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Colombia
Avian Jewels of the Choco Region
February 11 to 18, 2024



Steely-vented Hummingbird
© JJ Arango

SAFARI OVERVIEW

Bask in avian wealth with the richest bird diversity in the world. Colombia boasts the highest number of bird species anywhere on the earth, and the Cali area alone has 562 documented species, more than all of Europe. With the beautiful Araucana Lodge as your homebase, you will encounter an incredible variety of ecosystems in a relatively compact area. From the tanagers, hummingbirds, and cock-of-the-rocks in the Western Andes to flycatchers, piculets, and antbirds of the wetlands, the abundance of birdlife will amaze you at every turn. In addition to maximum time in nature to interact with wildlife and enjoy the majestic scenery, privileged local access will provide you the opportunity to be immersed in the Columbian lifestyle.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Sojourn at the new Araucana Lodge (owned, operated, and designed for birders where you will experience farm-to-table meals including organic produce grown on property).
- Delight in watching possibly 22 species of hummingbirds.
- Be dazzled by the color, movements, and sounds of cock-of-the-rock leks.
- Attend a festival of tanagers in the Anchicaya Watershed.
- Observe a multitude of endemic and near endemic (birds that have more than half of their distribution in this area but have spread to neighboring regions) species in disparate habitats.

LEADER: Jose Luna.

DAYS: 8, including estimated travel time.

GROUP SIZE: 8.

COST: \$3,420 per person, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See the Costs section on page 6.

Date	Description	Accommodation	Meals
Feb 11	Arrive in Cali, Colombia (known as a branch of heaven to locals).	Araucana Lodge, Valle del Cauca	D
Feb 12	Bird along KM 18 in the Western Andes in search of tanagers, plus stop at an Andean cock-of-the-rock lek and a garden with hummingbird feeders.		B, L, D
Feb13	Birdwatch at the Sonso Lagoon, one of the few wetlands left in Cauca Valley.		
Feb 14	Explore near the lodge, including visits to the hummingbird feeders and fruit plates for up-close bird watching.		
Feb 15	Ride the rails to San Cipriano to explore the pristine forests at the reserve and view an abundance of birdlife.		
Feb 16	Bird the biodiverse Upper Anchicaya and visit Doña Doras in the morning; witness the spectacle of a cock-of-the-rock lek in the afternoon.		
Feb 17	Contrast the dry forest, rain shadow habitat near Atuncella in the morning with the Rio Bravo wetlands in the afternoon.		
Feb18	Fly home.		B

OPTIONS

- Continue your journey on the Santa Marta mountains extension. You will travel up from the Caribbean shore to the world's highest coastal peak encountering incredible bird diversity including an abundance of endemics (<https://cheesemans.com/extension/santa-marta-extension>).

LEADER



Jose Luna

Jose was born and raised in the western Andes of Colombia, and he has been birding since he was 16 years old. Jose was the first guide to join Colombia Birdwatch and has since traveled throughout most regions of Colombia with hundreds of guests from all corners of the world. Jose shines amongst his colleagues for his calm demeanor, friendliness, and proficiency in English, not to mention his ability to find birds.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Feb 11 ~ Arrive in Cali, Colombia

Travel to Cali (called a branch of heaven by the locals because of its lively and happy culture) where our local agent will transfer you from the airport to the Araucana Lodge. If you would like to arrive earlier, we can arrange divergent airport transfers and extra nights. Upon arrival at the lodge, you will be enveloped by its organic modern architecture designed to integrate your accommodations seamlessly into the natural surroundings. The property where the lodge currently resides was purchased by our operator's grandparents in the 1950's as a retreat from the chaos of city life. It was named La Araucana in honor of his grandmother's Chilean heritage. When phone lines came through, his grandfather said, "No, thank you, I don't want anyone to reach me here." You will find it a lovely retreat as well.

Feb 12 ~ KM 18

Spend the day around the famous KM 18, located on a 5,900-ft (1,800-m) pass 11 mi (18km) northwest of Cali, along the road that connects Cali with the port city of Buenaventura. Birding can be very productive with more than 180 species recorded in the San Antonio Forest. You'll search for four endemics: chestnut wood-quail, Colombian chachalaca, grayish piculet, and the threatened, spectacular multicolored tanager. This area is a tanager paradise where you have a good chance to observe some stunning birds like Choco-endemic purplish-mantled, summer, golden, near-endemic scrub, metallic-green, saffron-crowned, and golden-naped tanagers as well as ashy-throated bush-tanager and blue-winged mountain-tanager.

You may be privileged to see an impressive show of hummingbirds at a private house along the same road, including the beautifully ornate long-tailed sylph, booted rackettail, blue-headed sapphire, green violetear, fawn-breasted brilliant, speckled hummingbird, white-necked jacobin, brown violetear, and tawny-bellied hermit. Birding the forest can also produce many near endemics such as scrub tanager, purple-throated woodstar, and Nariño tapaculo.



Colombian Chachalaca
© Christopher Calonje

Feb 13 ~ Sonso Lagoon

You will start early to take a two-hour drive to this wetland gem. Sonso Lagoon is one of the only remaining wetlands in the Cauca Valley and is teeming with birds, making it one of Colombia's best wetland birding locations. You will scan the marshes and lagoons that line the Cauca River for fulvous and black-bellied whistling-ducks, roseate spoonbill, glossy ibis, anhinga, herons (little blue, cocoi, and striated), snowy egret,

black-necked stilt, and snail kite. We are likely to find wattled jacana, which have a polyandry mating system, meaning females mate with many males within a breeding season. Polyandry is a fascinating adaptation that occurs in less than 1% of birds and is most common among shorebirds.

Other interesting species you might spot include the endemics apical flycatcher and grayish piculet, jet antbird, blackish rail, ruby-topaz hummingbird, and horned screamer. Along riparian areas you may find greater ani, ringed kingfisher, crested and yellow-headed caracara, red-crowned and spot-breasted woodpeckers, and cocoa woodcreeper. Greater anis are fascinating because two to four unrelated pairs form a nesting group that builds a single nest in which all the females lay their eggs and raise the young communally.

Feb 14 ~ Araucana Lodge

Spend the day on the 30 acres of the Araucana Lodge in search of some of the targets that include species such as Parker's antbird, grayish piculet, apical flycatcher, smoky-brown woodpecker, bar-crested antshrike, spectacled parrotlet, scaled antpitta, crimson-rumped toucanet, Colombian chachalaca, and scale-crested pygmy-tyrant.

You will also have opportunities to explore the more than 5km of trails that wind through the pre-montane forest on the property and stroll around the organic coffee, fruit, and vegetable gardens that provide produce for your meals at the lodge.

Feb 15 ~ San Cipriano Reserve

Drive for about 1.5 hours to Zaragosa, your entry point into the humid forests of the San Cipriano Reserve. Since the reserve does not have roads, access is via a pleasant ride on *brujitas*, which are motorcycle-powered wooden carts on rails that have been ingenuously engineered by the locals. In the heart of the Choco Bioregion, the area is known for being one of the wettest and most biodiverse on the planet. Some of the possible birds include Choco toucan, stripe-billed aracari, blue-headed parrots, spot-crowned, broad-billed motmot, purple-throated fruitcrow, and tawny-crested tanager. Also possible are near endemics: black-tipped cotinga, rose-faced parrot, and five-colored barbet.



Flame-rumped Tanager
© JJ Arango

The area is teeming with antbirds, with chances to see ocellated, jet, stub-tailed and bicolored antbirds. With the high humidity and heat, we hope to find species such as Pacific and checker-throated antwrens, Pacific flatbill, cinnamon becard, thicket antpitta, black-chested puffbird, white-ringed flycatcher, blue-black grosbeak, and blue-crowned and golden-collared manakin.

Feb 16 ~ Upper Anchicaya - Doña Doras - Cock-of-the-Rock Lek

Perhaps Colombia's most famous birding location, the Anchicaya watershed is in the Farallones National Park, one of the most diverse parks on the planet. The birding begins just 30min from the hotel via a paved road that can offer many of the Choco endemics that this mega diverse locality has to offer. You will spend the day birding along the upper portion of the road.

You will devote some time to the El Descanso area where Doña Dora, displaced by war, started a small cafeteria to support her family, which she, over time, has turned into a destination for birders. You can

observe many of the following in the area: rufous-throated, glistening-green, and silver-throated tanagers. A day of birding on the road should yield many highly prized species including the endemic crested ant-tanager, golden-collared honeycreeper, white-whiskered puffbird, uniform treehunter, sooty-headed wren, green thorntail, and empress brilliant. Toucan barbet, sporting five different colors elegantly while still having a tough demeanor, will be one of the main targets. Don't forget to keep scanning the skies for barred hawk, ornate hawk-eagle, and swallow-tailed kites, whilst keeping an eye out on low branches for the attractive ornate flycatcher feeding. Another target is the recently described Tatama tapaculo.

After lunch you'll drive two hours to an Andean cock-of-the-rock lek to witness the spectacular mating rituals of these fascinating birds.

Feb 17 ~ Atuncella and Rio Bravo

Drive about 40min to visit the village of Atuncella, where a very interesting habitat exists due to a localized rain shadow. A dry forest with several endemic cactus species harbors entertaining birds such as bar-crested antshrike and striped cuckoo. Other targets of this area include pale-breasted spinetail, golden-rumped euphonia, and the endemic apical flycatcher and cocoa woodcreeper.



Cock-of-the-Rock
© JJ Arango

When it starts to warm up, you will head back to the main road for lunch and a one-hour drive to the Rio Bravo Reserve, known as one of the wettest parts of the world, where you will seek out targets such as rufous-throated tanager, purplish-mantled tanager, brown-billed scythebill, sooty-headed wren, white-winged tanager, buff-fronted foliage-gleaner, uniform antshrike, rufous-rumped antwren, cerulean warbler, and uniform treehunter.

Feb 18 ~ Fly home

After breakfast at the Araucana Lodge, you will be transferred to the airport for your flights home. Or you can join our Santa Marta extension (<https://cheesemans.com/extension/santa-marta-extension>).

COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

Cost

Type	Cost per Person
Trip Cost, double occupancy	\$3,420
Single Supplement	\$470

Costs are per person, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See *Included* and *Not Included* sections for more details.

If you are a single traveler, we will try to find a roommate for you, but if we cannot pair you with a roommate, we may charge you a single supplement. Single rooms cost extra and are subject to availability.

Payment Schedule

Payment	Due Date	Amount per Person
Deposit	Due now to reserve your space	\$500
Final	September 4, 2023	Remaining Balance

Payments are due based on the schedule above. All reservations require a deposit to confirm reservation of your space.

Cancellations

Until the Final Payment due date, deposits are refundable except for a cancellation fee of \$150 per person, which can be applied toward another trip if reserved within six months of the cancelled trip's departure date. Cancellations are non-transferrable. No refunds are given after the Final Payment due date.

Included

- Carbon offsets for the duration of this trip.
- All leaders, transport, and park entry fees for all activities unless described as optional.
- Transfers between Cali Airport and the Araucana Lodge regardless of arrival or departure day.
- Accommodations for the nights of February 11 through February 17.
- Meals from dinner on February 11 through breakfast on February 18.
- Purified water at the lodge to refill your water bottle.
- Juice during every meal.
- Soda and beer at restaurants.

Not Included

- Carbon offsets for your flights to/from this trip.
- All airfare, airport and departure taxes, and excess baggage fees. Round-trip airfare is approximately \$480 to \$960 between the US and Cali, depending on origin.
- Passport and visa fees.
- COVID tests.
- Extra hotel nights.
- Gratuities – tipping is always discretionary. However, we suggest budgeting about \$210 to \$350 total per participant for our main leader, local leaders, and lodge staff.

- Emergency evacuation insurance and trip cancellation insurance. For more information see www.cheesemans.com/travel-insurance.
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone calls, medical costs or hospitalization, room service, other beverages not listed as included, items not on the regular menu, etc. If you have special dietary needs, please indicate them on your Reservation Form.

SIGN UP

Please contact us first to check availability, reserve your space, and obtain a Reservation Form. To confirm your reservation, we require a deposit and signed form from each participant.

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

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OTHER DETAILS

Climate

The climate has been quite variable over the last few years. But generally, temperatures will be hot and humid in the lowlands (70°F at night to 90°F during the day) and comfortable in the highlands (60°F at night to 80°F during the day) where you should plan to wear layers.

Fitness Level

Most bird watching is on dirt tracks and at feeder stations with the vehicle nearby. The cock-of-the-rock lek requires a 15-minute hike down and a 25-minute hike up on a trail in good condition. The days in San Cipriano and Sanso Lagoon require 2 to 3-mile hikes and are hot and humid. Please contact us if you have any health concerns that may make this trip challenging.

Transportation

You'll drive to each location in a modified, 15-passenger Mercedes Sprinter or Volkswagen Crafter. In the San Cipriano Reserve, you will ride in *brujitas*, which are motorcycle-powered wooden carts on rails that have been ingeniously engineered by the locals.

Flights

Airfare is not included in trip costs. Detailed logistical information and the contact information for our recommended flight-ticketing agent are included in the Trip Materials we will send you. Please let us know if you are arriving earlier or staying later, as we are happy to assist you with any extra overnights that you might want to arrange.

Flights you (or a travel agent) book: Arrive in Cali, Colombia (CLO) by 3:00pm on February 11. Depart from Cali, Colombia (CLO) after 10:00am on February 18. **If you are continuing on our Santa Marta extension**, see the *Flights* section in its itinerary for departure information (<https://cheesemans.com/extension/santa-marta-extension>).

Terms and Conditions

Read our current Terms and Conditions at <https://cheesemans.com/terms-and-conditions>.

Conservation

Our company ethos has always regarded conservation as inseparable from responsible tourism. We struggle with the dilemma that traveling worldwide expends climate-changing carbon. However, we wholeheartedly believe that traveling with us will cultivate your passion for conserving our beautiful world while stimulating each destination's local economy. We encourage you to explore the various ways in which Cheesemans' operates within this context:

- **Ecotourism and Conservation for Colombia** (<https://cheesemans.com/ecotourism-and-conservation-in-Colombia>).
- **Cheesemans' Trips are Carbon Neutral:** As of June 1, 2022, our trips are carbon neutral (<https://cheesemans.com/carbon-neutral>).
- **Offsetting your Travel to/from our Trip:** We ask you to pledge to offset the carbon emissions for your travel to and from our trips. Use this tool to calculate your emissions and purchase your carbon offset today through Sustainable Travel International, or through your favorite carbon offsetting organization (<https://cheesemans.com/carbon-calculator>).