

Costa Rica

Kaleidoscope of Bird Diversity

March 29 to April 13, 2025



Keel-billed Toucan
© Marc Lombardi

SAFARI OVERVIEW

Costa Rica, with its lush and verdant landscapes, offers a paradise for bird and nature lovers. By exploring the diverse tropical environments of Savegre River Valley, Carara National Park, La Selva Biological Station, and Tortuguero National Park, you will discover the country's rich biodiversity. During the spring season, you'll experience exceptional weather and increased animal activity including migrating birds along the Continental Divide, as well as encounters with monkeys, sloths, crocodiles, peccaries, and agoutis. Delight in the warm hospitality of the locals and savor the delicious cuisine of Costa Rica while staying in beautiful and well-located lodges, making your exploration of this Central American hotspot truly memorable.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Embark on an adventure through Costa Rica using various modes of transportation such as buses, boats, and hiking to maximize magnificent bird-watching opportunities.
- Seek the iconic resplendent quetzal, renowned as one of Central America's most stunning birds.
- Explore a range of forest types, each offering a unique ecosystem to discover, including tropical rainforests, cloud forests, and tropical dry forests.
- Immerse yourself in the biodiversity hotspot of La Selva Biological Station where you'll encounter over 600 species and gain insights into tropical ecosystem research.

LEADER: Paco Madrigal.

DAYS: 16, including estimated travel time.

GROUP SIZE: 10.

COST: \$6,000 per person, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See the *Costs* section on page 5.

ACCOMMODATIONS: Lodging ranges from rustic to modern, all with private baths. While most lodges do not have air conditioning, some may have fans.

Date	Description	Accommodation	Meals
Mar 29	Travel from our Panama trip or from home, and meet your guide in San José, Costa Rica.	Hotel Bougainvillea, San José	D
Mar 30–31	Experience the cloud forests of the Savegre River Valley and find the resplendent quetzal.	Suria Hotel, Savegre River Valley	B, L, D
Apr 1–2	Discover rainforest habitats of Carara National Park on the banks of the Tarcoles River near the Pacific coast. Enjoy a mangrove boat tour.	Hotel Villa Lapas, near Carara National Park	B, L, D
Apr 3–4	Explore the tropical dry forests, marshlands, estuaries, and mangroves of Guanacaste Peninsula.	La Ensenada Lodge, Abangaritos	B, L, D
Apr 5–6	View active Volcán Arenal and walk in Arenal National Park on tropical forest trails with great birding.	Arenal Observatory Lodge, Arenal National Park	B, L, D
Apr 7–9	Explore tropical lowland rainforests of the Caribbean slope along the Sarapiquí River, including visits to Braulio Carrillo National Park and the La Selva Biological Station, a world-famous tropical research facility.	Selva Verde Lodge & Reserve, Chilamate	B, L, D
Apr 10–11	Boat to Tortuguero National Park on the Caribbean coast to explore rich, narrow waterways through the rainforest.	Laguna Lodge, Tortuguero National Park	B, L, D
Apr 12	Return to San José for a farewell dinner.	Hotel Bougainvillea, San José	B, L, D
Apr 13	Fly homeward.		B

OPTIONS

- Begin your journey early on our [Panama](#) trip from March 15 to 29, 2025. Embark on a special trip in cooperation with our local operator and guide, Paco, to explore Panama's incredibly accessible biodiversity.

LEADER

Paco Madrigal

Paco has over 20 years of experience guiding wildlife, natural history, and birding tours throughout his native Costa Rica. He grew up in Sarapiquí near the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS) Station surrounded by his family's passion for the diverse local plants and animals. He was part of the very first World Wildlife Fund (WWF) intensive Naturalist training program and also worked at La Selva Biological Station before following his dream of starting his own tour company. His deep knowledge and charming personality make him one of our best leaders.



DETAILED ITINERARY

Mar 29 ~ Travel from our [Panama](#) trip or from home to San José, Costa Rica

Travel from our [Panama](#) trip or from home. Arrive in San José for an overnight at your hotel located on ten acres of beautiful gardens that attract a multitude of birds including some you might not see on other parts of the trip!

Mar 30–31 ~ Savegre River Valley

Enter the misty highland cloud forests in the Talamanca Mountains and the Savegre River Valley to look for numerous species of flora and fauna. The jewel of these forests is the resplendent quetzal, considered by some to be the most beautiful bird in Central America. You'll also bird watch on the Savegre Hotel's private 400-hectare nature reserve visiting hummingbird feeding stations and walking through gardens as well as along trails in the forest and the Savegre River.

Apr 1–2 ~ Carara National Park

Situated on the banks of the Tarcoles River, near the Pacific coast, Carara National Park is in a unique climate zone that joins the humid southern coastal region and the dry climate of the northern Pacific area creating a rich mix of species from both regions. A possible highlight of the Carara Reserve is watching the orange-collared manakin dancing in its lek, an aggregation of males performing competitive displays to attract females that are ready to mate. Explore bird-rich trails through the forests in search of tiger-herons, antbirds, rufous-tailed jacamar, trogons, and royal flycatchers. Become one with the sights and sounds around you while looking for a cooperative mixed flock foraging together, and even catch a glimpse of one of the mammal species: collared peccaries, tayras, tamanduas, or agoutis. When the birds are less active, you'll find beautiful butterflies, like blue morphos, flitting about. Enjoy morning and evening stops at the Tarcoles River bridge to watch scarlet macaws fly to and from their nighttime roost in mangroves.



Resplendent Quetzal
© Marc Lombardi

Embark on a two-hour mangrove boat tour along the Tarcoles River in search of giant crocodiles, shorebirds, waterbirds, and raptors. If time allows, you will also explore the visitor center and walk through a habitat that is home to the great curassow and great tinamou, both seen side by side!

Apr 3–4 ~ Guanacaste and La Ensenada National Wildlife Refuge

The Guanacaste Peninsula has a vast diversity of wildlife habitats including tropical dry forests, marshlands, estuaries, and mangroves. Drive through the Pacific Lowlands on the Pan-American Highway passing through the arid landscapes of the Guanacaste-Gulf in the Nicoya region, which has distinctive flora and fauna endemic to this special area.

Explore La Ensenada National Wildlife Refuge on the Pacific Coast of the Gulf of Nicoya. You will stay at a family-managed ranch within the refuge where you will visit habitats including dry forest and mangroves. Listen for mantled howler monkeys calling in the distance and look for other mammals including white-headed capuchins, northern tamandua, white-nosed coati, and white-tailed deer. You can also find Pacific screech-owls and ferruginous pygmy-owl.



Scarlet Macaws
© Elise Spata

Apr 5–6 ~ Arenal National Park and Volcano

Drive east into the highlands of the Continental Divide and down the Caribbean Slope to Lake Arenal for your first sights of the breathtaking Volcán Arenal, Costa Rica’s youngest and most active volcano. Along your route, you’ll have time to stop for birds and picturesque views.

The Arenal Observatory Lodge, located within Arenal National Park, offers wonderful views of the volcano, sunsets over Lake Arenal, as well as tanagers, hummingbirds, and several species of warblers – all viewed from the comfort of the outside deck. Extensive trails around the lodge provide opportunities to walk through montane rainforest in search of woodland bird species, monkeys, and butterflies. In the evening, you can choose to go owling in search of black-and-white, mottled, and striped owls.

Apr 7–9 ~ Sarapiquí riparian zone and La Selva Biological Station

Continue down the Caribbean slope to Selva Verde Lodge, located in the tropical lowlands of Sarapiquí. Spend three nights at this lodge, situated on 500 acres of tropical forest adjacent to Braulio Carrillo National Park and the Organization for Tropical Studies’ (OTS) La Selva Biological Station.



Hiking
© Gina Barton

You’ll explore the wildlife-rich riparian zone along the banks of the Sarapiquí River for the great green macaw, an endangered species that feeds almost exclusively on the almonds of the almendron tree (*Dipteryx panamensis*) commonly

found here. Meander the walkways at your lodge and look for poison dart frogs, millipedes, and many bird species. Enjoy your early morning coffee at the fruit feeding station to see who will make an appearance!

Visit La Selva Biological Station, one of the world's most important sites for tropical ecosystem research where scientists and students come from around the world to study tropical ecology. La Selva is home to more than 420 bird species, 500 butterfly species, 120 mammal species, 55 snake species, and hosts a variety of tree species on its 4,000 acres of old growth and disturbed tropical wet forest. Paco knows this area very well from spending his youth here and working as a naturalist. La Selva is the most likely place to find any of three species of tinamous in Costa Rica, plus woodpeckers, aracaris, tanagers, rufous motmot, trogons, caciques, purple-throated fruitcrow, and snowy cotinga. Also look out for peccaries (wild pig), agoutis, coatis, sloths, and the monkeys that frequent this area.

Apr 10–11 ~ Tortuguero National Park on the Caribbean

Travel by boat to Tortuguero National Park navigating through small resort areas, agricultural land, and secondary forest before reaching your lodge just outside the park.

At Tortuguero National Park, you will traverse the rich labyrinth of peaceful waterways keeping an eye out for active wildlife along the banks and in the trees. This area boasts 320 bird species including tiger-herons, Agami heron, white-fronted nunbird, and all six species of kingfishers belonging to the Americas. You may also see caiman, iguanas, poison dart frogs, freshwater turtles, basilisk lizards, Honduran white tent-making bats, and three species of monkeys that frequent the banks. Also keep an eye out for slaty-tailed trogon, Montezuma’s oropendola, American pygmy kingfisher, bare-throated tiger-heron, and sungrebe.



Chestnut-headed Oropendola
© Gina Barton

If you have time, you may visit the Caribbean Conservation Center to see the outstanding exhibits of nesting turtles and forest ecology, with information on recent leatherback turtle activity in the area.

Apr 12 ~ Return to San José

Depart by boat downstream through Tortuguero National Park where sloths are sometimes visible in the trees. Drive from the Caribbean coast through Braulio Carrillo National Park en route to San José. Tonight, enjoy a farewell group dinner at your lodge.

Apr 13 ~ Fly home

COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

Cost

Type	Cost per Person
Trip Cost, double occupancy	\$6,000
Single Supplement	\$1,320

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	October 10, 2024	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, park entry fees, and permits for all activities unless described as optional.
- Transfers on March 29 and April 13 between the San José Airport and Hotel Bougainvillea.
- Accommodations for the nights of March 29 through April 12.
- Meals from dinner on March 29 through breakfast on April 13.
- Gratuities for group meals.
- Water throughout the trip.
- Trip Planning Materials – information about entry requirements, flights, packing, gratuities, etc.

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 \$830 between the US and San José, Costa Rica, depending on origin.
- Passport and visa fees.
- COVID tests.
- Divergent airport transfers (arranged by us) and extra hotel nights.
- Gratuities – tipping is always discretionary. However, we suggest budgeting about \$25 to \$40 per participant per day for your leader and driver (about \$350 to \$560 total per participant)
- [Emergency evacuation insurance and trip cancellation insurance.](#)
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone calls, medical costs or hospitalization, room service, alcoholic and other beverages, 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 Reservation Materials. To confirm your reservation, we require a deposit and signed form from each participant.

[Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris](#)

Email: info@cheesemans.com

WhatsApp: (408) 741-5330 | Skype: CheesemansEcologySafaris

Phone: (800) 527-5330 or (408) 741-5330

OTHER DETAILS

Climate

Temperatures vary greatly – the Pacific coast is often hot while the cloud forests can be cool. Although December through May is the dry season, expect rain anytime. The average temperatures in April range from 63°F (17°C) at night to 95°F (35°C) during the day, depending on the location within the country.

Fitness Level

You will view most wildlife by walking along trails or from small boats. Walks are generally a few hours and include flat trails, uneven terrain, and hills. Paco will offer optional night walks when he thinks it will enhance your overall wildlife experience; these walks are weather and moon dependent. Please contact us if you have any health concerns that may make this trip challenging.

When you fill in your Reservation Form, please respond to the following:

1. Describe how often you walk for at least a few hours at a time.
2. Tell us how often you carry the same gear you plan to take out in your day pack (photography gear, binoculars, etc.).
3. Tell us how you've managed walking in hot and humid conditions.

Accommodations

Lodging ranges from rustic to modern, all with private baths. While most lodges do not have air conditioning, some have fans. Almost all lodges have open-air dining and common areas.

Transportation

You will travel by air-conditioned mini-bus and occasionally by boat.

Flights

Detailed logistical information is included in the Trip Planning Materials we will send you.

Flights you book

- Arrive in San José, Costa Rica (SJO) by 5:00pm on March 29. **If you are arriving from our Panama trip**, see the *Flights* section in its itinerary for arrival information.
- Depart from San José, Costa Rica (SJO) after 6:00am on April 13.

Terms and Conditions

Read our current [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 Costa Rica](#).
- **Cheesemans' Trips are 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. You can purchase offsets with most airlines (Delta includes them automatically), use our handy [carbon calculator](#) and donate to Sustainable Travel International, or contribute to your favorite offsetting organization.