



INALA'S COSTA RICA

Birding Paradise: Quetzals, Macaws and more

Sat 27 September – Sat 11 October 2025

Itinerary prepared by Dr Tonia Cochran, Inala Nature Tours, 2 June 2024.



Sunbittern. Photo: V. Campos

The Republic of Costa Rica is home to 5% of the world's plant and animal species, including more than 900 species of birds. Nestled between the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, and at the junction of North and South America, the country boasts diverse habitats and exceptional wildlife with plenty of Central American endemics such as Resplendent Quetzal, Lovely Cotinga, Volcano Hummingbird, Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher and Nicaraguan Grackle. Costa Rica is also rich in other wildlife such as monkeys, sloths, caimans, and tree-frogs. Around 25% of the country is protected for conservation. On this tour, we visit a range of habitats to experience the astonishing diversity of the country and to look for a host of sought-after species. From mangrove swamps on the Pacific coast, along meandering rivers, across forested mountains, through tropical dry forest to the wetlands of the north – as well as a visit to the world-renowned La Selva Biological Station – this tour offers the best of Costa Rica.

Highlights: mangrove cruise, exploring the Talamanca Mountains to look for the Chiriquí Endemics, Costa Rican páramo, a visit to La Selva Tropical Biological Station, wetlands of Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge.

[This tour has been designed to adjoin the end of the International Conference for Women Birders \(IC4WB\) conference in Costa Rica Wednesday 24 – Friday 26 September 2025\).](#)

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1. Arrive San José International airport, Costa Rica.

Days 2-4. Pacific Lowlands.

Days 5 & 6. Mountain Oak Forest

Days 7 & 8. Rainforest on the Caribbean Slope

Days 9-11. Caribbean Lowlands.

Days 12 & 13. Caño Negro wetlands.

Day 14. Caño Negro wetlands to San José.

Day 15. Depart Costa Rica.



Boat-billed Heron. Photo: V. Campos

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1. Arrive San José International airport, Costa Rica. We will be met on our arrival at the San José International Airport in Costa Rica and taken to our hotel. Free time to explore the hotel's lush gardens, where we have a chance of spotting Crimson-fronted Parakeet, Boat-billed Flycatcher, Groove-billed Ani, and several species of hummingbird, or just relax until we meet for a welcome dinner at the hotel this evening. **Accommodation:** San José hotel (en suite room). **Meals:** D.



White-throated Magpie-jay. Photo: V. Campos

Day 2. San José to the Pacific Lowlands. Early this morning we will meet our expert local bird guide for a pre-breakfast birding walk. After breakfast we will depart for the central valley and Pacific lowlands (total travel time 2 hours). We will stop en route in the Dry Forest country (where the trees lose their leaves to save water) looking for unique bird species found on this type of habitat. Species we hope to see here include White-throated Magpie-jay, Ferruginous Pygmy-owl, Turquoise-browed Motmot and many others. We will arrive at our hotel in time for lunch. After checking into our rooms, we will then gather for some birding around and near the hotel grounds, before heading back to the hotel for dinner. **Accommodation:** [Villa Lapas Jungle Village](#) (en suite rooms). **Meals:** B, L, D.

Day 3. Pacific Lowlands – Carara National Park. After some early birding and breakfast at the lodge, we will transfer to Carara National Park, a short drive away. This area is a transition zone between the rainforest of the Pacific coast and the dry forests of the north, with the shift between them marked by the meandering Tárcoles River. We will spend the whole day in the National Park. Carara is home to an astounding diversity of flora and fauna, including the spectacular Scarlet Macaw, and Central American specialities including Orange-collared, Red-capped and Golden-hooded Manakins, Crimson-fronted Parakeet, and Brown-headed and White-crowned Parrots. The area is also rich in mammals, and we will keep a look out for Mantled Howler Monkeys, White-faced Capuchin Monkeys, Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth and Collared Peccary. **Accommodation:** Villa Lapas as for last night (en suite rooms). **Meals:** B, L, D.



Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth.
Photo: V. Campos

Day 4. Pacific Lowlands – Boat cruise Tárcoles River. After more pre-breakfast birding and breakfast at the lodge, we will head out to the surrounding forest to explore further. Around mid-afternoon we will take a boat cruise on the Tárcoles River to look for a variety of water birds, including Amazon Kingfisher, Bare-throated Tiger-heron and Boat-billed Heron, tiny Mangrove Swallow and Magnificent Frigatebird, plus Scarlet Macaws which roost in the mangroves. Mangrove Hummingbird, Mangrove Warbler, Mangrove Yellow Warbler are also possible. We will return to our lodge for a third night. **Accommodation:** Villa Lapas as for last night (en suite rooms). **Meals:** B, L, D.



Resplendent Quetzal. Photo: V. Campos

Day 5. Pacific Lowlands to Mountain Oak Forest – Talamanca Mountain. Pre-breakfast birding and breakfast at the lodge before we head to the Talamanca Mountain (total travel time of around 4.5 hours) which holds a unique type of forest dominated by a range of evergreen trees including two endemic species of oak. Running from the central valley in Costa Rica to Panama, this high mountain range provides home to many range-restricted birds known collectively as the “Chiriquí Endemics”. Birds such as Resplendent Quetzal, Yellow-winged Vireo, Spotted Wood-quail, Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Yellow-thighed Brushfinch Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher, and many more live in this wonderful oak forest. We will stop at Paraíso del Quetzal Lodge to enjoy lunch and some birding. Located at an altitude of 2,300 meters (around 7,500 feet), it is a birding hotspot, and we will spend time looking at hummingbirds and other specialities there, before continuing to our lodge for dinner. **Accommodation:** [Savegre Mountain Lodge](#), San Gerardo Valley, Talamanca Mountains (en suite rooms). **Meals:** B, L, D.

Day 6. Mountain Oak Forest and Páramo. Pre-breakfast birding around the lodge before heading out in 4x4 trucks to an old oak forest in the San Gerardo Valley to look for more highland specialties. After lunch back at the lodge will we visit the Páramo, an expanse of alpine shrublands and grasslands rich with endemic plants where we will look for Peg-billed Finch, Timberline Wren, Volcano Junco and other species living high up in the Cordillera de Talamanca. **Accommodation:** Lodge in the Talamanca Mountains (en suite rooms) as for last night. **Meals:** B, L, D.

Day 7. Rainforest on the Caribbean Slope: Talamanca Mountains to the Orosi Valley. Today we will drive through the Talamanca Mountain area to the city of Cartago, the first capital of Costa Rica. Here we will stop at one of the most beautiful Catholic churches in the country, Basílica de Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles,

which was founded in 1639 and restored in 1939. We will also stop for some birding en route before arriving at our destination today: Hotel Quelitales in the Orosi Valley. Our hotel is located in a hotspot for birds. Among the species recorded from the surrounding area are Montezuma and Chestnut-headed Oropendolas, the stunning Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Collared and Gartered Trogons, numerous species of hummingbirds, tanagers and woodpeckers. It is owned by a local birder/photographer who welcomes visitors with warm Costa Rican-style friendship. We will have dinner at the gourmet restaurant at the hotel. **Accommodation:** [Hotel Quelitales](#) in the Orosi Valley (en suite rooms). **Meals:** B, L, D.

Day 8. Rainforest on the Caribbean Slope: El Copal. After some pre-breakfast birding and breakfast at the lodge, we will travel to a magic place called El Copal private reserve (around 1 hour total travel time), where we will bird mostly from the balcony to see birds like Speckled Tanager, Bay-headed Tanager, Black-and-yellow Tanager, Snowcap Hummingbird and if we are lucky, Lovely Cotinga, which certainly lives up to its name. We will have lunch at El Copal while birding, before returning to our hotel for dinner. **Accommodation:** Hotel Quelitales in the Orosi Valley (en suite rooms) as for last night. **Meals:** B, L, D.



Lovely Cotinga. Photo: V. Campos



Snowcap Hummingbird. Photo: V. Campos

Day 9. Caribbean Slope to Caribbean Lowlands. After breakfast we will depart for our next destination, the Caribbean Lowlands (a total travel time of around 4 hours). Heading east across the central mountain range, we encounter different landscapes and a different suite of birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. We will arrive at our lodge for dinner this evening. **Accommodation:** [La Quinta Lodge](#), Sarapiquí (en suite rooms). **Meals:** B, L, D.

Day 10. Caribbean Lowlands: La Selva Biological Station. After an early breakfast we will depart for the world-renowned Las Selva Biological Station (a total travel time of around 15-30 minutes) where we will spend the day. La Selva was established in 1953 and has expanded over the years to encompass more than 1500 hectares of lowland rainforest. This is a rainforest laboratory used by researchers around the world and is a great destination for birders, with about 470 species recorded here. It is one of the most important protected ecosystems for the iconic Great Green Macaw and many others. We will return to our hotel for lunch and dinner today. **Accommodation:** La Quinta Lodge, Sarapiquí (en suite rooms) as for last night. **Meals:** B, L, D.

Day 11. Caribbean Lowlands. After pre-breakfast birding and breakfast at our hotel, we will travel to nearby birding areas (total travel time around 45 minutes). Our birding today is a combination of open country birding and bird feeding stations around the Rio San José. The open areas are fantastic for seedeaters, parrots, macaws, and toucans, while the feeders, located on private property owned by a nature lover and artist, is a paradise for birders and photographers. Tanagers, doves, toucans, parakeets and hummingbirds are regular visitors here. Today we will also have the opportunity to visit a Cocoa factory, where you will learn the process of making chocolate and the history and importance of this crop for the local culture. We will return to our hotel for dinner. **Accommodation:** La Quinta Lodge, Sarapiquí (en suite rooms) as for last night. **Meals:** B, L, D.



Nicaraguan Grackle. Photo: V. Campos

Day 12. Caribbean Lowlands to Caño Negro wetlands: Wildlife Refuge and Los Chiles. After our customary pre-breakfast birding and breakfast at our hotel, we will travel to Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge (a total travel time around 3 hours), which is one of the best places in Costa Rica to see and photograph birds, monkeys, caimans, iguanas, Green Basilisk and more. Located in the north of Costa Rica, this is home to a particular bird species, the Nicaraguan Grackle, which is endemic to this small area of Central America. During the day we will board pontoon boats, which will take us out on the Medio Queso wetland (which translates to 'half of a cheese') near the township of Los Chiles to look for Jabiru, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Sungrebe, Nicaraguan Seed-finch and Yellow-breasted Crike. We will have dinner at our lodge this evening. **Accommodation:** [Natural Lodge](#), Caño Negro (en suite rooms). **Meals:** B, L, D.

Day 13. Caño Negro Wildlife refuge. We will spend all day in this area today. This morning, we will take a boat cruise on Rio Frio River where we expect to see a myriad of wildlife, including Spectacled Caimans, Green Basilisk, Black River turtles, monkeys and many water birds. We will return to the hotel briefly for lunch, before heading out again on our boats to continue exploring this area. **Accommodation:** Natural Lodge, Caño Negro (en suite rooms) as for last night. **Meals:** B, L, D.

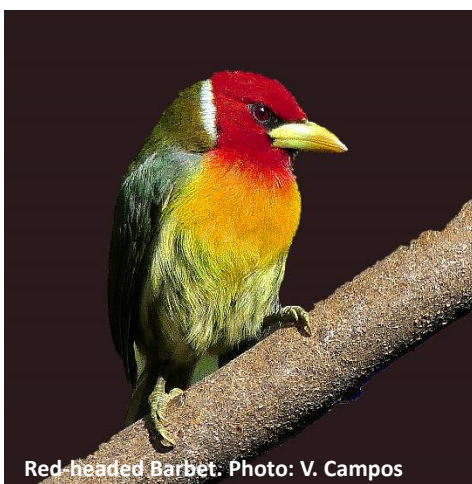


Green Basilisk. Photo: V. Campos



Silver-throated Tanager. Photo: V. Campos

Day 14. Caño Negro wetlands to San José. After an early breakfast we will travel back to San José (a total travel time of around 3 hours). As we ascend from the lowlands, we will stop at another feeding station, where birds like Northern Emerald-toucanet, Silver-throated Tanager, Red-headed Barbet and many others are regular visitors. We will have lunch at La Paz Waterfall Gardens, which located at a mid to high elevation, is a regular stop for many hummingbirds and other bird species that live at this altitude. This is also a great place to see a huge variety of butterflies. After enjoying a buffet lunch, we will continue to explore this area, walking a trail where six incredible waterfalls cut through the mountain. We will then head to San José for our final dinner together. **Accommodation:** Hotel in San José (en suite rooms) as for last night. **Meals:** B, L, D.



Red-headed Barbet. Photo: V. Campos

Day 15. Depart Costa Rica. Today we depart Costa Rica for our onward travels. No activities have been planned for today, and the hotel airport shuttle bus (which operates from 05:00-22:45) will be available for airport transfers as required. **Accommodation:** none. **Meals:** B (served from 07:00-09:00).

Tour Price: US \$8,000 per person twin share. Single supplement: US\$1,100.
(equivalent to around AU \$12,000 per person twin share and \$1,650 single supplement- conversion rate June 2024)

Pre- and post-tour accommodation San José: USD\$220/room (includes complimentary breakfast).

Please allow about US\$300-350 pp for tips to local guide, driver and associated staff/community members.

Price based on a group size of 6-12 participants + Inala leader Dr Tonia Cochran + local guide.

Inclusions Accommodation for 14 nights and specialist guiding and transport for day and night tours in a private air-conditioned vehicle with specialist licensed local guide and driver as outlined in the itinerary, all meals (B, L, D, snacks and water) and activities (boat rides on the Tárcoles River, Medio Queso Wetland, Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge and 4WD trip to Los Robles), entry fees to National Parks, Cocoa factory and feeders.

Exclusions international and domestic airfares, arrival and entry visa fees, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages and expenses of a personal nature (travel and medical insurance, phone calls, laundry, tips etc), personal & incidental expenses and any additional activities not mentioned in the above itinerary.

Please note

- The above rates are based upon a group size of 6-12 people. If the tour does not achieve minimum numbers, we will offer you the option of continuing with a smaller group size at a small supplement (we would always discuss options with you beforehand).
- Whilst we aim to follow the itinerary as planned, please note that the itinerary provided should only be used as a guideline. Depending on individual trip circumstances, weather, and local information, the exact itinerary may not be strictly adhered to. The guides reserve the right to make changes to the itinerary as they see fit.



Keel-billed Toucan. Photo: V. Campos



Geoffroy's Spider Monkey. Photo: V. Campos

MAP OF AREAS WE WILL VISIT ON THIS TOUR:

