

Northern Colombia Birding Trail



Colombia is a birder's paradise waiting to be discovered. Thanks to its wide variety of landscapes and climates, Colombia is a megadiverse country with some of the highest biodiversity on the planet. Regardless of size, Colombia holds almost 20% of all birds in the planet (1,930 species, with new species still being discovered).

This tour takes you to the northern Colombia, one of the most interesting regions of Colombia for bird lovers, famed for its high level of endemic species. The Northern Colombia Birding Trail, first introduced by Audubon Society is the result of a very successful program where local birding guides received training in birding and guiding, as well as in English language skills. These young people are becoming ambassadors for their local environments, and key people who will convince their communities to conserve habitat rather than degrade it. This is conservation of birds and habitats through bird-focused tourism. We will explore a huge variety of different habitats including high elevation mountains, dry forest, wetlands, mangroves and coastal habitats.

Starting with the dry scrub forest in between the cities of Cartagena and Barranquilla, where we hope to find an array of lowlands specialties, such as the recently split and endemic Turquoise-winged Parrotlet and the endemic Chestnut-winged Chachalaca. Then, we will start to ascend in elevation towards the spectacular Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta, the tallest coastal mountain range on earth which have been identified as the planet's single most important and irreplaceable site for threatened and endemic biodiversity, where it is possible to see up to 24 species that can't be found elsewhere. Subsequently, we will explore the highly endangered and full of regional specialties dry forest of La Guajira, before we start ascending again, this time to the northernmost spur of the Andes, the Serrania de Perijá.

This exciting tour includes upwards of 400 species, including more than 35 Colombian endemics, as well as a number of interesting mammal species and exquisite landscapes.



► Santa Marta Parakeet
Roger Rodriguez Ardila

Day	Activity	Overnight	Elevation	
			m.a.s.l.	Feet
1	Arrival to Cartagena	Cartagena	Sea level	
2	Morning birding in Cartagena and transfer to Barranquilla- birding on route	Barranquilla	20	65
3	Morning birding in Barranquilla, visit to Isla Salamanca park and transfer to Minca	Minca	650	2132
4	Birding the road towards El Dorado Reserve	El Dorado Reserve	2000	6561
5	Full day birding at El Dorado reserve	El Dorado Reserve	2000-2600	6561-8530
6	Full day birding at El Dorado reserve	El Dorado Reserve	2000-2600	6561-8530
7	Morning birding around El Dorado Reserve and transfer to Rioacha – birding on route	Rioacha	Sea level	
8	Full day at Los Flamencos Flora and Fauna Sanctuary	Rioacha	Sea level	
9	Morning birding around los Flamencos and transfer to Valledupar (if take the extension) – birding on route	Valledupar	168	551

EXTENSION TO PERIJA MOUNTAINS

10	Morning birding at Los Besotes Reserve and Transfer to Perija Thistletail Reserve (Perija Mountains)	Perija Thistletail Reserve	2800	9186
11	Full day birding at Perija Thistletail Reserve	Perija Thistletail Reserve	2800	9186
12	Full day birding at Perija Thistletail Reserve	Perija Thistletail Reserve	2800	9186
13	Morning birding at Thistletail Reserve and flight to Bogotá from Valledupar	International flights or extra night in Bogotá per request		

Detailed Itinerary

DAY 1

Arrive to Cartagena

We will be landing at the historic city of Cartagena. There should be time to take a stroll around this small but wonderfully preserved colonial masterpiece allowing everyone some time to soak up its special atmosphere. We will spend the night in a pleasant city Hotel.

Accommodation at Cartagena.



► Northern Screamer
Roger Rodriguez Ardila

DAY 2

Transfer to Barranquilla

We will spend the morning visiting several sites on the edge of Cartagena. Our main target will be the recently split and endemic Turquoise-winged Parrotlet. We will also hope to find Scaly-breasted Hummingbird, a local species in Colombia. Depending on time we may visit some wetlands around Cartagena where we will look for Northern Screamer. We also hope to find a host of commoner species with everything from ubiquitous Great-tailed Grackles and

Thick-billed Euphonia to Magnificent Frigatebirds and Brown Pelicans soaring overhead. In the late morning there may be the option of a short city tour for those whom are interested.

Around lunchtime we will make the three hour drive east to Barranquilla. We will stop on the city limits and visit some dry scrub forest where our main target will be the endemic Chestnut-winged Chachalaca. We are sure to see a few commoner species which could include Mouse-coloured Tyrannulet, Northern Scrub Flycatcher and Trinidad Euphonia.

Accommodation at Barranquilla.

DAY 3

Isla Salamanca National Park and transfer to Minca

The morning will be spent in the extensive wetlands and Mangroves of the Salamanca National Park east of Baranquilla.

The Salamanca National Park is adjacent to the Ciénaga Grande, right in the middle of the Barranquilla-Santa Marta highway. It protects the most significant area of mangroves in the Colombian Caribbean. Offers good chances for the endemic and Critically Endangered Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird, like another interesting birds as the Bicolored Conebill, Black-crested Antshrike, Golden-green and Red-rumped Woodpeckers, Dwarf Cucko, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, Bronzed Cowbird and Striped-backed Wren. Another great aquatic birds possible to see include the White-cheeked Pintail, Northern Screamer, Boat-billed Heron and the American Pygmy Kingfisher.

In the late morning we will start driving east through the park but expect to make frequent stops to look at the concentrations of waders and terns that can often be found on roadside pools. In the late afternoon we will climb into the foothills of the Santa Marta Mountains, to a little town called Minca.

Accommodation at Minca Hotel

▼Tropical Gnatcatcher
Trevor Ellery



DAY 4**Minca and transfer to El Dorado Bird Reserve**

Minca is a little village located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, the birding from the dry scrub below Minca up to the shade-coffee plantations area, encompasses lots of different habitats that yield a large number of birds, including near-endemics Golden-winged Sparrow, Scaled Piculet and Red-billed Emerald, besides Keel-billed Toucan, Pale-eyed Pygmy-tyrant, Rufous-and-white Wren and Black-headed Tanager. The restaurant bird feeders attract White-vented Plumeleteer, Rufous-breasted Hermit, Steely-vented Hummingbird, White-necked Jacobin, Black-throated Mango and Whooping Motmot all of them can be photographed easily.



In the ride up to El Dorado Bird Reserve belonging to the Colombian NGO ProAves, some of the low-elevation endemic birds can be seen: Santa Marta Tapaculo, Santa Marta Woodstar, White-lored Warbler, Santa Marta Blossomcrown and Santa Marta Foliage-gleaner and the Santa Marta Antbird as well as White-tipped Quetzal, the recently split Santa Marta Toucanet, Groove-billed Toucanet, Golden-breasted Fruiteater, and Rusty-breasted Antpitta.

Accommodation at El Dorado Bird Reserve▼ Santa- marta Toucanet
Roger Rodriguez Ardila

DAY 5 - 6**El Dorado Bird Reserve**

The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, a UNESCO-declared Biosphere Reserve, and a well-known Pleistocene refuge, is an isolated mountain, set apart from the Andes. Reaching an altitude of 5775 meters (18942 feet) above sea level, the Sierra Nevada is the world's highest costal peak that holds the highest degree of endemism in the world per area unity. Now days, there are about 24 Santa Marta endemic birds recognized, species you cannot see anywhere else on earth. Although, taxonomic changes can increase this number in the near future.

We will leave very early morning and spend much of the day at the highest elevations that hold most of the endemic bird species of Sierra Nevada, the critically endangered Santa Marta Parakeet, Yellow-crowned Whitestart, Santa Marta Warbler, Santa Marta Bush-Tyrant, Santa-marta (Black-cheeked) Mountain-tanager, Brown-rumped Tapaculo, Rusty-headed Spinetail, Santa Marta Antpitta and a likely to be split race of Rufous Antpitta can be found at San Lorenzo Ridge. Heading back to the lodge one can find White-tailed Starfrontlet and Streak-capped Spinetail. Around the lodge are Colombian Brushfinch, Santa Marta Brush-Finch and lots of endemic subspecies including Cinnamon Flycatcher, Black-hooded Thrush, Blue-capped Tanager, and Black-throated Tody-Tyrant.

Accommodation at El Dorado Bird Reserve



Sunset at El Dorado Bird Reserve
Roger Rodriguez Ardila



▲ Blue-naped Chlorophonia
Roger Rodriguez Ardila

DAY 7

Transfer to Rioacha

We'll try as much as possible to clean up all the Sierra Nevada specialties, so in day 6 we may either go back to San Lorenzo Ridge or to lower elevation towards Minca if we missed any target the days before. We also may spend time on the feeders and the compost pile of El Dorado Lodge, where Black-fronted Wood-Quail, Lined quail-dove, Sickle-winged guan, Band-tailed guan and the gorgeous Blue-naped Chlorophonias are common visitors.

In the late afternoon we will descend to a Hotel on the coast where we may squeeze in a little birding before dusk.

Accommodation at Rioacha

▼ Black-fronted Wood Quail
Roger Rodriguez Ardila



► Orinocan Saltator
Roger Rodriguez Ardila



DAY 8

Los Flamencos Fauna and Flora Sanctuary

We will drive around 20 minutes to the Guajira peninsula. In between the Camarones village and the Tapias River is Los Flamencos Flora and Fauna Sanctuary, western edge of the Guajira desert. Inside the sanctuary, rain water and little streams fill a number of inland lagoons along the coast that attracts numerous spectacular shorebirds such as American flamingo, the even brighter Scarlet Ibis, White Ibis, Gulls, terns, and many migratory shorebirds are to be found at Los Flamencos waterbodies.

The surrounding xerophytic scrub habitat is the natural habitat of very attractive regional specialties as the amazing Vermillion Cardinal, Orinocan Saltator, Buffy Hummingbird, Russet-throated Puffbird, Bare-eyed Pigeon, Chestnut Piculet, Slender-billed Inezia, White-whiskered Spinetail, Pileated Finch, Tocuyo Sparrow and the Rufous-vented Chachalaca. Also, Black-crested Antshrike, Crested Bobwhite, White-fringed Antwren, Northern Scrub-Flycatcher, Blue-crowned Parakeet, Brown-throated Parakeet and Green-rumped Parrotlet are likely

to be seen.

Accommodation at Rioacha.

EXTENSION TO PERIJA MOUNTAINS

DAY 9

Transfer to Valledupar

We will spend the morning birding in the dry scrub where we target many species including Vermilion Cardinal, Tocuyo Sparrow, Bare-eyed Pigeon and Pale-tipped Inezia. Around lunch time we will make the long drive south to Valledupar where, depending on time we may make a short late afternoon visit to Los Besotes Reserve.

Accommodation at Valledupar

DAY 10**Los Besotes Reserve and transfer to Perija Thistletail Bird Reserve**

Los Besotes reserve protects an extensive portion of the dry forest along the eastern foothills of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. It is 8 km north of Valledupar, north eastern part of Colombia.

We will target Venezuelan Flycatcher and hope to at least hear Red-legged Tinamou. We also have a second chance of several Minca and Guajira birds. We also can expect to find Yellow-olive and Yellow-breasted Flycatchers, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Scrub Greenlet, Lance-tailed Manakin, Rufous-capped Warbler, and Pale-eyed Pygmy Tyrant. We will then spend much of the day climbing up to the Perija Lodge and we may pick up our first Perija endemics on route such as Perija Tapaculo and Black-fronted Brush Finch.

Accommodation at Perija Thistletail Bird Reserve.



▲ Black-backed Antshrike
Trevor Ellery



▲ Lance-tailed Manakin
Trevor Ellery

DAY 11 - 12**Perija Thistletail Bird Reserve (Perijá Mountains)**

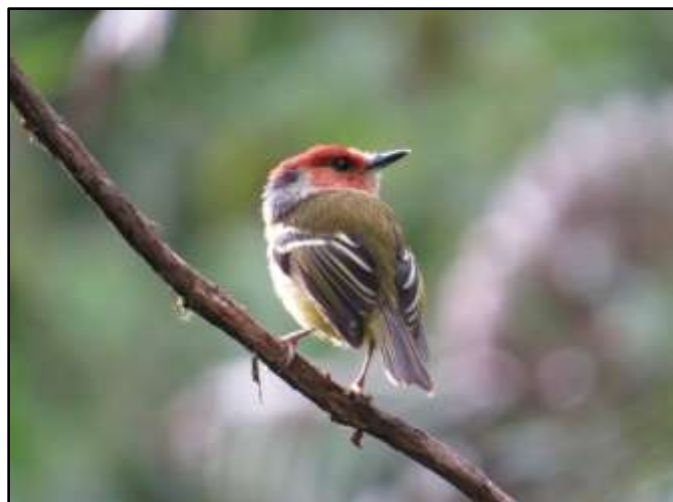
The Serrania de Perija is an isolated offshoot of the Eastern Andes that forms the border with Venezuela and is one of the least explored areas in Colombia. The Perija Thistletail Reserve is located in the villages of El Cinco and Altos de Perijá, in the municipality of Manaure, department of Cesar, and protects a huge portion of the remnants of high andean forests, subparamo and paramo of this area.

We will spend the morning on the Paramo above the Perija lodge where we will look for Perija Thisteltail, Perija Metaltail and the local race of Perija Rufous Antpitta. We will spend the later part of the day birding near the lodge looking for Perija Starfrontlet, Loungamere's Sunangel, Rufous-shafted Woodstar and several commoner species which are represented by Perija endemic subspecies that may one day gain full species status.

Accommodation at Perija Thistletail Bird Reserve



▲ Perija Metaltail
Trevor Ellery



▲ Rufous-crowned Tody Flycatcher
Trevor Ellery



▲ Venezuelan Tyrannulet
Trevor Ellery



▲ Paramo Seedeater
Trevor Ellery

▼ Perija / Black-fronted Brush-Finch
Trevor Ellery

▼ Perijá / Phelps's Brush-Finch
Trevor Ellery





▲ Crested Quetzal
Trevor Ellery

DAY 13

Transfer to Bogota

We will have a final morning birding in the Coffee plantations below the Perija Reserve where we will look for Perija Brushfinch, Moustached Puffbird, Grey-throated Warbler and Yellow-throated Toucan. In the afternoon we will catch a domestic flight back to Bogota to connect with international flights.

International flights or extra night in Bogotá per request.

