

Colombian Caribbean Coast: Cultural & Nature Trip



Colombia is the country with the second-highest biodiversity in the world, behind Brazil (Around 7 times Colombia's size). The Colombian Caribbean region is mostly lowland plains extending from the northern reaches of the Colombian Andes to the Caribbean Sea that are characterized by a variety of ecosystems including: The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta that rise from the plains to snow-capped peaks, separated from the Andes as an isolated area of high biodiversity and endemism; One of the largest marshes in Colombia, the Ciénaga Grande de Santa Marta. The main river is the Magdalena which is fully navigable in the region and a major path for the flow of shipments to and from inland Colombia.

This tour takes you to the northern Colombia, one of the most interesting regions of Colombia for nature lovers, famed for its high level of endemic species. We will explore a huge variety of different habitats including high elevation mountains, dry forest, wetlands, mangroves, deserts and coastal habitats.

Besides, this tour takes you to know a good part of the culture of this side of the country. The inhabitants of the Colombian Caribbean are the result of the racial and cultural mixture of aboriginal peoples that inhabit the region since ancient times, with white individuals of Spanish nationality who arrived in the Colombian Caribbean in 1499, who at the same time introduced people of diverse African tribes as slaves. As consequence we can enjoy a unique array of music, traditions and lifestyles that maintain until today.



American Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) is the only flamingo distributed through the Caribbean Sea, the northern coasts of South America, and on the Galapagos. It was formerly considered conspecific with the Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) of the Old World. Picture by Roger Rodriguez Ardila

Day	Activity	Overnight	Elevation	
			m.a.s.l	Feet
1	Arrival to Bogotá	Blue Suites Hotel	2600	8530
2	Visit to Monserrate and La Candelaria	Blue Suites Hotel	2600	8530
3	Birding at Chicaque Park and flight to Cartagena	Cartagena	Sea level	
4	Cartagena Historic city	Barranquilla	20	65
5	Birding Isla Salamanca National Park and Barranquilla Area – Transfer to Minca	Minca	650	2132
6	Birding the road towards El Dorado Reserve	El Dorado Reserve	2000	6561
7	Full day at El Dorado Reserve	El Dorado Reserve	2000-2600	6561-8530
8	Morning birding at El Dorado and Transfer to Tayrona Area	La Jorará Lodge	Sea level	
9	Full day at Los Flamencos Flora and Fauna Sanctuary	Rioacha	Sea level	
10	Traditional dancing show and flight to Bogotá	International flights or extra-night in Bogotá per request		

Detailed itinerary

DAY 1

Arrival to Bogotá

Your international flights are likely to arrive in the early morning or late afternoon and you will be taken to the hotel.

Accommodation at Blue Suites Hotel

DAY 2

Visit to Monserrate and La Candelaria

The hill of Monserrate is the best known of the Eastern hills of Bogotá, has an altitude of 3152 m and is located on the eastern Andes mountain range. Well known for being a spot with a great view of all the city and sometimes the Central Andes. At its top is the chapel of the Virgin of Monserrate, erected in 1640 by order of Spanish settlers. There we also have chances to see a number of high-altitude birds such as the fantastic Sword-billed Hummingbird, Shining Sunbeam, Black-tailed Trainbearer, different species of flowerpiercers and more.



After spend a couple hours in Monserrate, we will head to La Candelaria, the 17th locality of Bogotá, Colombia. A historic neighborhood in the city's downtown. The architecture of the old houses, churches and buildings has Spanish Colonial, Baroque and art deco styles. Many of the old buildings are still preserved and have been declared assets of historical and cultural interest and now houses several universities, libraries and museums. Those steep stone streets of La Candelaria, which seem to reach the sky, have seen the history of the country go by and you will learn about it from our guides.

Accommodation at Blue Suites Hotel





Golden-bellied Starfrontlet by Trevor Ellery

DAY 3

Birding at Chicaque Park and flight to Cartagena

Chicaque Natural Park is a protected area located southwest of the savannah of Bogotá at 2700 m.a.s.l. (8858 feet) and is the first private natural reserve in Colombia. The reserve has hummingbird's feeders where it is possible to see the near-endemic Golden-bellied Starfrontlet, plus some other high-elevation jewels as White-bellied Woodstar and Glowing Puffleg. We also going to walk this gorgeous Cloud-forest where we expect to find Scarlet-bellied Mountain-tanager, Black-capped, Supercilliated and Black-eared Hemispingus, Buff-breasted Mountain-tanager, Emerald Toucanet among

many others.

After lunch, we will take an internal flight towards Cartagena, in the Caribbean coast.

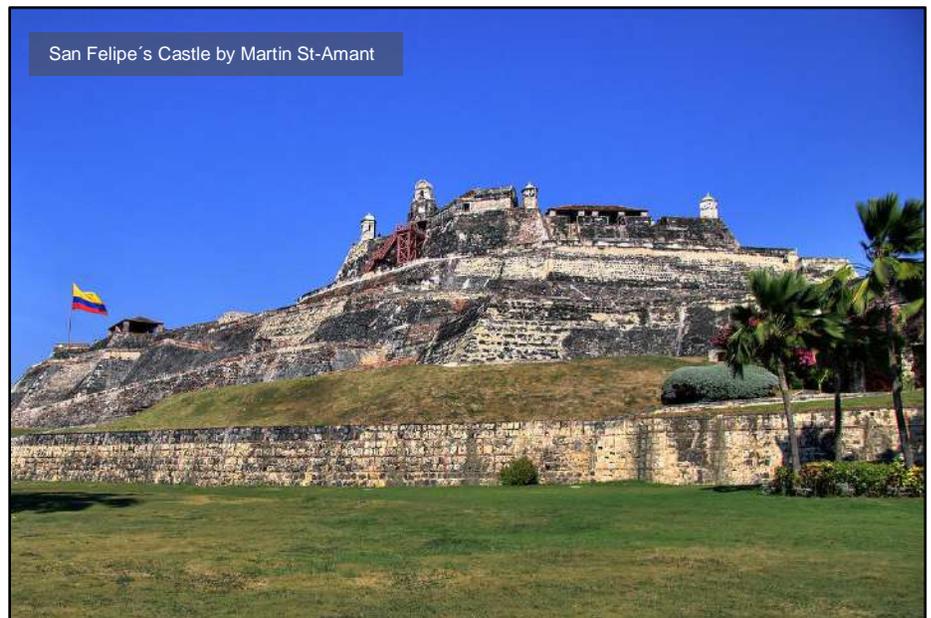
Accommodation at Cartagena.

DAY 4

Cartagena Historic city

Cartagena is a city founded as a major port in 1533, located on the northern coast of Colombia in the Caribbean Coast Region. It was strategically located between the Magdalena and Sinú rivers and became the main port for trade between Spain and its overseas empire, establishing its importance by the early 1540s. During the colonial era it was a key port for the export of Peruvian silver to Spain and for the import of African slaves. In order to defend it against pirate attacks in the Caribbean, great castles and walls were built throughout the city. Cartagena's colonial walled city and fortress were designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We will spend a full day visiting most of those buildings and learning about its fantastic history before start the way towards Barranquilla.



San Felipe's Castle by Martin St-Amant

DAY 5

Birding Isla Salamanca National Park and Barranquilla Area - Transfer to Minca

In the way towards Isla Salamanca National Park we will stop on the Barranquilla 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.

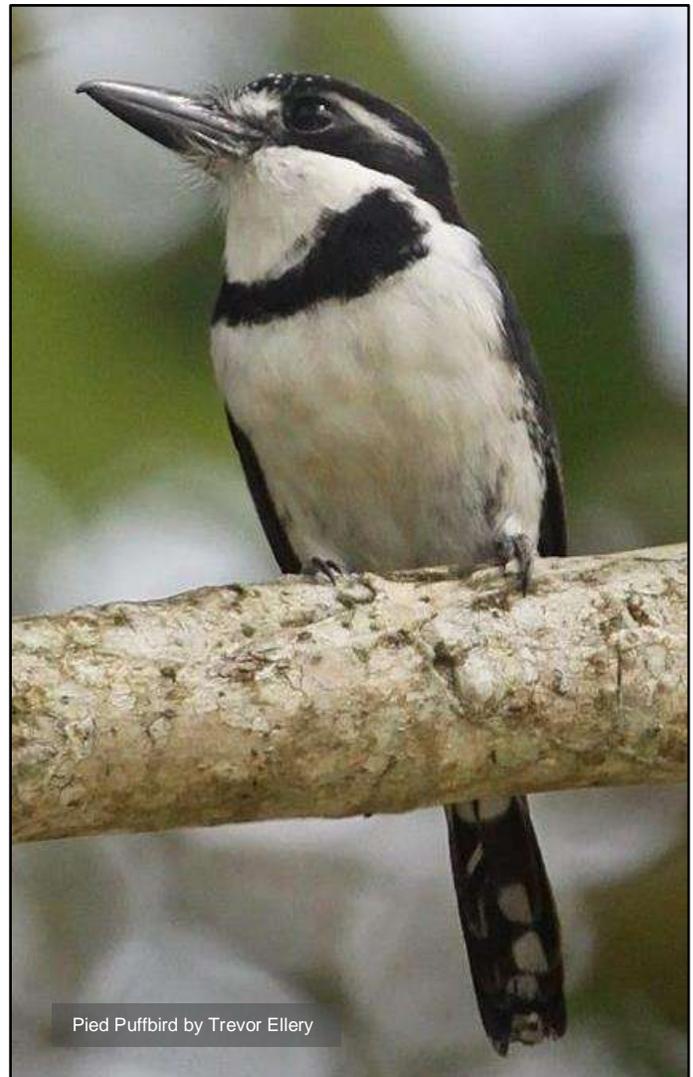
Most of the morning will be spent in the extensive wetlands and Mangroves of the Salamanca National Park east of Baranquilla. The Salamanca National Park is adjacent to the Ciénaga Grande, right in the middle of the Barranquilla- Santa Marta highway. It protects the most significant area of mangroves 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. We also hope to find a host of commoner species with everything from ubiquitous Great-tailed Grackles and Thick-billed Euhphonias to Magnificent Frigatebirds and Brown Pelicans soaring overhead.

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.

DAY 6

Birding the road towards El Dorado 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.





Santa-marta Toucanet by Roger Rodriguez Ardila

In the way up, we will make one stop at one of the oldest coffee farms in Colombia founded in 1892, called Hacienda La Victoria, there you will learn about how the best coffee in the world is planted, harvested, processed and sold.

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

DAY 7

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.



White-tailed Starfrontlet by Roger Rodriguez Ardila

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

DAY 8

Morning birding at El Dorado and Transfer to Tayrona Area

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 La Jorará (Tayrona National Park area)



Santa-Marta Brushfinch by Roger Rodriguez Ardila



Russet-throated Puffbird by Roger Rodriguez Ardila

DAY 9

Full day at Los Flamencos Flora and Fauna Sanctuary

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.

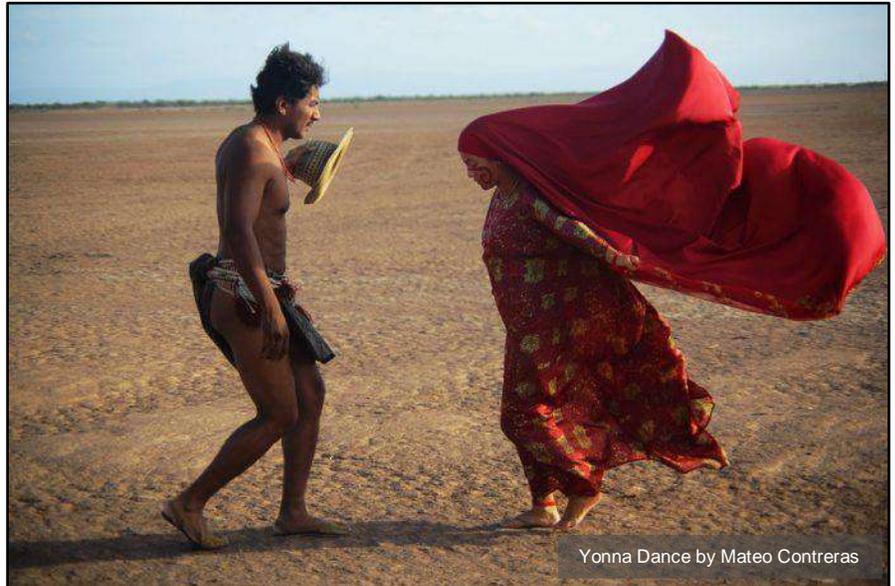
The surrounding xerophytic scrub habitat is the natural habitat of very attractive regional specialties as the amazing Vermillion Cardinal, Orinocan Saltator, Buffy Hummingbird, Russet-throated Puffbird, Bare-eyed Pigeon, Chestnut Piculet, Slender-billed Inezia, White-whiskered Spinetail, Pileated Finch, 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.

DAY 10

Traditional dancing show and flight to Bogotá

The Wayuus or guajiros, are aborigines from the peninsula of La Guajira, on the Caribbean Sea, inhabiting territories of Colombia and Venezuela. Although the contact with the European conquerors dates from the 16th century, the wayús were not conquered until the independence of Colombia and Venezuela. This was influenced both by indigenous resistance and by the harsh environmental conditions of the desert, which served as a refuge for the Wayús. The different daily activities, festivities and rituals widely imply the use of traditional music. The work of grazing is accompanied by music produced by flutes or canutillas, whistles made of elements of the environment such as dried lemon are used in livestock activities. The indigenous yocna or yonna dance is used in celebrations related to the development of women and involves steps where she advances in defiance of the man, who recoils trying not to fall. You can enjoy of watching them doing this tradicional dances the last day before take a flight back to Bogotá.



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