



**COSTA RICA BIRDING TOUR: COSTA RICA ESCAPE,
PART II**

21 FEBRUARY – 01 MARCH 2026



*Yellow-eared Toucanet, one of the top birds we expect to find during our exciting tour (photo
Vernon Campos).*

Our Costa Rica Escape, Part II birding tour is designed to provide you with a fantastic neotropical birding experience in a true birder's paradise. This trip focusses on the Caribbean slope, offering participants a four-night stay at the famous El Arenal Observatory Lodge from which we will explore the area's many exciting birding hotspots. We will also visit Heliconias Lodge which will give us the opportunity (for the first time on our Costa Rica fixed departure tours) to see the most-wanted and hard-to-find **Tody Motmot**. The trip will start in the third week of February, to coincide with the **Three-wattled Bellbird** lekking season, as we want to ensure that participants can enjoy this iconic and most-wanted species.

This short nine-day Costa Rica birding tour is just the perfect excuse to escape the cold northern winter and explore the Caribbean foothills where we will target species such as **Yellow-eared Toucanet, Keel-billed Toucan, Three-wattled Bellbird, Thicket Antpitta, Blue-and-gold Tanager, Sharpbill, Great Curassow, Emerald Tanager, Prong-billed Barbet, Keel-billed Motmot** and with luck, **Ornate Hawk-Eagle**.

The tour includes two exciting boat trips to look for specials such as **Nicaraguan Seed Finch** and **Nicaraguan Grackle** and other top aquatic species. These boat trips will be a particular delight for any first-time neotropical birders as you will likely be entertained by **Boat-billed Heron, Jabiru, Sunbittern, Sungrebe, Yellow-breasted Crake, Pinnated** and **Least Bitterns** and if we are lucky, the elusive **Agami Heron**.

The tour will then end with two nights at Heliconias Lodge where we will look for **Tody Motmot** and other special birds of the area. This Costa Rica birding tour offers you a great selection of birds and top-notch logistics which will all make for a memorable experience. This tour can be done as a standalone tour or can be combined with **Costa Rica Escape, Part I**.

Itinerary (9 days/8 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in San José and transfer to the hotel

You will arrive at the San José International Airport to be met by your Birding Ecotours leader, and then transfer to our hotel in San José. If time permits, we may do some birding around the beautiful hotel grounds looking for **Rufous-backed Wren, Hoffmann's Woodpecker, Finsch's Parakeet, Baltimore Oriole, Squirrel Cuckoo, Cinnamon-bellied Saltator, American Yellow Warbler, Lesson's Motmot, White-winged Dove, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, Clay-colored Thrush, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Melodious Blackbird, Great-tailed Grackle**, and with some luck, **White-eared Ground Sparrow** and **Mottled Owl** which has a daytime roost in the hotel garden.

Overnight: Hotel Bougainvillea, San José

Day 2. Exploring San Ramon and the Bogarín Reserve and transfer to Arenal Lodge

We will explore the hotel grounds before breakfast, looking for some of the birds described above, and after breakfast, we will head to the nearby forests of San Ramon where we will look for one of the top targets of the trip, **Three-wattled Bellbird**. This iconic species leks in the area at this

time of the year and we hope to get some good encounters with this amazing-looking bird. Other birds we expect to find here include **Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush**, **White-crowned Parrot**, **Brown Jay**, **Blue-throated Toucanet**, **Ochraceous Wren**, **Prong-billed Barbet**, **Spotted Barbtail**, **Chestnut-capped Brushfinch**, **Chestnut-capped Warbler**, **Tawny-capped Euphonia**, and if we are lucky, **Azure-hooded Jay**.



Three-wattled Bellbird is one of our top targets of the trip (photo Ramon Fernandez).

Later we will continue our drive towards La Fortuna and visit the Bogarín Reserve a popular private reserve in the area famous for its **Brown-throated Sloths** which we will have the opportunity to enjoy as well. In addition we have good chances of seeing **White-collared Manakin**, **Streak-headed Woodcreeper**, **Smoky-brown Woodpecker**, the elusive duo of **White-throated** and **Uniform Crakes** and with luck, **Black-and-white Owl** at a daytime roost. Later in the day, we will arrive at El Arenal Observatory Lodge and Trails which we will use as our base for the next three nights.

Overnight: El Arenal Lodge



*The elusive **Ornate Hawk-Eagle** in the Arenal area (photo Brandon Welch).*

Day 3. Birding El Arenal and the Costa Rica Sky Adventure Park

We will have a predawn start to enjoy some of the feeders at El Arenal Lodge where the first birds to arrive are usually **Crested Guan**, **Grey-headed Chachalaca** and **Great Curassow** as well as tanager species such as the handsome **Emerald Tanager** along with **Blue-grey**, **Palm**, **Golden-hooded**, **Bay-headed** and **Scarlet-rumped Tanagers**.

We will then leave the lodge and head to the Costa Rica Sky Adventure Park which offers the chance for visitors to go zip-lining over the forest. This is an interesting site to look for birds and allows us to use hanging bridges to access primary montane forest, ensuring unique views of the canopy. Here we will look for **Russet Antshrike**, **Sharpbill**, **Yellow-eared Toucanet** and with some luck, **Blue-and-gold Tanager**. The park can be good for raptors too with species such as **White** and **Great Black Hawks** and **Swallow-tailed Kite** all possible. On previous trips here we have been lucky to get stunning views of the majestic **Ornate Hawk-Eagle**. The understory is good for tough-to-see species such as **Thicket Antpitta**, **Tawny-faced Gnatwren**, **Ochre-bellied Flycatcher**, and **Carmioli's Tanager**.

In the afternoon we will enjoy the surroundings of El Arenal looking for **Keel-billed Motmot**, **White-fronted Nunbird**, **Gartered Trogon**, and **Keel-billed Toucan**.

Overnight: El Arenal Lodge



The stunning Keel-billed Toucan is always a pleasure to see (photo Vernon Campos).

Day 4. El Arenal Lodge

Today we will have the full day to explore El Arenal Lodge's trails and have time for some relaxed birding around the gardens. We will put in special efforts to look for army ant swarms that may provide flocks of army ant followers such as **Ocellated Antbird** and the mythical **Rufous-vented Ground Cuckoo**. Other forest birds that we will be on the lookout for include **Spotted** and **Dusky Antbirds**, **White-flanked Antwren**, **Stripe-breasted Wren** and the elusive **Song Wren**.

In the afternoon we will further enjoy the gardens looking for **Black-crested Coquette**, **Golden-olive Woodpecker**, **Long-tailed Tyrant**, **Scarlet-thighed Dacnis**, **Red-legged Honeycreeper** and **Scale-crested Pygmy Tyrant**.

Overnight: [El Arenal Lodge](#)

Day 5. El Arenal, Medio Queso and transfer to Caño Negro

After spending the last morning birding around the lodge we will leave and head towards Medio Queso Lake near the Nicaraguan border. Here we will enjoy a boat trip that offers a lot of special birds including **Nicaraguan Seed Finch** and **Nicaraguan Grackle**. We will have the opportunity to see **Least** and **Pinnated Bitterns** — this must rank as one of the best areas to see both species alongside each other. We will likely see plenty of aquatic bird species too, such as **Blue-winged Teal**, **Pied-billed Grebe**, **Northern Jacana**, **Bare-throated Tiger Heron**, **Anhinga**, **Black-necked Stilt**, **Black-collared Hawk**, **Green Ibis**, **Roseate Spoonbill** and some secretive species such as **Yellow-breasted** and **White-throated Crakes** and **Sora**. Further exciting species include **Slaty Spinetail**, **Canebrake Wren**, **Grey-crowned Yellowthroat**, and **Olive-throated Parakeet**, amongst many others.

Later that afternoon we will head towards Refugio Caño Negro where we will arrive in the early evening.

Overnight: Natural Lodge Caño Negro



*The most-wanted **Sungrebe** is one of the targets at Caño Negro (photo Paul Newman).*

Day 6. Caño Negro and transfer to Heliconias Lodge

Today we will explore the Refugio Caño Negro having a morning boat ride to look for as many birds as possible and focus on some targets such as the most-wanted **Sungrebe**, **Muscovy Duck**, **Grey-headed Chachalaca**, **Limpkin**, **Jabiru**, **Wood Stork**, **Boat-billed Heron**, **American Pygmy Kingfisher**, **Spot-breasted Wren**, **Great** and **Barred Antshrikes** and if we are lucky, we may find the elusive **Bare-crowned Antbird** and the sought-after **Agami Heron**. After we have finished our morning boat ride, we will transfer to Heliconias Lodge for our two-night stay.

Overnight: Heliconias Lodge

Day 7. Heliconias Lodge

We will spend a full day birding and exploring this lodge and the adjacent Tapir Valley looking for **Ocellated Antbird**, **Northern Barred** and **Ruddy Woodcreepers**, **Long-tailed Manakin**, **Canivet's Emerald**, **Rufous-winged Tanager**, **Brown-hooded Parrot**, **Black-eared Wood Quail**, **Streak-crowned Antvireo**, **Rufous Mourner**, **Yellow-green Vireo**, **Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser**, **Black-faced Anthrush**, **Stub-tailed Spadebill** and **Tody Motmot**. If we are lucky, we could find the most-wanted **Snowcap** and the elusive **Purplish-backed Quail-Dove**. There is

also a second chance for **Yellow-eared Toucanet** and at night it is possible to hear and find **Crested Owl**.

Overnight: Heliconias Lodge



*The secretive and exquisite **Tody Motmot** will be our primary target at Heliconias Lodge (photo Alvaro Bullerez).*

Day 8. Heliconias and transfer back to San José

After a last morning's birding at Heliconias Lodge we will be transferred to San José to Hotel Robledal where we can relax in the afternoon or enjoy the garden looking for some of the last birds of the trip. Noteworthy species here include **Ferruginous Pygmy Owl** and **Plain-capped Starthroat**. We will then enjoy our final dinner together as a group before our flights home tomorrow.

Overnight: Hotel Robledal

Day 9. Transfer to the airport

Today you will be transferred to the San José International Airport to connect with your international flights home.

Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.

Duration:	9 days
Group Size:	6 - 8
Dates:	21 February – 01 March 2026
Start:	San José, Costa Rica
End:	San José, Costa Rica
Prices:	US\$4,872 per person sharing, based on 6-8 tour participants (2026)
Single Supplements:	US\$780 (2026)

Price includes:

All accommodation
Land transportation
River transportation
All meals (from dinner on Day 1 until breakfast on Day 9)
Tour leader
Local guides
Admission fees
Transfers airport/hotel/airport
Water in the bus for all days in the field

Price excludes:

All flights
Medical and trip cancelation insurance
Personal expenses such as laundry, drinks, beverages and alcoholic drinks Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))
Any activity not described in the itinerary
Early check-ins and late check-outs