



COLOMBIA BIRDING TOUR: SANTA MARTA ESCAPE

01-11 DECEMBER 2025

01-11 DECEMBER 2026



The range-restricted “Perija Parakeet,” regarded as a subspecies of the more widespread Painted Parakeet by some authorities, is one of many exciting targets on this tour (photo Cristian Manrique).

Our new 11-day Colombia: Santa Marta Escape birding tour offers a unique birding experience in northern Colombia, centered around the endemic-rich Santa Marta Mountains. This tour will likely appeal to those seeking an introduction to birding in Colombia (or the neotropics, for that matter) and to more hardcore and experienced birders hoping to see the range-restricted endemics of this region. The imposing Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is an isolated mountain range, entirely separated from the Andes and reaching an elevation of over 18,700 feet (5,700 meters)! Given the isolation of these mountains and their proximity to the Caribbean coast (approximately 25 miles (40 kilometers)), endemism is rife here, with no fewer than 19 endemic birds! As a result, this is one of those obligatory destinations for any serious global birder.



*The striking **Santa Marta Mountain Tanager** is endemic to Colombia's Santa Marta Mountains.*

For over a decade, we've been leading successful tours to this diverse part of the country as part of our comprehensive Colombia tours. On this itinerary, we aim to spend more time in the region, allowing us to target additional species that are not usually feasible due to time constraints on our comprehensive Colombia tours.

Our tour will start in Bogotá, the capital of Colombia. From Bogotá, we will take a domestic flight to Valledupar, the capital of the state of Cesar in northern Colombia. From here, we will explore the Serrania de Perijá, an area created by the Andes before they end in western Venezuela. With new accommodation facilities in the area, it is now possible to bird this reserve and search for several regional endemics, including **Perija Tapaculo**, **Perija Metaltail**, **Perija Starfrontlet**, **Perija Thistletail** and **Perija Brushfinch**. We will also look for the scarce "**Perija Parakeet**" (still considered conspecific with Painted Parakeet by some taxonomic authorities).

Later, we will have the chance to spend a couple of days in the deciduous coastal scrub of Guajira, where we will look for several targets, including **Vermilion Cardinal**, **Orinoco Saltator**, **Buffy Hummingbird**, **White-whiskered Spinetail**, **Chestnut Piculet**, **Scarlet Ibis**, **Double-striped Thick-knee** and the secretive **Tocuyo Sparrow**.



*The beautiful **Vermilion Cardinal** is one of the star birds of the Guajira coastal scrub.*

Our next stop is the Santa Marta Mountains, where we will explore the lower section above the town of Minca in the hopes of finding **Santa Marta Tapaculo** and **Santa Marta Foliage-gleaner**. After hopefully cleaning up these two targets, we will make our way up to around 9,840 feet (3,000 meters) elevation where most of the specials, including **Santa Marta Parakeet**, **Santa Marta Warbler**, **Santa Marta Screech Owl**, **White-tipped Quetzal**, **Golden-breasted Fruiteater**, **Santa Marta Antpitta** and **Santa Marta Mountain Tanager** await us.

We will have awe-inspiring views over the Caribbean coast (especially at sunrise and sunset) from our accommodation, where we will also have the chance to enjoy several hummingbirds and other species at the feeders.

Finally, we will end the trip exploring the surroundings of Barranquilla, where it is possible to see several wetland and mangrove specials, such as **Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird** and scrub specials like **Chestnut-winged Chachalaca**.

Itinerary (11 days/10 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Bogotá

After arriving in Bogotá, we will transfer to our comfortable hotel in the city.

Overnight: Courtyard by Marriot

Day 2. Flight to Valledupar and transfer to RN Chamicero de Perijá

Today, we will make our way back to the airport in Bogotá and fly to the city of Valledupar, from where we will have access to the Chamicero de Perijá private reserve, a ProAves reserve with accommodation and facilities to explore the Perijá Mountains. This area hosts five localized species that occur only here and in adjacent northwestern Venezuela, including the endangered **Perija Thistletail**. The other main targets here are **Perija Metaltail**, **Perija Starfrontlet**, **Perija Tapaculo** and **Perija Brushfinch**. We will spend the next few days exploring this area as an introduction to northern Colombia.

Overnight: RN Chamicero de Perijá



Santa Marta Woodstar – one of the many Santa Marta specials we will be searching for on this tour.

Day 3. Full day birding at RN Chamicero de Perijá

We will have a full day birding the Perijá region, looking for eastern Andean species including **Rufous Spinetail**, **Crimson-mantled Woodpecker**, **Golden-headed Quetzal**, **Barred Fruiteater**, **Red-crested Cotinga**, **White-throated Tyrannulet**, **Yellow-billed Cacique**, **Yellow-breasted** and **Slaty Brushfinches**, **Black-crested Warbler**, **Tyrian Metaltail**, **Longuemare's Sunangel**, **Andean Siskin**, **Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia**, **Chestnut-bellied Thrush**, **Buff-breasted Mountain Tanager**, **Plushcap**, **Lazuline Sabrewing**, **Streaked Tuftedcheek** and **Golden-bellied Flycatcher**. Our main targets for the day will include **Black-fronted Wood Quail**, **Perija Brushfinch**, **Perija Metaltail**, **Perija Starfrontlet**, **Perija Tapaculo** and **Perija Antpitta**.



*The striking **Plushcap** will be on the target list at RN Chamicero de Perijá.*

Nocturnal birding in the reserve is often productive, and we may see **White-throated Screech Owl**, **Rufous-banded Owl**, **Andean Pygmy Owl** and **Band-winged Nightjar**.

Overnight: RN Chamicero de Perijá

Day 4. RN Chamicero de Perijá and transfer to La Jagua

We will spend the morning searching for any outstanding targets at RN Chamicero de Perijá before making our way to La Jagua, where we will spend the night.

Overnight: Jagua Colonial

Day 5. La Jagua and transfer to Riohacha

Today, we will bird the deciduous habitat around La Jagua in search of the range-restricted and rare **Perija Parakeet** (note that this taxon is considered conspecific with the more widespread Painted Parakeet by some authorities). Later, we will continue to Riohacha, our base for the next two nights on the Caribbean coast. On the way, we will try for **Double-striped Thick-knee**.

Overnight: Hotel Taroa



Double-striped Thick-knee is possible near Riohacha.

Day 6. Full day birding Los Flamencos and Guajira

We will aim for an early start this morning to maximize our time at Los Flamencos and the dry coastal scrub of Guajira. Several range-restricted species are on the cards for us, as well as a few more widespread birds, and we will look for **Vermilion Cardinal**, **Orinoco Saltator**, **Buffy Hummingbird**, **Panama Flycatcher**, **Green-rumped Parrotlet**, **Pale-tipped** and **Slender-billed Inezias**, **Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant**, **Fulvous-crowned Scrub Tyrant**, **Venezuelan**

Flycatcher, Bare-eyed Pigeon, Rufous-vented Chachalaca, Crested Bobwhite and the shy Tocuyo Sparrow.

The wetlands, mangroves, and alkaline mudflats may yield **American White Ibis, Yellow-crowned Night Heron** and possibly **Scarlet Ibis**. During the boreal winter, it is possible to see masses of waders here, and we hope to see **American Flamingo** as well.

Overnight: Hotel Taroa

Day 7. Las Gaviotas and transfer to Minca

We will depart Riohacha this morning, picking up birds like **Glaucous Tanager, Bronze-brown Cowbird** and **Double-striped Thick-knee** en route to our next stop. We plan to explore the Las Gaviotas track, where we will look for the splendid **Lance-tailed Manakin** in addition to **Double-striped Thick-knee, Pale-eyed Pygmy Tyrant, Bright-rumped Attila, Northern White-fringed** and **White-flanked Antwrens, Black-backed Anthshrike, Southern Bentbill** and the distinctive **White-whiskered Spinetail**. After birding at Las Gaviotas, we will arrive in Minca in the afternoon – our base to explore the lower parts of the Santa Marta Mountains. Time permitting, some participants may elect to rest until dinnertime. The area may produce **Black-and-white Owl**, which is occasionally seen at a day roost.

Overnight: Minca



*We hope to see the colorful **Yellow-crowned Whitestart** in the Santa Marta Mountains.*

Day 8. Full day birding the Santa Marta Mountains

Today, we will bird the area above Minca, which may produce **Keel-billed Toucan**, **Groove-billed Toucanet**, **Scaled Piculet**, **Golden-winged Sparrow**, the secretive **Rosy Thrush-tanager**, **Rusty-breasted Antpitta** and the elusive **Santa Marta Tapaculo** and **Santa Marta Foliage-gleaner**. Other birds we may encounter this morning include **Black-chested Jay**, **Black-capped Tanager**, **Yellow-legged Thrush**, **Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush**, **Rufous-and-white** and **Rufous-breasted Wrens**, **Santa Marta Antbird**, **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, **Mountain Elaenia**, **Coopman's Tyrannulet** and warblers such as **American Redstart** and **Tennessee Warbler**.



*The beautiful and secretive **Rosy Thrush-tanager** will be searched for in the Santa Marta Mountains.*

After arriving at our accommodation at Mountain House Bird Lodge, we will spend the afternoon enjoying the gardens and hummingbird feeders, which may produce several hummingbird species from the common **Crowned Woodnymph** and **Brown Violetear** to the scarcer **Santa Marta Blossomcrown**, **Santa Marta Woodstar**, **Sooty-capped Hermit** and **Pale-bellied Hermit**. Other birds often seen around the lodge include **Collared Aracari**, **Chestnut-capped Warbler**, **Sickle-winged Guan**, **Black-capped Tyrannulet**, **Gartered Trogon**, **Whooping Motmot**, **Plain Xenops** and the endemic **Yellow-crowned Whitestart**.

Overnight: Mountain House Bird Lodge



*The Endangered and endemic **Santa Marta Parakeet** is one of many targets on our morning at San Lorenzo Ridge.*

Day 9. San Lorenzo Ridge

We will have a predawn start today as we make our way up to the San Lorenzo Ridge, located at 9,400 feet (2,800 meters) elevation in the Santa Marta Mountains. We will be sure to take in the spectacular sunrise, and after a packed breakfast, we will have a few hours to find all of the higher-elevation endemics. Our main targets will include **Santa Marta Warbler**, **Rusty-headed Spinetail**, **Sierra Nevada Brushfinch**, **Santa Marta Brushfinch**, **Santa Marta Mountain Tanager**, **Santa Marta Parakeet**, **Santa Marta** and **Sierra Nevada Antpittas** and **Brown-rumped Tapaculo**. Other birds worth looking out for are **Streak-capped Spinetail** and **Black-backed Thornbill**, while hummingbird feeders may produce the endemic **White-tailed Starfrontlet** and the more widespread **Lazuline Sabrewing**.

In the afternoon, we will enjoy more leisurely birding in search of **Golden-breasted Fruiteater** and **White-tipped Quetzal**. We will dedicate most of our time to finding the endemic and recently described **Santa Marta Screech Owl**, which we may even find on a day roost.

Overnight: Mountain House Bird Lodge

Day 10. Santa Marta Mountains and transfer to Barranquilla

After a relaxed start, we will return to the coast and head south to Barranquilla, where we will have time to look for some coastal species, such as the endemic **Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird** and

wintering **Prothonotary Warblers**. The wetlands near Barranquilla will likely produce several trip birds such as **Stripe-backed Wren**, **Yellow-chinned Spinetail**, **White-headed Marsh Tyrant**, **Black-collared Hawk**, **Snail Kite**, **Golden-green Woodpecker**, **Bicolored Conebill**, **Great-tailed Grackle**, **Ringed and Green Kingfishers**, **Ferruginous Pygmy Owl**, **Greater Ani** and **Grey-cowled Wood Rail** among others. Before sunset, we will look for the endemic **Chestnut-winged Chachalaca** at their roost.

We will spend the night at a comfortable hotel in Barranquilla and conclude what is sure to be a highly rewarding trip.



*The poorly known **Santa Marta Screech Owl** was only recently described to science.*

Day 11. Transfer to Barranquilla Airport to connect with international flights

After ten days of birding in northern Colombia, we will transfer to Barranquilla Airport to connect with our respective domestic and international flights.

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 guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling or other factors.

Duration:	11 days
Group size:	4-8
Dates:	01-11 December 2025 01-11 December 2026
Start:	Bogotá
End:	Barranquilla
Prices:	US\$5,990 per person sharing, based on 4-8 participants (2025) US\$6,650 per person sharing, based on 4-8 participants (2026)
Single Supplement:	US\$640 US\$710

Price includes:

All accommodation
All meals
Entrance fees
Private transportation
Private tour leader
Transfers from/to the airport

Price excludes:

International and domestic flights
Personal expenses such as laundry, drinks and alcoholic drinks, personal items, phone calls, internet access, etc.
Gratuities (please see our tipping guidelines blog)
Medical and trip cancellation insurance
Any activity not described in the itinerary