



2027

EcoTravel

Overnight Natural History Tours and Day Trips

Colombia: Central Andes and Santa Marta

January 16 – 27, 2027



Overview

For many years, travel to Colombia was heavily restricted due to civil war. However, since the peace deal in 2016, birding tourism has blossomed as visitors began to explore the vast, untouched regions previously inaccessible due to conflict.

Roughly twice the size of Texas, the landscape varies from the snow-capped mountains of the country's interior to the Amazon rainforest and coastal beaches. With over 1,900 bird species, over 80 of which are found nowhere else in the world, Colombia easily sits in first place and ranks second in the world in total biodiversity, behind only Brazil.

Our adventure begins outside the city of Pereira, in the foothills of the Andes. Here, we'll venture through the cloud forest and into the paramo, searching high and low for a variety of skulking species that surprisingly visit local feeders. Vibrant species, including Multicolored Tanager, also visit fruit feeders in the area, while hummingbird feeders are host to territorial battles between woodstars, incas, velvetbreasts, violetears, and many more. Since we'll be in the "Coffee Axis" region of Colombia, we'll be sure to experience a local farm and learn just how important coffee is.

The second half of the trip will bring us north to the Caribbean coastline, where we'll make our way towards the world-famous Santa Marta Mountains. Isolated from the Andes by lowland forest, the mountains tower over the local beaches. Stewarded by indigenous people and at constant threat from development and farming, the mountains here are home to over 20 endemic species of birds alone.

Climate

Temperature and Season

While located close to the Equator, climate in Colombia is heavily varied due to elevation. Evenings may be as cold as upper 40s, while daytime temperatures in the mountains rarely exceed 80. Overcast skies and scattered rainshowers are a near-daily experience, and should be expected. Along the coastline, temperatures can easily approach 90 degrees with humidity. Proper precautions, including regular hydration, are key.

Elevation

0 – 13,000 feet above sea level

Accommodation

Our hotels are comfortable and local, with the exception of one night near the airport at an established chain. Hotels high in the mountains lack air conditioning, as evening temperatures are cool and comfortable. As with all trips to the tropics, humidity can be expected, especially in lowland areas.

Pace and Physical Difficulty

This trip is spread between two major parts of the country, and include an in-country flight. Ample feeder setups can be expected, allowing for excellent photography opportunities. Because of the wide range in elevation, travelers should plan accordingly and carry altitude sickness remedies with them. Forest birding on trails may be difficult at times due to dense foliage. Some roads may be rough and bumpy.



Itinerary

Day 1

We'll depart our home airports in the early morning, aiming to arrive in Pereira in the mid-afternoon. After transferring to our hotel, we'll have time to relax before a Welcome Dinner and introductions where we'll discuss the plans for the days ahead.

Night: Hotel Mandalay

Meals: D

Day 2

14 miles from the city of Pereira lies Otún Quimbaya Sanctuary, nestled amidst the picturesque western flank of the Central Mountain Range. The sanctuary encompasses an impressive 90% of protected natural forests in different states of succession and mature forests. A top spot for birdwatching, the sanctuary contains species accounting for 16% of all birds reported in Colombia. In the early morning we'll take a walk along an open, quiet road to connect with several sought-after birds. The sanctuary is considered one of, if not the, best place to find **Cauca Guan** (E). Other endemics found on the property include the iconic **Multicolored Tanager** (E) and the unique **Crested Ant-Tanager** (E). We'll also keep our eyes out for **Red-ruffed Fruitcrow**, **Andean Motmot**, **Northern Chestnut-breasted Wren**, **Golden-headed Quetzal**, **Wattled Guan**, **Black-billed Peppershrike**, and **Rufous-naped Greenlet**. Otún Quimbaya is also well known for being the best site to see the mysterious Mountain Tapir.

After lunch, we'll head towards the charming city of Manizales. Along the way, we'll make strategic stops to admire the beauty of a nearby cascading river, where we might be fortunate enough to spot remarkable species such as **Torrent Duck** and **White-capped Dipper**, among others.

Night: Hacienda El Bosque

Meals: BLD

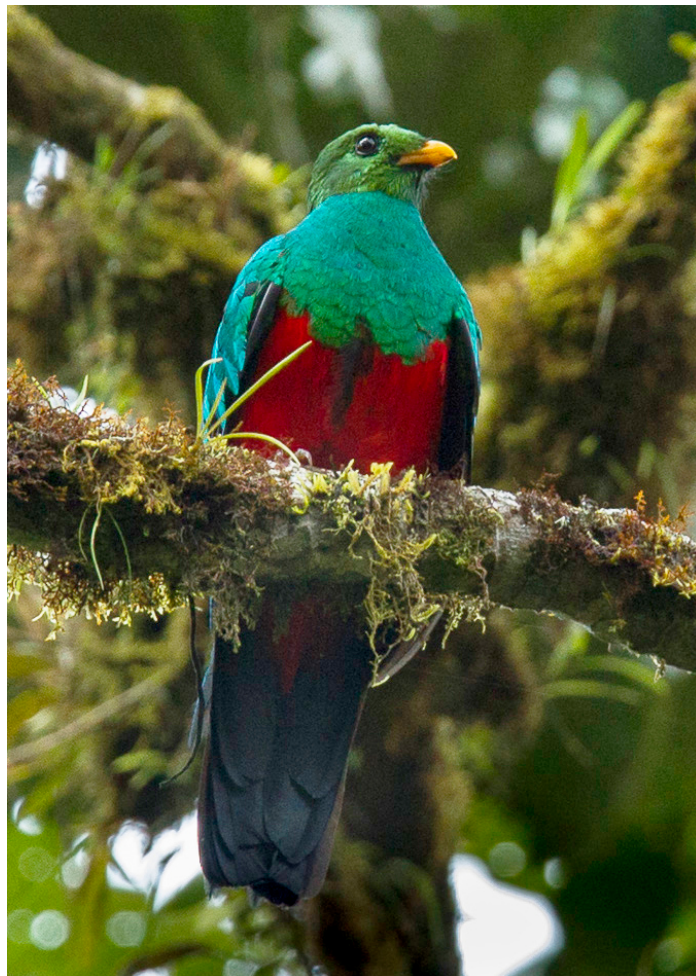
Day 3

Río Blanco is one of the best birding sites in Colombia, particularly for skulking species. As the first birding location in Colombia to develop feeders for antpittas, it's a must-visit destination for those eager to observe these elusive birds up close. Located just to the northeast of Manizales, the reserve spans elevations from 7,050 to 12,140 feet a.s.l. and consists of highly biodiverse cloud forest, home to numerous endangered species. With 362 species, including 13 Colombian endemics, this area offers an incredible birding experience.

We'll begin the day with the local warden guiding us to a feeding area, where we can enjoy close views of the once almost impossible **Brown-banded Antpitta** (E). **Chestnut-crowned Antpitta** is often more cooperative as the day unfolds, and we also have good chances of spotting **Bicolored** and **Slate-crowned antpittas**. Other species we'll search for include **Green-and-black Fruiteater**, **Ash-colored Tapaculo**, **Ocellated Tapaculo**, and **Gray-browed**



Torrent Duck © Charles J. Sharp CC BY 4.0



Golden-headed Quetzal © Francesco Veronesi CC BY-SA 2.0



Multicolored Tanager © Anthony Batista CC BY 4.0

Brushfinch. Further searching may reveal **Black-collared Jay**, **Bar-bellied** and **Crimson-mantled woodpeckers**, and **Lacrimose Mountain Tanager**. Additionally, several species of hummingbirds can be observed throughout the reserve, including the **Tourmaline Sunangel**, **Long-tailed Sylph**, and **Buff-tailed Coronet**.

Night: Hacienda El Bosque
Meals: BLD

Day 4

The elfin forest and paramos of this massive park are home to endemic species, including the rare and local **Rufous-fronted Parakeet** (E). Starting in the elfin forests, we'll search for the parakeet, along with **Rainbow-bearded Thornbill**, **Viridian Metaltail**, **Golden-breasted** and **Black-thighed pufflegs**, and **Paramo Tapaculo**, while small roving flocks may include **Golden-fronted Redstart**, **Paramo Seedeater**, **White-browed Spinetail**, and **White-chinned Thistletail**. One of the highlights of this stunted mountainside is the delightful endemic **Buffy Helmetcrest** (E). Also, here should be the vocal and often showy **Tawny Antpitta**, alongside **Stout-billed Cinclodes**, **Crowned Chat-Tyrant**, and **Many-striped Canastero**.

Night: Hacienda El Bosque
Meals: BLD

Day 5

Hacienda El Bosque is a traditional Andean estate located just 30 minutes from Manizales, offering an incredible mix of bird diversity and breathtaking landscapes. Situated between 9,514 and 12,790 feet a.s.l., the hacienda encompasses high-Andean forests, páramo ecosystems, and pastures for livestock and dairy production. With over 40 years of forest conservation, this site has become a prime destination for observing high-altitude specialties.

One of the main highlights of Hacienda El Bosque is its feeder stations, which attract an outstanding variety of hummingbirds and tanagers. Here, we'll target species including **Collared Inca**, **White-bellied Woodstar**, **Mountain Velvetbreast**, **Sparkling** and **Lesser violetears**, and **Tyrian Metaltail**. Additionally, the highly sought-after **Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan** often makes an appearance. However, the true stars of Hacienda El Bosque are its antpitta feeders, which offer the rare opportunity to observe two of the most elusive species in the region: **Crescent-faced** and **Equatorial antpittas**.

Night: Tinamú
Meals: BLD

Day 6

Tinamú Reserve is a charming birding hotspot with well-maintained trails and numerous feeders just 30 minutes from Manizales. Nestled in a 12.5 hectare dry forest at 4,020 feet a.s.l., this reserve provides excellent opportunities to observe a diverse range of bird species. We'll search for several Colombian endemics, including the **Grayish Piculet** (E), **Colombian Chachalaca** (E), and **Parker's Antbird** (E). Other specialties include **Moustached**



Golden-fronted Redstart © Francesco Veronesi/CC BY-SA 2.0



Crescent-faced Antpitta © Ziegler/CC BY 4.0



Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan © Christoph Morning/CC BY 4.0

Puffbird, Blue-lored Antbird, Speckle-breasted Wren, and **Guira Tanager**. Additionally, the reserve offers a high chance of witnessing a lek of the **Golden-collared Manakin**, where males perform their fascinating courtship display. At the feeders, we can expect to see near-endemics like the **Western Emerald** and **Scrub Tanager**, alongside a variety of other hummingbirds and tanagers, including **Blue-necked Tanager** and **Andean Emerald**.

Since we'll be surrounded by coffee plantations throughout most of our journey, and Colombian coffee is often regarded as some of the highest quality on the planet, we can't miss the opportunity to be immersed in a coffee experience at Venecia farm. We'll learn about the origin and history of coffee, the worldwide distribution, and the different coffee varieties and qualities, as well as about the aromas and properties of coffee and the Coffee Cultural Landscape (UNESCO World Heritage Site). The tour continues with a walk through the plantation to learn more about the growing and harvesting of coffee beans. After picking our own beans, we'll visit the wet mill to learn about coffee processing and marketing. We'll have the chance to taste and see the beans with different grades of roasting to experience the different aromas, as the roasting brings out the aroma and flavor that is locked inside.

Night: Tinamú
Meals: BLD

Day 7

In the early morning, we'll pack our bags and head to the airport in Pereira for an in-country flight to Barranquilla. After arriving, we'll spend the first hours in the Malecón of Barranquilla, where our main target will be **Northern Screamer**, a unique species that eats aquatic plants. We're sure to see a few common species as well.

Night: Hotel Sheraton
Meals: BLD

Day 8

We'll visit the extensive wetlands and Mangroves of Salamanca National Park, to the east of Baranquilla. 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 and offers good chances for the endemic and endangered **Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird** (E), while also being home to interesting species, including **Bicolored Conebill**, **Black-crested Antshrike**, **Dwarf Cuckoo**, **Yellow-chinned Spinetail**, and **Striped-backed Wren**. In the late morning, we'll start driving east through the park, expecting to stop and observe the concentrations of waders and terns that can often be found in roadside pools. In the late afternoon, we'll climb into the foothills of the Santa Marta Mountains.

Night: Mountain House
Meals: BLD

Day 9

Minca is a little village located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. The birding from below the village up to the shade-



Andean Emerald © Aralcal CC BY-SA 2.0



Dwarf Cuckoo © Alejandro Bayer Tamayo CC BY-SA 2.0



Bicolored Conebill © Ingeborg van Leeuwen CC BY 2.0

coffee plantations area encompasses a variety of different habitats which yield large numbers of birds, including near-endemics such as **Golden-winged Sparrow**, **Scaled Piculet**, and **Red-billed Emerald**, along with **Military Macaw**, **Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant**, and **Black-headed Tanager**. The restaurant feeders attract **White-vented Plumeleteer**, **Rufous-breasted Hermit**, **Steely-vented Hummingbird**, **White-necked Jacobin**, and **Black-throated Mango**.

Night: Mountain House
Meals: BLD

Day 10

The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, is an isolated mountain set apart from the Andes. Reaching an altitude of 18,942 feet a.s.l., the Sierra Nevada is the world's highest coastal peak and holds the highest degree of endemism per unit area in the world. Currently, there are 24 Santa Marta endemic bird species, although taxonomic changes are expected to increase this number. This breathtaking region is home to a dazzling array of endemic bird species, including some that are critically endangered, including the **Santa Marta Parakeet** (E). We'll look for the striking **Yellow-crowned Redstart** (E), the exquisite **Santa Marta Warbler** (E), the colorful **Black-cheeked Mountain Tanager** (E), and the elusive **Santa Marta Bush-Tyrant** (E).

We may even catch a glimpse of **Brown-rumped Tapaculo** (E), **Rusty-headed Spinetail** (E), and **Santa Marta Antpitta** (E), as well as the intriguing **Sierra Nevada Antpitta** (E), which was recently split. In the afternoon we'll watch out for the stunning **White-tailed Starfrontlet** (E), lively **Streak-capped Spinetail**, and **Santa Marta Brushfinch** (E) and numerous endemic subspecies.

Night: Mountain House
Meals: BLD

Day 11

With a wonderful view of the mountains and the Caribbean Sea in the subtropical area of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, we'll spend the morning birdwatching at Mountain House Lodge. Our goal for the day is to locate the elusive **Santa Marta Blossomcrown** (E), a beautiful bird that can only be found in a few particular garden setups. In the afternoon, we'll search for all the endemic species and subspecies that inhabit this elevation, including any specialties we may have missed.

Night: Mountain House
Meals: BLD

Day 12

We'll depart after breakfast for the drive back to Barranquilla, stopping for lunch on the way, in order to make our evening flights back home. With plenty of memories to talk about, the drive and flight should go by quickly!

Meals: BL



Black-throated Mango © Matthew Bell/CT Audubon



Black-cheeked Mountain Tanager © Nick Athanas CC BY 2.0



White-tailed Starfrontlet © Dick Culbert CC BY 2.0

General Information

Tour Cost: \$7,498.

Members: \$6,998.

The above cost is based upon a minimum number of six paying participants traveling together. If there are fewer participants, there will be a small group supplement. Per person Tour Cost is based on two people sharing a room.

Single Room Supplement: \$540.

All rates are calculated at the time of publication and are subject to change due to conditions out of our control (i.e. hotel rates). All passengers will be notified if changes in pricing occur.

Tour Includes:

Accommodations are based on double occupancy, one or two beds. Meals are included as outlined in the itinerary section (B=Breakfast/L=Lunch/D=Dinner). Additional charges for meals may apply if needs are out of the standard offerings. Entrance fees to national parks and sightseeing as specified in the itinerary.

Not Included:

Taxes; costs of obtaining passports and visas; airfare; baggage fees; personal expenses such as room service, beverages, laundry, gratuities for the local guide and housekeeping; personal communications; airport taxes; tax increases or new taxes charged for services that were not taxed at the time the booking was made; excess mileage carried out at the request of the passenger; sightseeing or meals not specified in the itinerary; personal insurance coverage (strongly recommended); and transfers to and from your home airport.

Leader

Matt Bell is a graduate of The Ohio State University with BS degrees in both earth sciences and evolution/ecology. He started birding in May 2013 and became more seriously involved after a trip to Costa Rica. Since then he helped revive The Ornithology Club at Ohio State and assisted as a volunteer guide for The Biggest Week in American Birding and the Yellow Rails and Rice Festival. He absolutely loves participating in citizen science, tour guiding, chasing rare birds in his free time, and meeting fellow birders from around the globe. Most of all, Matt enjoys sharing his passion for birds and conservation with others and never shies away at taking the time to help beginners start their explorations of the avian world. Matt is the Assistant Director of EcoTravel and leads day trips and overnight tours.



Golden-collared Manakin © Melissa McMasters CC BY 2.0



Mountain House



Scaled Piculet © Fernando Flores CC BY-SA 3.0

General Terms & Conditions

Reservations

Early reservations with deposit are essential to guarantee your booking. A **\$1,500 deposit, per person**, applicable to final payment, is required to reserve space on this trip. Reservations made within 120 days of departure require full payment along with the formal Registration Forms. Final payment for programs is due 120 days prior to departure. Payments can be made by personal check, money order, certified check, or a cashier's check.

Rates and Fares

Prices are accurate as available at the time of publication. Prices do not include airfare unless otherwise stated. The Connecticut Audubon Society (CAS) reserves the right to alter quoted prices to reflect changes in airline fares, land service, or currency exchange rates. In the event that the number of participants is below the minimum required for the quoted price, a small group surcharge may be added.

Cancellation and Insurance

At the time the EcoTravel Office receives written notice that you must cancel your trip, the following cancellation fees will apply: Prior to 120 days from departure, your payments will be refunded minus **\$500 per person**. At 120 days and less, no refund is granted. NOTE: In addition to cancellation fees, airline tickets and deposits required to guarantee hotel rooms may be nonrefundable. The purchase of a general travel insurance plan covering baggage, accident/life, and trip cancellation is highly recommended. Give us a call and we can put you in touch with those providers. CAS reserve the right, if registration is insufficient or other reasons out of our control, to cancel, postpone, or offer the trip with a small group supplement. In the event that CAS cancels or postpones, those with reservations will be notified as soon as possible and a credit of payments will be held on file. The Connecticut Audubon Society is not responsible for the refund or credit of additional expenses incurred in preparation for a trip. Any "delay" or "postponing" of departure by tour participants is considered a cancellation and cancellation parameters will be apply relative to the 120-day window. There are no exceptions.

Responsibility

Payment of deposit represents and acceptance of the following terms and conditions by the purchaser: The Connecticut Audubon Society, its affiliates, and all cooperating airlines and agencies act only in the capacity of agents in all matters of transportation and tour operations, and their liability is limited to the terms of the airline tickets and land accommodation contracts. They are not responsible for any delays, inconveniences, accidents, expense, or mishap of any kind whatsoever resulting entirely or in part from the negligence of others or from causes beyond their control. They can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, riot, war, pandemic, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses must be borne by the passengers, as the tour rate provides for arrangements only as describe in the tour brochure. The right is reserved to change tour leaders, substitute hotels, of similar category, and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by unforeseen circumstances. Baggage is at the owner's risk entirely. No refund can be made for unused hotel rooms, meals, and sightseeing tours unless arrangements are made at time of booking. The right is reserved to decline any person as a tour member for any reason which affects the operation of the tour or the rights, welfare, or enjoyment of the other tour members. Any refund of the recoverable land tour services in the limit of The Connecticut Audubon Society and its affiliates' liability.

To make a Reservation:

Send the above stated deposit to hold your reservation. Nonmembers, please add \$28 (65+), \$45 (single), or \$58 (family) for your annual membership and to take advantage of the member discount.

Send your name(s), address, phone number, email address, name of the trip, your deposit, and membership fee (if applicable) to:

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