



2025 Tropical Wings Costa Rica Birdathon

A Note from Surcos Tours: Travel Green, Travel Sustainable! During the years of working in tourism trying to create new jobs and looking for the best practices to benefit the environment, we have realized that the best way to protect nature is to help those who, with great efforts, have put into practice sustainable and responsible cultivation techniques even when they are not economically profitable. That is why we have changed the way we work and we want those who visit us to be part of the economic support that these families need to continue doing things well, through good practices to provide economic sustenance for their families and protect the environment.

Day 1 Friday February 28 Arrive San Jose

Arrive in San Jose where we will be shuttled from the airport to our first night's lodging. Arriving early/mid afternoon is ideal. The Hotel Bougainvillea has absolutely fabulous grounds to get in some great tropical bird watching. We can expect to see Plain Wrens, Rufous-naped Wrens, Hoffman's Woodpecker, White-winged Dove, Crimson-Fronted Parakeets, Grayish Saltators, Red-billed Pigeons, Brown Jays, as well as Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds. Those arriving before dinner can do some bird watching in the hotel's gardens and/or enjoy some pool time. We will have dinner in the hotel restaurant followed by an introduction to our trip, the birds and our daily routine. Overnight at **Hotel Bougainvillea** (www.hb.co.cr) *Dinner today through breakfast on day 14 are included in the trip. Breakfast day 15 also included.*

Day 2 Saturday March 1 Travel to La Selva Research Station

We will do a short walk around the hotel grounds before breakfast, gathering near sunrise (5:50 am) to start learning about the amazing birds of Costa Rica! We may see some of our neotropical migrants in addition to resident birds including Brown Jays and the national bird of Costa Rica, the Clay-colored Thrush. **Soon after breakfast we will begin our drive to La Selva Research Station**, on the

Caribbean side of the central volcanic mountain range. A quick stop for a snack at **Soda Cinchona** will be a perfect place to get our first looks at Emerald Toucanet, Violet Sabrewing, Crimson-collared Tanager, Prong-billed Barbet and Black-faced Grosbeaks at the restaurant's feeders. **We'll arrive at La Selva in time for lunch**, and after moving into our simple accommodations, we will have our first hike on the extensive network of paved and dirt trails (38 miles!) that provide easy access to the wide range of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. The species richness of La Selva is outstanding, with more than 2,077 species of plants; 125 species of mammals (72 of them bats); 470 species of birds; 48 amphibian species; 87 species of reptiles; 45 species of freshwater fish; and tens of thousands of insects, arachnids, and other arthropods. La Selva Research Station offers 4000 acres of well-preserved old-growth and recovering **wet lowland tropical forest** that abuts the Braulio Carrillo National Park. The 4 to 6 km wide forested corridor that connects La Selva at 115 feet above sea level to the Barva Volcano at 9500 feet is one of the best-preserved elevational gradients in the tropics. **Dinner at La Selva.** After dinner we will begin our nightly routine of adding the birds seen today to our checklist.

Overnight at La Selva Research Station

(<https://tropicalstudies.org/portfolio/la-selva-research-station/>)

Day 3 Sunday March 2 Caribbean Birding and Pierella Ecogarden

We meet for coffee/tea at 5:30 AM (5:49 sunrise) before our early morning bird hike. **After breakfast we will travel to Pierella Ecogarden and Butterfly Farm** where we may see Green, Shining and Red-legged Honeycreepers, Buff-throated Saltator, Gray-cowled Wood-rail, White-collared Manakin, and Black-cheeked Woodpecker. We will enter the butterfly house where we will interact with some of the 1,500 species of butterflies native to Costa Rica. We also have a great chance to observe the seldom seen Honduran white bat (*Ectophylla alba*), sloth, green tree frog and giant walking sticks. **We will have lunch at Pierella**, then return to La Selva for some rest and an afternoon hike on the trails where we might see Broad-billed Motmot, Rufous Motmot, Squirrel Cuckoo, Blue-chested Hummingbird, Scaly-breasted Hummingbird, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Collared Aracari, Chestnut-headed Oropendola, Keel-billed Toucan and if we're real lucky - a Great Green Macaw. **Dinner and overnight at La Selva Research Station.**

Day 4 Monday March 3 Talamanca Mountains/Drive to Paraiso Quetzal Lodge

We meet for coffee/tea and an early morning bird hike before having **breakfast at La Selva**. Packing up right after breakfast, we begin the four hour drive across the **Cordillera Volcánica Central** (central mountain range) noted for its volcanic activity, down through the central valley, and back up to our destination in the **Talamanca**

Mountains. The Cordillera de Talamanca contain the highest peaks of Costa Rica and Panama, among them Cerro Chirripó at 3,819 m (12,530 ft) above sea level. This range is a result of tectonic uplift and its separation from other mountain ranges has resulted in many endemic species of animals and plants. **We will arrive at Paraiso Quetzal Lodge in time for lunch.** After lunch we will enjoy the hummingbird viewing platform right outside the lodge restaurant, where we can see Fiery-throated, Talamanca, and Lesser Violetear hummingbirds. After moving into our cabins we will go hiking on the lodge's trail system which includes 600 year old primary forests in a stunningly beautiful montane habitat. Possible birds here include the Long-tailed Silky Flycatcher, Mountain Thrush, Collared Redstart, Wrenthrush, Speckled Tanager, Spangle-cheeked Tanager and Yellow-bellied Siskin. The lodge is located at an elevation of 8694', 40 degree temperatures overnight are common. The cabins have small space heaters and there is a cozy fireplace in the main lodge where we will gather in the evenings to do our checklists. This is the place for a down jacket, cozy layers and warm pjs! **Dinner and Overnight at Paraiso Quetzal Lodge** <https://www.paraisoquetzal.com/en/index.php>

Day 5 Tuesday March 4 Resplendent Quetzals!!!!

Today we leave by 5:00 am with our Quetzal guide to drive to a local farmers' land to search for the Resplendent Quetzal, the most sought after bird in Costa Rica. It will be cold in the early morning, layers, a warm jacket, hat and mittens will ward off the chill. Black-cheeked Warbler, Flame-throated Warbler, Black-billed Nightingale Thrush and Black-faced Solitaire may also be seen. After searching for the Quetzal, we will have **breakfast back at Paraiso Quetzals.** Mid-morning we will drive down to San Gerardo de Dota and the Savegre River (7200'), stopping for lunch at **Miriam's Restaurant.** In addition to delicious food, we will enjoy her bird feeders and gorgeous mountain views. We may see Scarlet-rumped Tanager, Acorn Woodpecker, Blue-gray Tanager, Slaty Flower-piercer, Yellow-thighed Finch, Large-footed Finch, Sooty Thrush, Swallow-tailed Kite, Flame-colored Tanager, Talamanca Hummingbird, Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Volcano Hummingbird, White-throated Mountain Gem and Lesser Violetear. We then continue our drive down the steep mountain road to Bosque del Sueno, where we will explore their trails, including a suspension bridge that provides a treetop view. Possible birds here include Sulphur-winged Parakeets, Collared Trogon, Ruddy Treerunner, Spotted Barbtail, Tufted Flycatcher, Torrent Tyrannulet, Mountain Elaenia, and Spotted Wood-quail. **Dinner and overnight at Paraiso Quetzal Lodge.**

Day 6 Wednesday March 5 Travel Day to Las Cruces/Wilson Botanical Gardens

We meet for coffee before sunrise for some early morning birding before breakfast, hopefully seeing any high altitude birds we may have missed. We continue our travels after **breakfast at Paraiso Quetzal Lodge**, driving over the **Cerro de la Muerte** pass at 3,451 m (11,322 ft) above sea level. These high slopes are covered with Paramo vegetation, a unique, high-altitude ecosystem located only in the Andes of Ecuador, Peru, and Colombia, along with a few small areas in Central America. Páramo is found above timberline with average rainfall of about 80 inches per year. It is similar to the alpine tundra ecosystems found in the temperate regions of the world. We will stop in this unique ecosystem to look for the endemic Volcano Junco and Timberline Wren, and if the day is clear, get a view of the Pacific Ocean. Heading down the mountains we will get our first experience with heat and humidity during our **lunch stop at Chacuaco Restaurant** where we will see aquatic birds including Boat-billed Heron, Least Grebe, Northern Jacana and Green Heron. We will arrive at Las Cruces Biological Station/Wilson Botanical Gardens in the late afternoon, where we will stay for three nights. Temperatures are pleasant with 70-80 degrees F during the day and low 60's at night.

The property, at 3,900 feet above sea level, consists of 625 acres of protected forest, including primary forest, with at least 2,000 plant species including more than 20 endemic plants, 113 mammal species (60 species of bats), more than 400 montane and lowland bird species, an estimated 70 species of reptiles, and more than 1,000 species of insects including 800 species of butterflies. The Wilson Botanical Garden at Las Cruces has one of the most important plant collections in Central America with an extensive collection of palms, tropical and subtropical ornamentals, unusual plant families, and endangered plants from Costa Rica and other parts of the world.

Dinner and overnight at Las Cruces Research Station

(<https://tropicalstudies.org/portfolio/las-cruces-research-station/>)

Day 7 Thursday March 6 Local Tours - Sustainable Family Businesses

We will enjoy the bird viewing platform adjacent to the dining room before breakfast, the coffee is usually ready by 6 am. Potential birds include numerous Parrots, Thick-billed and Spot-crowned Euphonia, Buff-throated and Streaked Saltators, numerous species of Tanagers, Yellow-throated Toucan, Purple-crowned Fairy (hummingbird) and Fiery-billed Aracari. After breakfast we will take a hike on the well maintained trails through the gardens and then depart mid-morning for **lunch and tour at Aviva Organica**, a local family farm featuring innovative sustainable agriculture. After lunch we will tour a local shade grown coffee farm, **Finca Lluvias del Valle**, and learn how important supporting shade grown coffee is for wintering

neo-migratory birds. Here we may see Bay-headed Tanager, Scaled Pigeon, Purple-crowned Fairy, Garden Emerald and Red-legged Honeycreeper. **Dinner and overnight at Las Cruces Research Station. Possible night hike tonight!**

Day 8 Friday March 7 Wilson Botanical Gardens

Early morning bird hike before breakfast, then spending the day enjoying the many trails at Wilson, including birding from the top of the 49 foot observation tower, enjoying a treetop view of the many flycatchers, warblers, tanagers and parrots that make their home at Wilson. Possible birds today include White-ruffed and Blue-crowned Manakins, Rufous Piha, White-whiskered Puffbird, Plain Ant-vireo and Crested Guan. In late afternoon/early evening we will hear a presentation by **Guido Saborio** on research made possible through Tropical Wings and the Sister Parks relationship between the U.S. National Park Service and Costa Rica's SINAC organizations. **Dinner and overnight at Las Cruces Research Station.**

Day 9 Saturday March 8

We will enjoy our last morning at Las Cruces, **leaving after breakfast** for our drive to the lowlands where we will spend the night along the Sierpe River. We'll put away our warm clothes and dress for heat, humidity and sun! We will make several stops along the way to look for birds in different ecosystems including grassland, rice fields and wetlands, providing us with opportunities to see Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Smooth-billed Ani, Red-chested Meadowlark, and Black-necked Stilts. We will make a cultural stop at a park in the small village of **Sierpe** to see stone spheres, rare and unusual relics that were first uncovered from within the rainforest near Sierpe by agricultural developers in the 1930s. It is estimated that a few hundred spheres originally existed in Costa Rica within 35 miles of Sierpe, but many have since been relocated across the country. How and why they were made remains a mystery. Archeologists believe that they were crafted anytime from thousands to a few hundred years ago by native Costa Ricans of the Diquis culture. **After lunch at the Sierpe Hotel** we will enjoy some siesta time followed by a **late afternoon pontoon ride** and GREAT birding on the Sierpe River.

The **Terraba-Sierpe National Wetlands**, an internationally important wetland and one of our seven Sister Parks, encompasses 68,850 acres of water and land, and was established in 1994 in order to protect the mangroves of the Terraba and Sierpe Rivers. This is the largest mangrove system in Costa Rica and among the largest in Central America. These wetlands are home to a wide variety of birds, reptiles, mammals and fish. Possible birds to see as we relax on the pontoon boat include Tiger Heron, Frigate Bird, Amazon Kingfisher, Mangrove Swallow, Little Blue Heron,

Scarlet Macaws, Golden-naped Woodpecker and Purple Gallinule. We will return for **dinner in Sierpe**, followed by an orientation to our next destination: Corcovado National Park! Overnight **Oleaje Sereno**

(<http://www.destinationsierpe.com/places-to-stay/la-perla-del-sur/>)

Day 10 Sunday March 9 Corcovado National Park/Sirena Ranger Station

After an **early breakfast at our hotel**, we will take the boat to the Sirena Ranger Station in Corcovado National Park. After thirty plus minutes boating on the Sierpe River, we continue on the ocean for two more hours, where we stop at a colony of Brown and Red-footed Boobys. A wet landing followed by a 20 minute hike through the jungle will bring us to the very remote Sirena Ranger Station where we spend two nights. After **lunch at the ranger station** and a welcome siesta, we will take our first hike on the trails.

Corcovado National Park is one of our seven Sister Parks, one of the largest lowland tropical rainforests in Central America and the best place in Costa Rica for wildlife watching. It encompasses the only remaining old growth wet forests on the Pacific coast of Central America, and includes 13 major ecosystems. The park is over 163 square miles, covering nearly half of the Osa Peninsula, yet remains one of the most remote regions of Costa Rica. Famously dubbed “the most biologically intense place on Earth” by National Geographic, it contains 2.5 % of the world’s biodiversity. It is a treasure to researchers and nature lovers alike. All four of the monkey species (including the highly endangered Red-backed squirrel monkey), and all six of the feline species found in Costa Rica inhabit Corcovado. All four of the sea turtle species that nest in Costa Rica visit the beaches of Corcovado during their nesting season. Over 40 species of frogs including red-eyed tree, rain, glass, dink, and poison arrow varieties, dozens of snakes including a variety of Boas and the rare Bushmaster, as well as 28 species of lizards inhabit the park. More than 100 species of butterflies and at least 10,000 other insects call this place home. More than 400 species of birds including 16 different hummingbirds and the largest number of Scarlet Macaws anywhere in Central America are found in Corcovado.

Note: Communal sleeping platforms with assigned bunk beds and showers/toilets located nearby, accessed via a covered raised walkway. Ear plugs and headlamps are helpful here. Lights go out at 8 pm to save on gas for the generator.

Dinner and overnight at Sirena Ranger Station (<https://surcostours.com/>)

Day 11 Monday March 10 Corcovado National Park

We meet at 5 am for an early morning bird walk to the beach, starting in the dark so we can watch the jungle awaken! After breakfast we continue our hiking until lunch

followed by a rest during the hottest part of the day. We will explore the primary forest before dinner. Birds we may see in Corcovado include Tawny-winged, Wedge-billed, Northern-barred, and Cocoa Woodcreepers, Streak-chested Antpitta, Mayan Antthrush, Bright-rumped Attila, Turquoise Cotinga, Great Curassow, Rufous Piha, Masked Tityra, Chestnut-backed Antbird, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Ruddy Quail-Dove, Common Pauraque, Slaty-tailed, Baird's, Gartered and Black-throated Trogons and Great Tinamou. Possible mammals include all four species of monkeys, Two and Three-toed sloths, Tamandua, White-nosed Coati, White-lipped and Collared Peccaries and Baird's Tapir. **All meals and overnight at Sirena Ranger Station**

Day 12 Tuesday March 11 Boat to Puerto Jimenez

We spend our last morning at Corcovado taking a short hike before **breakfast**. Wading out to our boat at 9 am, we begin our 1 1/2 hour ride to Puerto Jimenez where we will meet our van and drive 25 minutes to La Cotinga where we will have **lunch**. After lunch we can take a nap and relax in our comfortable lodging. Late afternoon (4 PM) we will meet the staff of **Surcos Tours** and learn about this family owned and run company. We also hope to have a presentation on **Osa Birds: Research and Conservation** by our friend and colleague **Karen Leavelle** of Osa Birds. Dinner and overnight at **La Cotinga** <https://lacotinga.com/>

Day 13 Wednesday March 12 Yellow-billed Cotingas!

We will start our day with an early morning bird walk at **Rincon**, a short drive from our lodge, to try and find one of Central America's rarest and most endangered species - the Yellow-billed Cotinga. While looking for the Cotinga we have a great chance to see Bare-throated Tiger Herons, Green Herons, Gray-breasted Martins, Mangrove and Southern Rough-winged Swallows, and Green Kingfishers. We'll take a short walk along the river to look for shorebirds and enjoy the surrounding tropical forest. We will return to La Cotinga for breakfast. After breakfast we will drive to a local mangrove and hopefully see two endemics - the Mangrove Warbler and the Mangrove Hummingbird. We will look for shorebirds here too. We head back to La Cotinga for lunch and siesta with optional hikes before dinner, and a night hike after dinner! **All meals and overnight at La Cotinga.**

Day 14 Thursday March 13 Last Day on the Osa Peninsula/Fly to San Jose

We say good-bye to the birds of the Osa on our last early morning hike. After breakfast, we will pack and load our van for the 25 minute drive to the Puerto Jimenez airport where we have an 11 am charter flight to San Jose (a 50 minute flight with a sometimes enforced weight restriction for luggage- 30 lbs for checked

and 10 lbs for carryon) A driver will meet us at the San Jose airport to drive us 30 minutes to our hotel where we can relax by the pool, walk through the gardens and enjoy lunch and dinner (not included in trip cost) at the on site restaurant. Overnight at **Finca Rosa Blanca** [Finca Rosa Blanca](#)

Day 15 Friday March 14 Fly Home!

Breakfast included at Finca Rosa Blanca before a shuttle brings us to the airport, heading home with wonderful pictures, fond memories and new friends!

**Please note that some particulars of the itinerary may change, but it is relatively close to what we'll experience. We will make sure everyone is accommodated. It is also worth mentioning that there is a fair amount of walking (considered moderate) on this adventure which includes gravel, some hilly and uneven surfaces—talk to us should there be any concerns. Please bring collapsible walking sticks if needed. Also, be advised that the food is exceptional!

**In addition to birds, we have observed species such as Tamandua (small anteater), two and three-toed sloths, kinkajous, coatis, spiny rat, rice mouse rat, numerous bat species, 4 species of monkeys (white-faced capuchin, squirrel, howlers, and spider), 9 banded armadillo, many lizard species, spectacled caiman, American crocodile, Baird's tapirs, countless butterfly species, abundant species of frogs, as well as leaf cutter and army ants. If folks aren't too tired, night hikes can be added to our day and we'll explore around the lodge(s) searching for snakes, frogs, and interesting insects.

Adventure travel can be unpredictable; therefore, understanding and some flexibility is necessary—if we face surprises head on and with a smile, all will be okay. Hope to see you in beautiful Costa Rica...

