ROCKJUMPER
Worldwide Birding Adventures

# Colombia

## Mega Tour II

### *15th November to 14th December 2023 (30 days)*



**Rufous-fronted Parakeet by Clayton Burne**

*Colombia is undoubtedly the most diverse and exciting country on Earth. With two coastlines, four cordilleras, and a vast expanse of Amazonian rainforest habitats, one could spend years searching out all the natural wonders that it holds. Our Mega tour spends a month traversing all three Andean Chains and exploring the depths of the Magdalena and Cauca Valleys. From the white sand and terra firme forests of Inírida, to the humid Choco, we will sample the richest rainforests in the country. Finally, from the dry Caribbean coast, up lush slopes to the San Lorenzo Ridge, we will enjoy the best of the legendary, endemic-rich, Santa Marta Mountains. This tour is hands down the single most comprehensive offer to experience the most biodiverse nation in the world, and we welcome you to join us on this amazing challenge!*

## THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

**THE ITINERARY**

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| **Day 2** | **Bogota to Inírida** |
| **Days 3 to 6** | **Inírida - Sabanitas, Matraca, La Rompida, Cano Vitina & Cerros de Mavecure** |
| **Day 7** | **Inírida to Villavicencio** |
| **Day 8** | **Refugio del Tororoi & Bosque Bavaria** |
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| **Day 21** | **Hotel Tinamu to Cerro Montezuma via Apia area** |
| **Days 22 & 23** | **Cerro Montezuma** |
| **Day 24** | **Cerro Montezuma to Barranquilla via Pereira** |
| **Day 25** | **Barranquilla to Minca via PNN Isla Salamanca** |
| **Day 26** | **Minca to El Dorado Lodge, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta** |
| **Day 27** | **San Lorenzo Ridge, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta** |
| **Day 28** | **El Dorado Lodge to Riohacha** |
| **Day 29** | **Los Camarones and the Guajira Peninsula, evening flight to Bogota** |
| **Day 30** | **Final departures from Bogota** |

## TOUR ROUTE MAP…



## THE TOUR IN DETAIL…



**Bogota Rail by Rob Williams**

**Day 1: Arrival in Bogota.** Upon arriving in the city of Bogota, you will be met and transferred to a comfortable hotel in the city that is convenient to our birding destinations in this region. Here you will be met for a welcome dinner by your tour leader from Rockjumper Birding Tours with time to talk through some of the exciting adventures to come!

**Day 2: Bogota to Inírida.** Our morning flight into Inírida is under two hours in duration. After arrival we will get settled into our hotel, and then head out into the field for some afternoon birding at one of the nearby hotspots. Some of the first birds we encounter often include common species such as Large-billed Tern, Swallow-winged Puffbird, Cobalt-winged Parakeets, and Yellow-headed Caracara. When the sun gets lower, we'll search for Spotted Puffbird and Black Manakin, and then as dusk settles around us, we'll watch the Orange-winged Parrots, and the Scarlet and the Red-and-Green Macaws as they head for roost spots, and we'll hope to snag sightings of Least Nighthawk too. After check-in today we can settle in as we will spend all our nights at the same hotel until we head to Villavicencio on Day 7.

**Days 3 to 6: Inírida - Sabanitas, Matraca, La Rompida, Cano Vitina & Cerros de Mavecure.** We have four full days to bird the Inírida area, taking in a host of key sites such as Sabanitas, Matraca, La Rompida, Cano Vitina and Cerros de Mavecure. The specific order of the itinerary will depend on local condition on arrival.

**Sabanitas**: Perhaps the most species-rich hotspot of the trip, combining rural roadside birding with white sand savanna and white sand forest birding, Sabanitas provides a big bunch of birds, right out of the gate. Sabanitas is an indigenous community that welcomes birders to enjoy their land, and some days here when the weather is suitable, we may top 100 species. One of our big targets here is the odd and unpredictable Capuchinbird. A crow-sized, crazy-looking cotinga, with a bald head and orange-brown plumage, they issue out incredibly loud somewhat cow-like sounds. We'll hope to hear them, as the sound is remarkable, and keep fingers and toes crossed that we might even see one, but along the way there are plenty of other birds to



**Bronzy Jacamars by George L. Armistead**



**Black Bushbird by George L. Armistead**

keep us busy. Out in the savanna, Southern Rough-winged Swallows and Short-tailed Swifts whizz around, while macaws may be seen coming and going. The meadow area sometimes has Plumbeous Euphonia, Cherrie's Antwren, Yellow-green Grosbeak or even Pale-bellied Mourner. Once in the woods, we'll hope for Yellow-crowned Manakin and Pompadour Cotinga, as the Screaming Pihas make their exclamatory cries.

**Matraca & La Rompida**: Matraca is one of the best stretches of várzea forest we'll see here during our visit. After a short 5-minute canoe ride we will spend our morning on foot walking a lovely trail in primary forest. Here we have a chance for Orinoco Softtail and Black Bushbird, and a myriad of other great birds including, Green-tailed Jacamar, Black-fronted Nunbird, Gilded Barbet, Várzea Schiffornis, Cream-colored Woodpecker, and five or so species of antshrikes.

After lunch we'll get back on the boat and head north on the Rio Inírida until it empties into the even bigger Rio Guaviare, which forms the border between the department of Guainía, where all our birding has been to this point, and the department of Vichada where we seek out a few new birds. We'll make land on a white sand beach and keep our eyes open for waders like Collared Plover, Pied Lapwing and Buff-breasted Sandpiper, but our big target here is back in shrub woodlands a little higher up off the riverbank. In 2017 an antshrike in the genus *Thamnophilus* was discovered here and it is unclear whether or not it might be a new species.

The curious antshrike resembles the Chestnut-backed Antshrike in both voice and appearance, but that species is not known from anywhere nearby, found really only on the other side of the Amazon River, hundreds of kilometers away in Peru, Bolivia and central Brazil. The antshrike here appears darker overall, but while we await genetic analysis and further study, the fascinating mystery continues to make us all wonder. Regardless, this is a bird we want to try and see, and along the way we could well pick up other nice birds like Sand-colored Nighthawk and Black-capped Donacobius. We'll see what the weather looks like and either plan a picnic dinner tonight on the beach, or return to the hotel to eat before retiring for the night.



**'Mystery' Antshrike by George L. Armistead**

**Cano Vitina & The Cerros de Mavecure:** With two main sites on the docket today we'll check the weather and determine the best order of operations, but the plan will be to do a couple hours of birding in white sand forest



**White-naped Seedeater by George L. Armistead**

near town, and also a longer outing to the magnificent Cerros de Mavecure. White sand birds we might search for include the sneaky and very range-restricted Yapacana Antbird as well as the big-billed White-naped Seedeater.

A 90 minute boat-ride downriver, we will visit the remarkable Cerros de Mavecure, and see the black domes, and enjoy the scenery and birds around them. Weathered and worn tepuis, it is possible to hike up the smallest of these mountains, but it is very steep and usually extremely hot as well. To get to the top is a very rigorous uphill climb (involving ladders against part of the rock face), but to reach the lower edge, is not too far. We'll have options for those who wish to try this steep but short hike to the lower look-out, and for those who'd prefer to relax along the river. Regardless, there will be excellent scenery and some nice birds too. Recently featured in the Oscar-nominated (2016) film, 'El Abrazo de la Serpiente' ('The Embrace of the Serpent'), these hills are held sacred by the Amerindians living in the area and are startlingly beautiful.

**Pajuil Trail & Rio Inírida:** A short canoe ride from town is a gorgeous forest trail where we will spend our morning slowly walking and hoping for some more great birds. Another great patch of várzea forest, the Pajuil Trail gives us more chances at some of the scarce or rare birds we looked for at Matraca along with major target birds like Rose-breasted Chat and Yellow-crowned Elaenia, along with Common Squirrel Monkey or even Collared Titi.

We'll return to the hotel for lunch and after a brief siesta we will head back out on the river, birding by canoe. The Inírida River is the largest tributary of the Guaviare River, which it joins just north of town. Both are tributaries of the massive 1300+ mile long Orinoco River, which eventually flows out into the Atlantic on the coast of Venezuela. This is the third largest river in the world when measured by the volume of water it discharges. The drainage spans most of Venezuela and much of eastern Colombia where it is referred to as Orinoquia, one of five major bioregions within Colombia. We'll explore the river as well as a narrow offshoot of the Rio Inírida to see what we find. With luck we might encounter Black-chinned Antbird, Blue-throated Piping Guan, Orinoco Piculet, Slate-colored Hawk, or even a Duida Woodcreeper. We will stay out a little beyond sunset and see if perhaps we can pick out a Boat-billed Heron or some feeding Band-tailed Nighthawks, before returning to the hotel for dinner.



**Black Manakin by George L. Armistead**



**Ochre-breasted Brushfinch by Tuomas Seimola**

**Day 7: Inírida to Villavicencio.** We depart Inírida this morning after a thoroughly absorbing week of lowland forest birding. We'll take a short flight to the town of Villavicencio, the gateway to the Colombian Llano (plains). Time permitting, we'll visit the campus of Universidad de los Llanos to search for Hoatzin, Plain Thornbird, Glittering-throated Emerald and a host of wetland species.

**Day 8: Refugio del Tororoi & Bosque Bavaria.** Another exciting morning beckons as we set out to find one of the rarest endemics of Colombia, the tiny Cundinamarca Antpitta. A short drive will take us to Refugio del Tororoi near the village of Guaybetal. A recently established feeding station might help us have good views of both Cundinimarca and Muisca Antpittas, before we start working the denser forest for such targets as Ochre-breasted Brushfinch, Brown-breasted Parakeet, Greater Schythebill, White-capped Tanager, Black-collared Jay, Golden-headed Quetzal and possibly Ocellated Tapaculo in the process.

After lunch, we'll head back to our lodging in Villavicencio, where our next birding site is only a few minutes out of town, the foothill forest of Bosque Bavaria. Here we'll search for such as the much-desired Amazonian Umbrellabird, Black-faced Antbird, Cobalt-winged Parakeet, Sooty-capped Hermit, Golden-headed and White-bearded Manakins, Orange-breasted Falcon and Gilded Barbet.

**Day 9: Villavicencio to Bogota & PN Chicaque.** Time permitting, we may head back to Bosque Bavaria for a short time, before we start making our way back towards Bogota. We'll skirt the south side of Bogota before reaching Chicaque Natural Park further to the west.



**Golden-bellied Starfrontlet by Clayton Burne**

A small number of conveniently placed hummingbird feeders provides an excellent assortment of species including Green and Sparkling Violetears, Buff-tailed Coronet, Collared Inca, the very tricky Golden-bellied Starfrontlet, Tourmaline Sunangel and Glowing Puffleg. We shall no doubt take a short walk along the dirt roads searching for other gems that might include the tricky Moustached & Pale-naped Brushfinches, Rufous Spinetail, Black-crested Warbler, Golden-fronted Whitestart, Blue-capped Tanager, Capped Conebill, Grey-

breasted Wood Wren, Superciliaried Hemispingus and Blackish Tapaculo.



**Recurve-billed Bushbird by Stephan Lorenz**

**Day 10: Bogota to Bucaramanga, afternoon birding for Recurve-billed Bushbird.** This morning, before our flight to the oak forested slopes of central Colombia, we will visit the famous Parque La Florida. Though we may have encountered Bogota Rail, Spot-flanked Gallinule and other exciting wetland species at Siecha a few days before, this is one of only two reliable sites in the area for the cute Subtropical Doradito and the local endemic, Apolinar's Wren! Other species of waterfowl, waders, Neotropical migrants and the beautiful *bogotensis* subspecies of Yellow-hooded Blackbird will keep us busy and having fun as well.

This convenient birding site could not be more perfectly located, for it is a mere 5 minutes from the airport to board our flights for Bucaramanga.

In the afternoon we'll head out to explore the seldom birded areas around Bucaramanga that hold some very interesting species. Chief amongst our targets will be Recurve-billed Bushbird. This spectacular, somewhat enigmatic species inhabits dense foothill tangles on the western slope of the East Andes. During the few surveys done in the area, this species has been encountered along with Black-headed Brushfinch, Black-bellied Wren, Yellow-browed Shrike-Vireo, and other fascinating birds inhabiting slightly more humid slopes facing the mighty Magdalena River.

**Day 11: Pamplona Road.** We will spend much of the day on the Pamplona Road that heads east out of Bucaramanga, high into the Andes towards Venezuela. As an altitudinal transect, this little-known road has a myriad of habitats home to some of the most sought-after birds in the country. Of note, mixed flocks of large birds often include Black-collared Jay, Northern Mountain Cacique, and the rare Colombian Mountain Grackle! The mountain ridge forests here are home to a good population of the threatened Rusty-faced Parrot, that feeds almost on high-elevation Oak acorns. Crested and Golden-headed Quetzals, Black-billed Mountain Toucan, Klages's Antbird, Moustached Brushfinch, Golden-bellied and Blue-throated Starfrontlets, Band-tailed Guan, glorious Grass-green Tanagers, Hooded and Scarlet-bellied Mountain Tanagers are relatively numerous along the route, as are Longuemare's Sunangel!



**Black-billed Mountain Toucan by George L. Armistead**



**Niceforo's Wren by Dubi Shapiro**

The mixed flock in the high eastern Andes can be truly phenomenal. In just one massive flock on our 2018 tour, we encountered Rufous Wren, Rufous Spinetail, Spectacled Prickletail, Rusty-winged Barbtail, Striped and Flammulated Treehunters, Black-capped, Black-eared and Oleaginous Hemispingus, Citrine and Black-crested Warblers, Golden-fronted Whitestart, and the always spectacular Plushcap, not to mention a ton of tanagers. We will hope for good weather to deliver us some amazing birds!

We shall return to Bucaramanga later in the afternoon.

**Day 12: Bucaramanga to San Vicente de Chucurí via Sogamosa.** We'll depart Bucaramanga after breakfast, making our way to the cooler environs of San Vicente de Chucurí. We'll stop south of Bucaramanaga to bird the deep valley formed by the Rio Sogamosa. This steep-sided canyon sits in a rain-shadow and has evolved a very dry habitat. Road condition permitting, we'll search the area for Niceforo's Wren and Chestnut-bellied Hummingbird, Bar-crested Antshrike, Apical Flycatcher and other dry forest species.

**Day 13: RNA Reinita Cielo Azul and surrounds.** ProAves has a long history of purchasing tracts of land for the preservation of habitat for a specific species. Though this property was obtained to ensure wintering habitat for the declining Cerulean Warbler, it is home to no less than 9 Colombian endemic species! Today we will dedicate our efforts to finding a number of these, and other, spectacular and rare species that inhabit the fine cloud forest thriving on the slopes of this property and surrounds.



**Magdalena Tapaculo by Dubi Shapiro**

Our target species for this property, many of which can be seen in the gardens around the lodge, include the Gorgeted Wood Quail (variable), Barred Hawk, Lined Quail-Dove, the striking Black Inca, the rare Chestnut-bellied Hummingbird, Indigo-capped Hummingbird, Moustached Puffbird, Parker's Antbird, White-bellied Antpitta, Magdalena Tapaculo, rare Yellow-throated Spadebill, Moustached Brushfinch, and perhaps the namesake Cerulean Warbler - among the myriad of tanagers, hummingbirds, flycatchers and spectacular birds in the region.

We will also bird the nearby coffee plantations and scrub nearby for Turquoise Dacnis,



**Turquoise Dacnis by Dubi Shapiro**

Colombian Chachalaca, Niceforo's Wren and Chestnut-bellied Hummingbird, as well as Black-headed Brushfinch, Scrub Tanager, Double-banded Greytail, Yellow-browed Shrike-Vireo, Golden-rumped Euphonia, Spectacled and Pale-vented Thrush and scores of seedfinches and Seedeaters. In the late afternoon, we'll head back to our lodge in San Vicente de Chucuri.

**Day 14: San Vicente de Chucurí to Rio Claro via Sogamosa.** We depart our lodge early today en route to the more humid lowlands of the Rio Claro area. We'll have more time available to bird the Rio Sogamosa valley again if need be.

Rio Claro is a general term for the Rio Claro Canyon Park area, which includes one of the best birding stops in the Magdalena Valley – Rio Claro Oilbird Caves. Not only does this locality provide us with wonderful, up-close views of dozens (if not hundreds) of bizarre Oilbirds, but the trail system up to the caves, and onto the hill beyond them, offers some great species besides.

We will begin the walk to the caves in the mid-afternoon, looking for skulking understory and secretive sub-canopy species including Barred Puffbird, the rare and local Grey-cheeked Nunlet, Great Antshrike, Dusky Antbird, Band-backed Wren, and, with a lot of luck, Spotted Antbird or Streak-chested Antpitta! We will take our time inside the caves, enjoying the unique sights and sounds produced by the Oilbirds, and the deep cool of the dark interior. Later, a steep trail leads us up a short hill to look for one of the most interesting of all Tyrannids, Brownish Twistwing, which we have been able to view in full display here on past tours. We have also encountered the dapper endemic Silvery-brown Tamarin here on multiple tours in the past, not to mention one sneaky Jaguarundi crossing the creek before us! After our hike, we will retire to our lodgings up the serene Rio Claro Canyon.

**Day 15: Rio Claro and environs.** The Rio Claro Canyon became popular with Colombian birders long before it was recognized as THE place to find the rare Antioquia Bristle Tyrant. This morning we will get an early start, birding a small trail near our accommodations that is little-known in birding circles. This short track, which we discovered just a few years ago, hosts practically the entire suite of Magdalena Valley endemic species, and offers truly outstanding birding. Highlights include the White-mantled Barbet, near-endemic Magdalena Antbird, Rufous Mourner, Grey-cheeked Nunlet, Sooty Ant Tanager, Black-capped Pygmy Tyrant, Southern



**Antioquia Bristle Tyrant by Dušan Brinkhuizen**

Bentbill, Cinnamon Woodpecker, and many, many more species are possible this morning!



**Red-bellied Grackle by Adam Riley**

The canyon's beauty is attractive to anyone, and what better backdrop to search out such additional fine birds as Blue-tailed, Gartered and White-tailed Trogons, Rufous Motmot, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Checker-throated Antwren, Brown-capped Tyrannulet, Black-tailed Flycatcher, Russet-winged Schiffornis, Orange-billed Sparrow, and many gorgeous tanagers and euphonias!

**Day 16: Rio Claro to Medellin.** We will spend another full morning in the Rio Claro environs. Our exact activities will depend to a large extent on the species we may desire today. After lunch, we depart the Rio Claro canyon and head to Medellin for the evening.

**Day 17: Medellin to Pereira via La Romera & Antioquia Brushfinch site.** Early this morning, we shall make the short drive to visit the narrow watershed of La Romera Municipal Park. This park protects an island of forest surrounded by farms and semi-rural homes. Birding from the road, we will watch for Andean Motmot, which can often be quite confiding compared to the undergrowth skulkers we will be searching for. Specifically, we will be targeting Stiles's Tapaculo that is found in the same dense undergrowth where Chestnut-capped Brushfinch also lurks. The hyper-energetic near-endemic Yellow-headed Manikin is also high up on our list of targets, La Romera is perhaps the best-known site for it in Colombia. Bird flocks can be quite a spectacle in this area with Black-winged Saltator and a pleasant assortment of migrant warblers including Golden-winged, Tennessee, Canada, Black-and-white, Blackburnian and the increasingly scarce Cerulean Warbler all possible. The gorgeous but elusive Red-bellied Grackle moves around in small flocks, uttering extraordinary shrieks as they search for fruits and invertebrates.

By mid-morning, we shall be on our way towards Pereira, making a quick stop for the recently re-discovered Antioquia Brushfinch. Described from museum specimens taken in 1971, the species had not been seen alive until 2018!

The rest of the day is primarily dedicated to travel, as we continue south to Pereira.



**Antioquia Brushfinch by Stephan Lorenz**



**Cauca Guan by Adam Riley**

**Day 18: Otun-Quimbaya to Manizales.** Situated at 1 800 meters, the Otun-Quimbaya sanctuary in the Western Cordillera is one of the few sites known for Cauca Guan. Once presumed extinct, this species was only rediscovered in 1994; and with protection, this guan is now relatively common in the reserve, as is the more widespread Sickle-winged Guan. The scarce Wattled Guan also occurs and sometimes gives away its presence with an unlikely loud rising trill. Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth can be spotted casually lounging in a roadside Cecropia, a tree that also provides fruits for the impressive crimson-fronted race of Red-ruffed Fruitcrow, here at perhaps its highest density anywhere in South America. With luck, we may stumble across the gaudy Multicolored Tanager.

The forest really comes alive in the morning with the songs of Chestnut Wood Quail, enthusiastic Chestnut-breasted Wren, and reticent Moustached Antpitta hiding in the dark gullies. The deep, booming calls of Red-ruffed Fruitcrow will likely be a regular sound as we search for these secretive specialities and sift through mixed flocks containing Crimson-rumped Toucanet, White-throated Wedgebill, Spotted Barbtail, Montane Foliage-gleaner, Streaked Xenops and a nice assortment of localised tyrannids, including Plumbeous-crowned Tyrannulet, Variegated Bristle Tyrant, and Rufous-breasted Flycatcher.

We'll leave Otun-Qumbaya behind in the afternoon, making the odd a stop or two to scan the river below for Torrent Duck or conspicuous colonies of Acorn Woodpeckers, whilst also keeping an eye out for Pale-eyed Thrush and Andean Solitaire, both excellent songsters that are often found perched motionless on high tree limbs. We'll arrive in the beautiful town of Manizales in the early evening.

**Day 19: Rio Blanco Preserve.** Today we will explore the Rio Blanco Nature Reserve, situated above the city of Manizales. Here there are over a dozen active hummingbird feeders along a wooden balcony that is lined with flowers. The myriad of hummingbirds could include gems such as Long-tailed Sylph, Buff-tailed Coronet, Speckled Hummingbird, the boldly patterned Collared Inca and Tourmaline Sunangel. Finding an Andean Guan or even the oversized monotypic White-capped Tanager that can sometimes be seen from the balcony of the lodge would be a typical way to start the morning in Rio Blanco.



**Golden-plumed Parakeet by Dušan Brinkhuizen**



**Bicolored Antpitta by Clayton Burne**

Our main quest for the day, however – and certainly one of the highlights of the entire trip – will be the rarely-seen antpittas, which have been patiently habituated to come to earthworm feeding stations that are active early in the morning. The reserve features several of these 'antpitta feeders' where worms are placed out every day to attract these secretive birds, and here we have a chance to marvel at these fascinating but normally extremely difficult understory dwellers – sometimes only at an arms-length away! Ornately patterned Chestnut-crowned Antpittas and Brown-banded Antpittas are usually dominant, but we might also have a visit from the tiny vine-loving Slaty-crowned Antpitta, Chestnut-naped Antpitta, and occasionally even the vocal but sneaky near-endemic Bicolored Antpitta. As these special birds are accustomed to human presence at these sites, we often obtain exceptional studies (and photographs!) not just of the antpittas themselves, but also of their interesting behaviour as they stuff their bills with worms to feed hungry chicks or sometimes even hop across our feet! Other species that regularly visit the antpitta feeders include Grey-browed Brushfinch, the beautiful Green-and-black Fruiteater and Great Thrush.

The wide pathways within the reserve offer excellent access to the pristine cloud forest, where we will watch for the secretive Tawny-breasted Tinamou crossing the track, scarce East Andean Antbird, Golden-headed Quetzal perched motionlessly on a fern-covered branch, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker (arguably the world's most beautiful woodpecker!), and peer into the undergrowth for skulking Blackish, Spillmann's and Ash-colored Tapaculos.



**Golden-headed Quetzal by Dušan Brinkhuizen**

We might also locate a fruiting tree where several species of parrots could be in attendance, including the scarce Golden-plumed Parakeet, Scaly-naped Amazon and the endangered Rusty-faced Parrot (this being its type location where it was first discovered). Mixed flocks here are sometimes composed of fifty plus species all swarming together in excited movements with intense sound at all levels of the mossy forest, and have the potential to leave us dizzy! Just a few of the possibilities include Buff-breasted and Blue-winged Mountain Tanagers, Yellow-billed Cacique, Pearled Treerunner, Black-eared Hemispingus, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Pale-edged Flycatcher, Dusky Piha, Smoke-colored Pewee, the bright Plushcap that prefers dense bamboo, Handsome Flycatcher, Grey-hooded Bush Tanager, Smoky Bush Tyrant, White-banded and



**Buffy Helmetcrest by David Hoddinott**

White-tailed Tyrannulets, the white capped form of Capped Conebill, bright Blue-and-black Tanager, Sepia-browed Wren creeping through the vines, Streaked Xenops, Slaty-backed and Yellow-bellied Chat-Tyrants, and a wide range of other warblers, tyrants, spinetails, and tanagers.

Continued birding inside this fantastic reserve throughout the day could produce specialities such as the tiny, but colourful Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatcher, Mountain Wren, Powerful Woodpecker (giving its distinctive double tap), Masked Trogon, and/or the furtive but exquisitely patterned Ocellated Tapaculo sneaking through the vine tangles. Although we will need considerable luck on our side, we also have possibilities for rarities such as Masked Saltator and the enigmatic Hooded Antpitta.

**Day 20: Hacienda el Bosque, PNN Los Nevados del Ruiz & Termales del Ruiz.** We start early today, driving up the cattle ranch of Hacienda del Bosque. Our primary targets are a number of otherwise tricky *Grallaridae*, in the form of Equatorial and Crescent-faced Antpittas. As we head into the forest, we'll also be keeping our eyes open for other desirable species to be found here – including Grey-breasted Mountain Toucan, Banded Fruiteater, Grey-browed Brushfinch, Black-thighed Puffleg and Sword-billed Hummingbird.

After what should be a stunning start to the day, we'll then make our way to the much higher ground of PNN Los Nevados del Ruiz! Though species diversity dwindles markedly as one rises in elevation, the species become more visibly adapted to their niches in the harsh environments near, and above, the treeline. The elfin forest and paramos of this massive park are home to endemic species including the rare and local Rufous-fronted Parakeet and near-endemic Black-thighed Puffleg. Starting in the elfin forests, we will look for these two species along with Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Viridian Metaltail, Glowing and Golden-breasted Pufflegs, Great Sapphirewing, Crowned Chat-Tyrant, Black-backed Bush Tanager, Paramo Tapaculo and a slew of beautiful tanagers, including one of the most gorgeous birds on the continent – Golden-crowned Tanager!



**Crescent-faced Antpitta by Forrest Rowland**

Once above the treeline, in the alpine grasslands dotted with *Espletia* Sunflowers (known locally as *frailejones*)



**Rainbow-bearded Thornbill by Stephan Lorenz**

and Puya Yuccas, Andean Condors and Black-chested Buzzard-Eagles soar overhead, the delightful Buffy Helmetcrest flits from flower to flower, and various skulkers like Stout-billed Cinclodes, Andean Tit-Spinetail, Many-striped Canastero and Tawny Antpitta call from the scrub. It will be a unique experience to walk this high, over 12 000ft in elevation, amongst the highest peaks and volcanoes in the country. We'll ward off the typically cold outside temperatures with a cup of Coca tea or a hot Sugar Cane drink. Thereafter, we'll begin our descent from the mountain – taking a quieter route down with excellent road side birding.

We'll take a late lunch at the recently renovated Hotel Termales del Ruiz. The food here is excellent, the birding even better. High altitude hummingbird feeders are generally scarce, but here they could help us see many otherwise difficult species including Golden-breasted and Black-thighed Pufflegs, Rainbow-bearded Thornbill and Viridian Metaltail, as well as provide photographic opportunities for commoner species such as Great Sapphirewing, Buff-winged Starfrontlet and Shining Sunbeam.

**Day 21: Hotel Tinamu to Cerro Montezuma via Apia area.** We'll begin our birding today at Hotel Tinamu. This is an excellent site to see the rarely recorded Cocoa Thrush, as well as actually see Little Tinamou rather than just hear it! We'll also be looking for Rufous-breasted and Green Hermits, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Grey-headed Dove, White-vented Plumeleteer and Golden-collared Manakin.

By mid-morning, we shall be on our way towards Montezuma Lodge. Near a small school perched atop a rural mountain ridge, the stunted forest around Apia is home to both Yellow-headed Manakin and Turquoise Dacnis – two exceptional endemic species! Recent reports of Hooded Antpitta in the region might be worth a follow up, and with great luck we might run into Yellow-headed Manakin, among other exciting possibilities.



**Yellow-headed Manakin by Dubi Shapiro**

**Days 22 to 23: Cerro Montezuma.** The mountain ridge of Cerro Montezuma rises up from the valley beside our homestead, and we have two full days to immerse ourselves in the avian riches of this under-explored wilderness.

We aim to reach the Choco vegetation at around 2,000 metres in elevation. Here the dawn chorus will greet us and one of the first birds we will likely see is the gaudy



**Gold-ringed Tanager by David Hoddinott**

Gold-ringed Tanager, a species with an extremely limited distribution. Localized hummingbirds, endemic to the Choco region are also well in evidence, including the oversized Empress Brilliant, Brown Inca, Choco Tyrannulet, Choco Vireo, Purpled-bibbed Whitetip, White-whiskered Hermit, and lovely Violet-tailed Sylph. Bird activity will have us all watching the moss-covered trunks for the scarce Star-chested Treerunner that can often be found associating with other flocking activity. Some of the other Choco endemics that we will be sifting through in such flocks include the critically endangered Munchique Wood Wren, erratic Dusky Starfrontlet, bright Black-chinned Mountain Tanager, Uniform Treehunter, Pacific Tuftedcheek, Black-and-gold Tanager, Choco Warbler, Dusky Bush Tanager, Glistening-green and Rufous-throated Tanagers and maybe even the rarely-seen Black Solitaire that sometimes gives away its presence with its ethereal song. Conspicuous movement might also give away the presence of another Choco endemic in the form of Beautiful Jay although we will have to concentrate on small mouse-like movements in the undergrowth to catch a glimpse of Choco and Nariño Tapaculos, also both specialities of the Choco. While rare, we have recorded the localized Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer here on previous tours.

Birding our way into the lower elevations, we can continue looking for fruiting trees that attract frugivores such as Chestnut-breasted and Yellow-collared Chlorophonias, Black-billed Peppershrike, Scaly and the stunning Orange-breasted Fruiteaters, Ochre-breasted Tanager, Bicolored Antvireo, and the Choco endemic Toucan Barbet. Two difficult species that occur here that we might be able to lure into view are the scarce Cloud-forest Pygmy Owl that is normally found in the high canopy, while in the darkest undergrowth we can try our luck with the elusive Yellow-breasted Antpitta. The sparkling Rufous-gaped Hillstar generally prefers to be along riverside vegetation, which is also the preferred habitat of Bay Wren and the localized Choco Brushfinch.



**Empress Brilliant by Forrest Rowland**

**Day 24: Cerro Montezuma to Barranquilla via Pereira.** We have some more time to bird around Cerro Montezuma before beginning our road transfer to Pereira. We then take a flight to Barranquilla on the Caribbean coast.

Time permitting, we will visit the nearby Universidad del Norte – one of the best places to find the scarce endemic



**Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird by Clayton Burne**

Chestnut-winged Chachalaca. Other species of interest we may see in the scrubby habitat include Grey-lined Hawk, Brown-throated Parakeet, Black-chested Jay, Prothonotory Warbler and Yellow Oriole.

**Day 25: Barranquilla to Minca via PNN Isla Salamanca.** This morning we awake at the Caribbean Coast. Here we will begin by searching for one of the most range-restricted hummingbird species of the tour: Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird! The mangroves and scrub of the Isla Salamanca National Park harbour some very special birds as well, with Panamanian Flycatcher, Golden-green Woodpecker, Stripe-backed Wren, Black-collared Hawk, American Pygmy and Green-and-rufous Kingfishers, Bicolored Conebill, some 9 species of migrant Wood Warblers from North America, Bronze-brown Cowbird and the extremely localised, Chestnut-winged Chachalaca, being just some of the avian possibilities! We even have a chance of finding the recently described Turquoise-winged Parrotlet. Combine that with a huge array of herons, terns, gulls and shorebirds frequenting the many estuaries and mudflats we will traverse, and we are sure to have one whopping morning to start our extension off with a bang!

Our next destination is the rural, tourist town of Minca. Attracting national tourists, foreign hikers, bikers and birders alike, Minca's charm is undeniable. It is very conveniently located in the foothills of the famed Santa Marta Mountains, home to no less than 22 accessible endemic species. This will be our first taste of the great birding the Santa Marta range has to offer. While few of the birds in and around Minca are true endemics, many are rare and range-restricted, or just plain beautiful! This afternoon and evening we will be looking for Coppery Emerald, Rufous Nightjar, Keel-billed Toucan, Black-backed Antshrike, Pale-tipped Inezia, Pale-eyed Pygmy Tyrant, Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant, the striking Lance-tailed Manakin, Rufous-breasted and Rufous-and-white Wrens, and the boldly coloured Golden-winged Sparrow.



**Santa Marta Parakeets by Adam Riley**

**Day 26: Minca to El Dorado Lodge, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.** The drive from La Minca to El Dorado is one that no birder can forget. The views are impressive, the birding grand, and the road up the mountains is a river of huge rocks, potholes and seemingly impassable stream crossings that our drivers, in 4X4 Land Cruisers, will deftly manoeuvre to deliver



**Santa Marta Woodstar by Dubi Shapiro**

us safely and comfortably to the loveliest lodge of the tour – it makes for an exciting day! We will start out checking a roost site for the striking Black-and-white Owl. We will also make stops to walk the road in search for Rusty-breasted Antpitta and mixed flocks that may contain Scaled Piculet, Rosy Thrush-Tanager, Groove-billed Toucanet, Specious Tyrannulet, Yellow-legged Thrush and Black-headed Tanager. With luck, we might come across an antswarm, attracting the likes of Ruddy Woodcreeper, Grey-headed Tanager and other opportunists. There are several choice territories we will also check in our quest for all of the Santa Marta specialities. En route we have good chances to lure out the endemic Santa Marta Foliage-gleaner, Santa Marta Antbird (only recently split from Long-tailed Antbird), Santa Marta Tapaculo, and a stakeout for the lovely Santa Marta Blossomcrown, which we have managed to locate on every previous tour.

After taking some time to get settled in at El Dorado, we will hold vigil at the feeding stations and prowl a trail or two for some of the great birds that turn up within a few hundred meters of the Lodge proper. And the grounds are truly beautiful! Landscaped with native flowers, tucked perfectly into the cloud forest amidst thousands of acres of untouched habitat, and a clear view of the Caribbean Coast some 30 miles to the north, this lodge is one of the favourites for our participants, and never disappoints.

This afternoon and evening we will look for Band-tailed Guan, near-endemic Black-fronted Wood Quail, the handsome endemic Santa Marta Screech Owl, striking endemic White-tailed Starfrontlet, rare Lazuline Sabrewing, Santa Marta Woodstar, White-tipped Quetzal, ‘Santa Marta’ (White-throated) Toucanet, Grey-throated Leaftosser, Santa Marta Antpitta (which sometimes comes to feeders), Foothill Elaenia, Golden-breasted Fruiteater, Black-hooded Thrush, Blue-naped Chlorophonia, endemic White-lored Warbler and both Sierra Nevada and Santa Marta Brushfinches.



**Santa Marta Screech Owl by Rob Williams**

**Day 27: San Lorenzo Ridge, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.** Higher up on the mountain, after ascending to almost 3,000m (10,000ft) in elevation, we have the chance to continue collecting our suite of highland endemics. Although notoriously flighty, we can watch for noisy flocks of Santa Marta Parakeet, the more cooperative Rusty-headed Spinetail and furtive Brown-rumped Tapaculo.



**Chestnut Piculet by Rob Williams**

The lively Yellow-crowned Whitestart is normally in regular attendance with mixed flocks, which also contain the colourful Santa Marta Mountain Tanager and sometimes a few Santa Marta Warblers showing off their complex facial patterns. White-tipped Quetzal can often be located by its barking call, as we continue locating species such as White-throated (Santa Marta) Toucanet, Rufous-and-white Wren, the brightly coloured Golden-breasted Fruiteater, Yellow-legged Thrush, Hermit Wood Wren, Barred Forest Falcon, shy Lined Quail-Dove, and Grey-throated Leaftosser. At these higher elevations, we can try our luck coaxing into view the tricky (Santa Marta) Rufous Antpitta (a future split). Two especially difficult endemics that are also present but only in excruciatingly small numbers are the tiny Black-backed Thornbill, which prefers smaller flowers at the highest elevations, and the scarce Santa Marta Bush Tyrant that occasionally joins mixed bird flocks.

**Day 28: El Dorado Lodge to Riohacha.** We'll depart fairly early this morning, driving back down the Santa Marta mountains before heading eastward into the increasingly arid Guajira Peninsula. Here the cactus-studded scrub and xerophytic vegetation support several Colombian near endemics that share only a minuscule corner, barely accessible, in north-western Venezuela. Along our route, we might make a few opportunistic stops at sites for the localised Rufous-vented Chachalaca, Double-striped Thick-knee, or a chance for Lance-tailed Manakin in the dense vine tangles before we reach the coastal city of Riohacha.

We'll begin birding this unique habitat for specialities including the surprisingly attractive White-whiskered Spinetail, Grey Pileated Finch, noisy Caribbean (Pale-legged) Hornero and the sometimes ridiculously tame Russet-throated Puffbird. Ferruginous Pygmy Owl is quite common in this habitat, and while imitating its calls we are likely to attract mobbing species such as the endemic sub-species of Black-crested Antshrike, Red-billed Emerald, Slender-billed Inezia, Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant, Orinoco Saltator and Yellow Oriole amongst others.



**Vermilion Cardinal by Clayton Burne**

**Day 29: Los Camarones and the Guajira Peninsula, evening flight to Bogota.** It doesn't take long for the temperature to warm up in these desert conditions, so we plan to be in the field early to search any specialties we may still need. Our first stop could be at Los



**Glaucous Tanager by Stephan Lorenz**

Flamencos National Park for one of our primary targets, the outrageous Vermilion Cardinal - often heard singing before seen with its flashy elongated crest. We may also find Striped Cuckoo whilst watching for small flocks of Green-rumped Parrotlet flying past, along with the more common Bare-eyed Pigeon. Ferruginous Pygmy Owl imitations should continue to produce activity as things begin to warm up, with possibilities including Trinidad Euphonia, Bicolored Conebill, Slender-billed Inezia, Glaucous Tanager, Brown-crested Flycatcher, migrant Prothonotary Warbler, Grey Kingbird, Pale-eyed Pygmy Tyrant, Straight-billed Woodcreeper and Northern Scrub Flycatcher. Four more localised specialities we'll be targeting this morning include the sharply-patterned Orinoco Saltator, localised Buffy Hummingbird, Chestnut Piculet and the difficult Tocuyo Sparrow.

As the day heats up, we will head further along the Caribbean Sea, where the myriad of coastal lagoons and coastal mudflats can produce a wide variety of terns, gulls, migrant waders, pelicans, stilts, frigatebirds, and egrets. Scanning over these marshlands, we may be able to pick out three particularly attractive species, namely the stately American Flamingo, Roseate Spoonbill and the incandescent Scarlet Ibis. Time permitting, we will make occasional stops to search for Carib Grackles and perhaps a few migrant Purple Martins mixed in with the resident Brown-chested Martins. We'll head to the Riohacha airport in time for our evening flight back to Bogota, where we'll enjoy a celebratory final dinner together.

**Day 30: Final departures from Bogota.** Today we will transfer to the airport to catch our departure flights home.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:**

**Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT INFORMATION below.**

The tour fee includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 30;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Extra activities mentioned in the itinerary;
- Reserve entrance fees; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).

The tour fee does not include:

- Visa fees;

- **ANY** flights;
- Any drinks;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

**Single Supplement:** The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

**IMPORTANT NOTES:**

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.**
- **Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

**Tipping:** As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does not include your Rockjumper leader/s. If, therefore, you feel that he/they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

**Special Notes:**

- Our Mega tours are very fast-paced birding adventures designed for the dedicated lister and serious birder. The focus of the tour is to see as many of the endemics and area specials as possible in our given time. In order to cover the necessary route to maximise the species list we tend to spend a single night at most sites and travel large distances. There is very little down time aside from that spent driving from one site to the next. These tours are not suitable for dedicated or avid photographers; inexperienced or new birders; as well as anyone with serious mobility or health challenges.
- This tour involves very little arduous walking, though we will be at fairly high altitude on some days.
- We will be birding in some remote areas well away from modern medical facilities.
- The hotels are of comfortable yet sometimes basic standard throughout.
- Internal flights to and from Inírida have strict luggage weights (Carry on: 5kg/33lbs, Checked: 15kg/11lbs)
- Transport is by small coach or minibus and the roads are mostly in good condition. However, due to the nature of the topography, there is the possibility of landslides interfering with our trip, though we have minimised this risk by undertaking the tour during the drier season.
- We expect the weather to be mostly dry and often sunny; it can be hot and occasionally humid in the lowlands, such as at Rio Claro. The Inírida area can be especially uncomfortable with high levels of humidity and is often very hot too. At higher elevations, it can be cool to cold, especially at night. There is likely to be some rain, which can be heavy at times.

- It is recommended that you take measures to prevent insect-bites, especially in rural areas. There is a possibility of encountering biting flies along the coast.

**ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:**

This tour **does not** include **ANY** airfares. The tour will depart from El Dorado International Airport (IATA: BOG), Bogotá on Day 1 and, as it is an arrival day, you are welcome to arrive any time before 17:00. The tour will conclude after breakfast on day 30 at El Dorado International Airport (IATA: BOG), Bogotá.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

**FLIGHTS:**

The tour will start and finish at El Dorado International Airport, Bogotá (IATA: BOG), which is the main port of entry for international flights into Colombia. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**