ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Colombia

Northern Endemics of Santa Marta & Perija

10th June to 21st June 2022 (12 days)



Santa Marta Woodstar by Dubi Shapiro

Colombia has more bird species than any other country; a staggering 1 900 species occur within the confines of this incredible nation, of which 89 are endemic! Our endemics-laden tour of Northern Colombia takes us to the Santa Marta Mountains and the Guajira Peninsula on the northern coast of Colombia, as well as the and the recently explored Perija range on the Venezuelan border. The Santa Marta massif is an isolated mountain range and its snow-capped peaks are the highest coastal mountains in the world. It is also one of the most endemic-rich regions of South America, hosting nearly 50 endemics and regional specialities plus numerous endemic subspecies (several of which, upon further taxonomic

review, are likely to be elevated to full species status in the future). We spend time at both low and high elevations of the Perija Range, birding near Valledupar before basing ourselves at the Chamicero Reserve. Purchased in 2014 after the discovery of good forest tracts on accessible land for the entire suite of Sierra de Perija endemics, including the yet-to-be-described Perija Tapaculo and another 35 subspecies that need further research. The local forms of Golden-bellied Starfrontlet, White-throated Toucanet, Rufous Spinetail and Rufous Antpitta are all proposed splits that require more conclusive documentation.

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

Day 1	**Arrival in Cartagena**
Day 2	**Cartagena to Barranquilla**
Day 3	**Isla Salamanca NP, birding en route to Santa Marta Mountains**
Days 4 to 6	**Santa Marta Mountains**
Day 7	**Santa Marta Mountains to Riohacha**
Day 8	**Riohacha to Valledupar**
Day 9	**Los Besotes Road to Chamicero de Perija**
Days 10 & 11	**Chamicero de Perija**
Day 12	**Minaure to Bogota via Valledupar and depart**

TOUR MAP



THE TOUR IN DETAIL…



Chestnut-winged Chachalaca by Adam Riley

Day 1: Arrival in Cartagena. Upon arriving in the city of Cartagena, you will be transferred to a comfortable hotel in the city. 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!

Formerly known as Cartagena de Indias, the superbly preserved old town is certainly worth a few hours of afternoon exploration and sightseeing. Take your time to enjoy the Plaza de los Coches, Bolívar Square, Plaza de la Aduana, Gold Museum, Plaza de Santa Teresa, Plaza de Santo Domingo and the incredible fortifications that surround the old city.

Day 2: Cartagena to Barranquilla. Early this morning we begin our birding tour by visiting Jardin Botanico Guillermo Piñeres. While we can expect a plethora of exciting species, we shall direct our attention to a handful of the specialities that can be found here including Scaly-breasted Hummingbird (very scarce in Colombia), the taxonomically confusing Turquoise-winged Parrotlet, Chestnut-winged Chachalaca, Glaucous Tanager, Trinidad Euphonia, Stripe-backed and Bicolored Wren, Lance-tailed Manakin and Black-crested Antshrike. As the day heats up, we shall start heading east towards Barranquilla stopping to bird the numerous marshes and drier scrubby habitat for Northern Screamer amongst a host of more regular waterfowl as well as Russet-throated Puffbird, Brown-throated Parakeet, Caribbean Hornero and Carib Grackle.

After arriving in Barranquilla this afternoon, we will visit the nearby Universidad del Norte – one of the best places to find the scarce endemic 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.



Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird by Clayton Burne

Day 3: Isla Salamanca NP, birding en route to Santa Marta Mountains. We depart Barranquilla and make our first stop at the nearby Isla Salamanaca National Park. Here we will begin searching for perhaps the most range-restricted 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, Black-collared Hawk, American Pygmy and Green-and-rufous Kingfishers, Bicolored Conebill,



Santa Marta Blossomcrown by Clayton Burne

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 bypass en route towards the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta massif.

After lunch we will carry on towards Minca. Perched 650masl, we will escape the oppressive heat of the lowlands and begin our initial exploration of this new habitat. The lodge's hummingbird feeders typically host Rufous-tailed and Steely-vented Hummingbirds, Red-billed Emerald, Crowned Woodnymph, White-vented Plumeleteer and White-necked Jacobin. As the afternoon wanes, we shall move to a vantage point not far from the Minca Road and wait for large flocks of Military Macaw to return to their roosts.

Days 4 to 6: Santa Marta Mountains. From Minca we head higher up the northwest slope of the Santa Marta mountains, traversing coffee plantations and eventually montane forest until we arrive at El Dorado Lodge, our base for the next two nights. The Santa Marta mountain range is isolated from the main Andes, which has resulted in a phenomenal array of biodiversity, including numerous endemics and localised bird specialities, although we only have access to a relatively small range of accessible forest, it is enough to give us access to all but two current endemics (Santa Marta Wren & Blue-bearded Helmetcrest).

Winding our way up the foothills of this ProAves reserve in 4x4 jeeps, we can begin sifting through mega flocks that often swarm with activity, typically including an abundance of migrant warblers, tanagers, vireos, grosbeaks and flycatchers, plus resident species such as the scarce Coppery Emerald, White-bearded Manakin, Sooty-capped Hermit, Specious Tyrannulet, Rusty-breasted Antpitta, Crested Oropendola, Rufous-breasted Wren, Black-striped Sparrow, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, and the smart-looking Golden-winged Sparrow that prefers areas of denser undergrowth.



Santa Marta Parakeet by Adam Riley

Passing by innumerable waterfalls cascading along the mountain slope, we can also try to tease out the sneaky Santa Marta Tapaculo before turning our attention to other endemics, including the



Santa Marta Warbler by Adam Riley

recently split Santa Marta Blossomcrown, Santa Marta Brushfinch, the arboreal Streak-capped Spinetail, Santa Marta Antbird, often secretive Santa Marta Foliage-gleaner, and White-lored Warbler.

Our very comfortable eco-lodge here has friendly staff that cater perfectly to nature enthusiasts and birders. The hummingbird feeders buzz with activity, with species including White-tailed Starfrontlet and tiny Santa Marta Woodstar, the endemic race of Tyrian Metaltail, and sometimes a surprise such as Lazuline Sabrewing. The compost pile can also be well worth staking out for visiting Black-fronted Wood Quail, Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Black-hooded Thrush, gaudy Blue-naped Chlorophonia and Sierra Nevada Brushfinch. We will also have a look for Santa Marta Antpitta, which sometimes visits a nearby feeding station, and enjoy at least one evening walk through the forest nearby to search for Mottled Owl and the recently described Santa Marta Screech Owl.

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. 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.



Santa Marta Antpitta by Adam Riley

After some final birding around El Dorado lodge to catch up with any special birds we may still be searching for, we start retracing our steps down to Minco for the night. New possibilities abound, and we could get lucky and find a roosting Black-and-white Owl or Pale-bellied Hermit, amongst other species such as Masked Trogon, Whooping Motmot, the tricky Groove-billed Toucanet, Collared Aracari, Golden-olive Woodpecker, Bat Falcon, Grey-throated Leaftosser, Plain Xenops, Rusty-breasted



Buffy Hummingbird by Clayton Burne

Antpitta, Cinnamon and Golden-crowned Flycatcher, Black-hooded and White-necked Thrushes, Yellow-backed Oriole or the rare Black-headed Tanager.

Day 7: Santa Marta Mountains to Riohacha. We depart El Dorado early this morning and head down the mountain, stopping at Las Gaviotas. We have a short time to bird this habitat for a number of lowland forest species such as Lance-tailed Manakin, White-bellied Antbird, Buff-breasted Wren, Gartered Trogon, Brown-capped Tyrannulet, Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher and the scarce White-necked Puffbird.

We'll then change gears and head eastward into the increasingly arid Guajira Peninsula. Here the cactus-studded scrub and xerophytic vegetation support several Colombian 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 and Double-striped Thick-knee before we reach the coastal city of Riohacha.

As the afternoon cools down, we will 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.

Day 8: Riohacha to Valledupar. 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 will be at Los 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.



Chestnut Piculet by Clayton

As the day starts to heat up, we will head further along the Caribbean Sea, where the myriad of coastal lagoons and coastal mudflats can



Crested Quetzal by Clayton Burne

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.

Most of the afternoon will be dedicated to travel however, as it is a rather long drive to reach our destination for the evening, Valledupar. After dinner, we may head out for a spot of night birding for our primary nocturnal species here - Rufous Nightjar.

Day 9: Los Besotes Road to Chamicero de Perija. The lowlands around Valledupar, and the lower mountain slope of both the Santa Marta range, and the Perija range nearby hold some very interesting prospects. Today we will spend time at a few locations above Valledupar in both ranges. Rufous-vented Chachalaca, Scaled Dove, Double-striped Thick-Knee, Shining-green Hummingbird, Double-banded Puffbird, Chestnut Piculet, Military Macaw, Black-backed Antshrike, White-whiskered Spinetail, Slender-billed and Pale-tipped Tyrannulets, Venezuelan Flycatcher, Lance-tailed Manakin, Golden-fronted Greenlet and Trinidad Euphonia are among some of the 150 species possible in the area today, adding a special component to the tour's birding and diversity!

After lunch, we shall ascend to the Chamicero de Perija Reserve. ProAves purchased the site 2014 after the discovery of good forest tracts on accessible land for the entire currently recognized suite (5 species) of Sierra de Perija endemics, as well as the yet to be described Perija Tapaculo and another 35 subspecies that need further research. The local form of Golden-bellied Starfrontlet, Rufous Spinetail and Rufous Antpitta are all proposed splits that require more conclusive documentation.

The most exciting development was when ProAves also decided to build a lodge on the premises of this remote tract of land for visiting birders! Situated in high-altitude forest, the reserve occupies 1,800ha of temperate and tree-line forest, sub-paramo scrub and true paramo grassland, while the road transects several fincas with intact native vegetation ranging from dry forests at 800masl through lush foothill and lower subtropical habitats.



Black-fronted Wood Quail by Colin Valentine

Days 10 & 11: Chamicero de Perija. We will begin our day's birding at sunrise, in the paramo – working our way down over the course of the day. Perija Metaltail and Perija Thistletail are the main targets, whilst the Perija



Rosy Thrush-Tanager by Adam Riley

form of Golden-bellied Starfrontlet (a certain split) and Perija form of Rufous Antpitta (which has confounded, somewhat, the Santa Marta ssp. situation) only occur in tree-line scrub and forests above the lodge, all accessible by vehicle. There are many other splendid species that will draw our attention. The local race of Streak-backed Canastero is common in paramo scrub, as are Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle and White-rumped Hawk, which are seen frequently. Closer to the lodge, Black-and-chestnut Eagle, Crested Quetzal, Barred Fruiteater, Andean and Band-tailed Guans, Red-crested Cotinga, Black-throated Tody-Tyrant, Perija Brushfinch, Plushcap, Paramo Seedeater and Black-fronted Wood Quail are all fairly common! Many species are attracted to the feeders at the lodge itself, including Black Flowerpiercer, Longuemare's Sunangel, Mountain Velvetbreast and both Chestnut-capped and Slaty Brushfinch all regularly putting in appearances, while fruit-eating birds only come sporadically.

The afternoon will be spent birding some of the good mid-elevation forest patches along the road from 2,400m down to about 1,800m elevation. The diversity only increases as we head down the road, getting into better habitat for birds including Blue-throated Starfrontlet, Golden-breasted Fruiteater, Wattled Guan, Streak-capped Treehunter, White-browed and Rufous Spinetails, endemic Perija Tapaculo, Rufous-breasted Chat-Tyrant, Variegated Bristle Tyrant, Yellow-billed Cacique, Oleaginous Hemispingus, Venezuelan Tyrannulet, Buff-breasted and Lacrimose Mountain Tanagers, as well as the endemic Black-fronted Brushfinch. One of the most exciting things about being remote is the opportunity for discovery.

The Perija Tapaculo, for example, was discovered by a visiting birder who queued into an unidentifiable sound. While finding a species new to science is about as rare as being struck by lightning…it does happen! At the very least, we will contribute to the expanding base of knowledge on the fauna of this isolated mountain range.



Crimson-rumped Toucanet by Jonathan Rossouw

Our second day remains flexible depending on which species we still require. Assuming we have connected with all the high altitude specials, we will head slowly down the Perija ridge and bird in the foothills and coffee plantation forests of the lower slopes. Researchers and visiting birders have turned up some surprising records in this area, as well as extending the ranges of several East Andes and Magdalena Valley species. It is probable that we will run into species we have already encountered on the tour. However, Red-legged Tinamou, Crested

Bobwhite, Coppery Emerald, Rufous-shafted Woodstar, Klage's Antbird, Rufous-breasted Wren, Grey-throated Warbler, Rosy Thrush-Tanager, Fulvous-headed Tanager and Golden-winged Sparrow might all be new for us!

In the afternoon we move onwards to our lodgings in the village of Minaure. If we have enough time available in the afternoon, we will make our first attempt at finding the sometimes tricky Perija Brushfinch.

Day 12: Minaure to Bogota via Valledupar and depart. The final morning of our tour will focus on the few remaining lowland species around Minaure. We have another opportunity to find Perija Brushfinch, as well as Grey-throated Warbler, Yellow-throated Toucan, Crimson-rumped Toucanet, Moustached Puffbird and Golden-headed Manakin.

We depart Minaure around lunch time and drive back to Valledupar for a short flight to Bogota where the tour will conclude.

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.

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 12;
- 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 (see above);
- All alcoholic and any additional beverages;
- 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. The Single Supplement cost on this tour only covers accommodations where single rooms are available.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) 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.
b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient a small party supplement will have to be charged.
c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.
d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s 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:

- This tour involves some hiking at high altitude and we can expect to be on our feet for most of the day. You should, therefore, be in good health and of sound fitness to undertake this tour. If you have any physical limitations or medical conditions of any sort, please let the Rockjumper office know in advance of the tour.
- We will be birding in some remote areas well away from modern medical facilities.
- 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 very dry on the Guajira Peninsula. At higher elevations, it can be quite cool, especially at night. There is likely to be some rain, which can be heavy on occasion.
- Accommodation is mostly of a very good standard. Lodgings are Minca and Minaure are a little more basic.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include **ANY** airfares. The tour will depart from Rafael Núñez International Airport on day 1 and, as this is an arrival day you are welcome to arrive at any time before **18:00** when we will gather for an introductory dinner. The tour will conclude after an early morning flight from Valledupar to Bogota.

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:

Bogotá International Airport (IATA: BOG) is the main port of entry for international flights in Colombia, while Rafael Núñez International Airport (IATA: CTG) can also be reached with relative ease from most international points of origin. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**