ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Colombia

Santa Marta Extension I

12th August to 17th August 2023 (6 days)



Santa Marta Parakeets by Adam Riley

Colombia has more species of birds than any other country - a staggering 1900 species are to be found within the confines of this incredible nation; of which, at least 89 are endemic. Our endemics-laden extension takes us to the Santa Marta Mountains and the Guajira Peninsula on the northern coast of Colombia. 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 endemic 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).

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

SANTA MARTA EXTENSION

Day 1	**Arrival in Barranquilla**
Day 2	**Barranquilla to El Dorado Lodge via PNN Isla Salamanca**
Day 3	**San Lorenzo Ridge**
Day 4	**El Dorado Lodge to Minca**
Day 5	**Minca to Riohacha via Los Camarones and the Guajira Peninsula**
Day 6	**Riohacha to Bogota**

TOUR MAP



THE TOUR IN DETAIL…

Species in Italics = Endemic **Species in Bold = Near Endemic**



Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Day 1: Arrivals in Barranquilla. Birding opportunities this evening will vary greatly, depending on our flight's arrival time. We may get the opportunity to visit a local birding site near our hotel, or else we can just spend some time enjoying the colours and sounds of vibrant Barranquilla.

Day 2: Barranquilla to El Dorado Lodge via PNN Isla Salamanca. This morning we awake at the Caribbean Coast. Here we will begin our extension by searching for perhaps 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!

The isolated Santa Marta Mountain range supports a phenomenal array of biodiversity, including numerous endemics and localised bird specialities, although it is a relatively small range of accessible forest since much of the territory has sadly been deforested for agriculture. 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 Blossomcrown by Clayton Burne



Santa Marta Screech Owl by Rob Williams

We will, however, have to make some good time today, and will, therefore, stop only briefly for lunch before we continue birding our way up the lower, dry slopes of the Santa Marta range, to the most scenic accommodation of our tour - El Dorado Lodge.

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***.

Day 3: San Lorenzo Ridge. 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 Warbler***s 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 Bush Tyrant by Forrest Rowland



Santa Marta Woodstar by Dubi Shapiro

Day 4: El Dorado Lodge to Minca. We have a few more hours to bird around the lodge, before slowly making our way back down the mountain. We'll pass innumerable waterfalls cascading along the mountain slope where we shall try to tease out the sneaky ***Santa Marta Tapaculo*** before turning our attention to other endemics, including the recently split ***Santa Marta Blossomcrown***, ***Santa Marta Brushfinch***, the arboreal ***Streak-capped Spinetail***, ***Santa Marta Antbird***, **Scarlet-fronted Parakeet**, **Spectacled Tyrannulet**, often secretive ***Santa Marta Foliage-gleaner***, and ***White-lored Warbler***.

Further down. try catch up with any special birds we may still be searching for, including Rosy Thrush-Tanager, **Groove-billed Toucanet**, ***Santa Marta Foliage-gleaner***, Rufous-and-white Wren, **Black-backed Antshrike**, **Coopmans's Tyrannulet** or Sooty Grassquit, we will descend towards the village 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 Santa Marta Mountains. 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.

Day 5: Minca to Riohacha via Los Camarones and the Guajira Peninsula. Time permitting we'll spend some time checking the hummingbird feeders in Minca for **Steely-vented Hummingbird**, Coppery Emerald, White-necked Jacobin and Rufous-tailed Hummingbird. We'll then change gears and begin 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.



Santa Marta Antpitta by Adam Riley



White-tailed Starfrontlet by Dubi Shapiro

If time allows, we can 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 6: Riohacha to Bogota. It doesn't take long for the temperature to warm up in these desert conditions so we will plan to be inside Los Flamencos National Park at daybreak to hear the dawn chorus and take advantage of the cooler conditions. One of our primary targets will be the outrageous **Vermilion Cardinal** that is often first heard singing before seen with its flashy elongated crest. Striped Cuckoo can often be heard singing from a great distance and we should watch 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**, **Dwarf Cuckoo**, 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**.

Looking out over the Caribbean Sea, 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. From the beach, we should also find Carib Grackles and maybe a few migrant Purple Martins mixed in with the resident Brown-chested Martins. Other birds here include Reddish Egrets dancing across the shallows, American White Ibis, Semipalmated and Grey Plovers, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Wilson's Plover, Semipalmated and Western Sandpipers, and Wood Stork.

After a full morning's birding, we will then make our way to Riohacha airport for our return flights to Bogota where the tour will conclude.

Endemics Potential: **25 species**
Near Endemics Potential: **22 species**

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 breakfast on day 6;
- Some soft drink with meals;
- 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.

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.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include **ANY** airfares. The tour will depart from Barranquilla International Airport on day 1 and, as this is an arrival day you are welcome to arrive at any time before **17:00** when we will gather for an introductory dinner. The tour will conclude after a mid-morning flight from Riohacha to Bogota. International flights should be booked after 18:00.

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 Barranquilla International Airport (IATA: BAQ) 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.**