Costa Rica

Gateway to the Neotropics



Scarlet Macaw by Adam Riley

Costa Rica is widely regarded as one of the world's premier birding destinations and provides the perfect introduction to the exciting avifauna of the Neotropics. This small but remarkably diverse country has embraced ecotourism and bird-focused travel, developing an excellent tourism infrastructure, comfortable lodges and outstanding protected areas that make birding both rewarding and accessible. With more than 850 recorded bird species packed into an area smaller than West Virginia, Costa Rica offers an astonishing variety of birdlife within relatively short travel distances.

Our Rockjumper Gateway Tour has been specially designed to introduce travellers to the wonders of tropical birding in a comfortable and approachable way. Exploring a range of scenic

habitats including lush foothill rainforest, misty cloud forest and Pacific lowland forest, we can expect an exciting array of colourful and charismatic species throughout the tour. Among the many highlights are the incomparable Resplendent Quetzal, dazzling Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Scarlet Macaw, Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher, Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Black Guan and the spectacular Turquoise Cotinga. Toucans, trogons, motmots, hummingbirds and tanagers are all wonderfully represented, while mammal sightings may include monkeys, sloths and crocodiles.

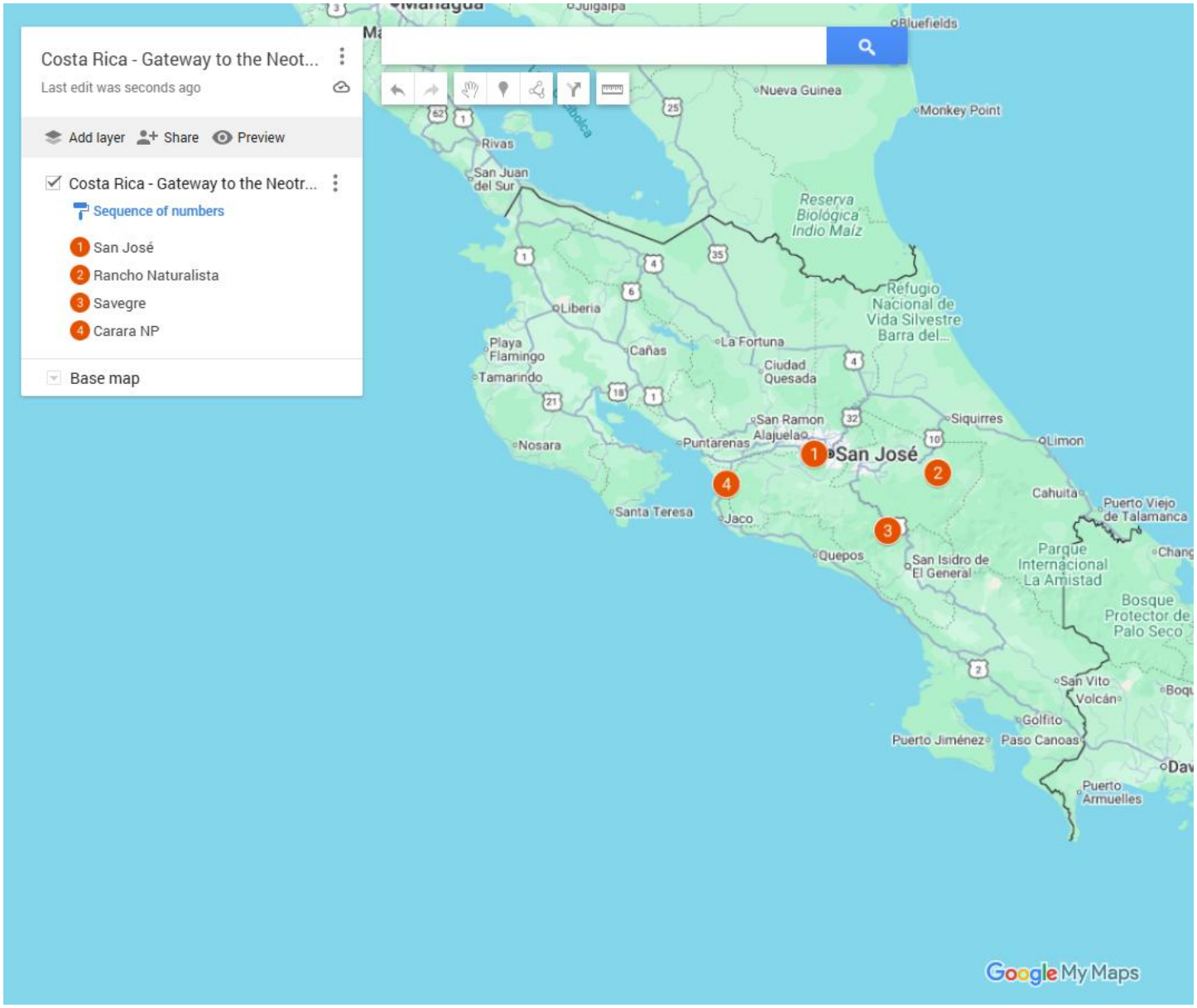
In addition to the exceptional birding, Costa Rica's friendly atmosphere, excellent tourism infrastructure, comfortable accommodations and manageable travel distances make it an ideal destination for those embarking on their first international birding adventure. Combined with a relaxed pace and the support of experienced Rockjumper leaders throughout the journey, this tour provides the perfect gateway into the incredible world of Neotropical birding.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in San José, Costa Rica & welcome group dinner**
Day 2	**Travel to Rancho Naturalista & introduction to tropical birding**
Days 3 & 4	**Rancho Naturalista**
Day 5	**Rancho Naturalista to Savegre**
Days 6 & 7	**Savegre & surrounds**
Day 8	**Savegre to Carara National Park**
Day 9	**Carara National Park**
Day 10	**Rio Tarcoles boat trip & return to San José**
Day 11	**Final departure**

*Optional Gateway Start Package**

Day 0	**Arrival in Miami & overnight stay**
Day 1	**Flight from Miami to San José, Costa Rica & welcome group dinner**



Feeders & close bird encounters

Excellent **photography** opportunities

Optional **night** birding

Scenic highland **landscapes**

Boat excursion

Birding sites in detail

Travel to Rancho Naturalista. Leaving San José behind, we'll travel through the scenic Costa Rican countryside towards the famous Rancho Naturalista. Along the way we may already begin enjoying some of the country's colourful birdlife, while the lush forests and rolling hills provide a wonderful introduction to tropical Central America.

Rancho Naturalista. Rancho Naturalista is the perfect introduction to tropical birding in Costa Rica: relaxed, welcoming and renowned for its excellent hospitality and delicious locally sourced cuisine. Few visitors fail to be enchanted by the sweeping views from



Snowcap by Lev Frid

the balcony, the distant smoking cone of Turrialba Volcano and the constant activity of hummingbirds visiting feeders at arm's length. With over 450 bird species recorded in the surrounding area, the next few days promise to be packed with excitement.

Starting on the balcony, we shall work our way through a dazzling variety of hummingbirds that may include Crowned Woodnymph, White-necked Jacobin, Green Hermit, Green Thorntail, Violet Sabrewing, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer and Green-crowned Brilliant. Aside from the numerous hummingbirds, we can also expect to see brightly coloured Scarlet-rumped and Blue-

grey Tanagers, Black-cheeked Woodpecker, Montezuma Oropendola and bossy Collared Aracaris.

Moving away from the lodge deck, our focus will remain on hummingbirds as we explore flowering Verbena hedges in search of one of Costa Rica's most celebrated species, the remarkable Snowcap. These hedges may also produce Black-crested Coquette, Violet-headed Hummingbird and perhaps the attractive Garden Emerald.



Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher by Dušan Brinkhuizen

We will also spend time near the famous Hummingbird Pools, where birds regularly arrive to bathe and drink during the afternoon. The surrounding secondary growth and forest edge provide excellent opportunities for a variety of species including Grey-headed Chachalaca, Brown-hooded Parrots, Finsch's Parakeet, Scarlet-rumped Cacique, Chestnut-headed Oropendola, Black-headed Saltator and numerous tanagers such as Black-and-yellow, Olive, Speckled and Crimson-collared.

The lodge grounds and nearby forests also support an exciting variety of wildlife and we may encounter Central American Agouti, Variegated Squirrel, White-nosed Coati, and even Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth.

Rancho Naturalista to Savegre. Today we journey into the scenic Talamanca Highlands, travelling through spectacular mountain scenery and changing habitats as we make our way towards the cool cloud forests of Savegre. The dramatic landscapes and fresh mountain air provide a wonderful contrast to the warmer Caribbean lowlands visited earlier in the tour.

Savegre & surrounds. We'll crest a scenic pass in the Talamanca Mountains at nearly 3 300m (11 000ft), where some of the region's special highland birds may include Timberline Wren, Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Sooty Thrush and the localized Volcano Junco before descending into the beautiful valley of San Gerardo de Dota.



Resplendent Quetzal by Dušan Brinkhuizen

The beautiful cloud forests around Savegre are among the best places in Costa Rica to search for the incomparable Resplendent Quetzal, surely one of the world's most spectacular birds. Seeing these magnificent birds feeding quietly in fruiting trees is certain to be one of the major highlights of the tour.

This peaceful highland valley is surrounded by towering oak forests, crystal-clear streams and breathtaking mountain scenery. The cool mountain climate and relaxed atmosphere provide a refreshing contrast to the warmer foothill forests and Caribbean slope habitats visited earlier in the tour. The forests here support a remarkable collection of regional specialties, many shared only with a small portion of neighbouring Panama, including Wrenthrush, Black Guan, Costa Rican Pygmy Owl, Large-footed and Yellow-thighed Finches, Grey-tailed Mountaingem, Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher and Black-and-yellow Phainoptila.



Fiery-throated Hummingbird by Bobby Wilcox

Hummingbird feeders in the area may host Lesser Violetear, Scintillant, Volcano and the oversized Talamanca Hummingbirds, while Fiery-throated Hummingbird dazzles with its incredible iridescent colours. Other exciting species include Flame-throated and Black-cheeked Warblers, Silvery-throated Jay and Golden-browed Chlorophonia.

We will also spend time birding along the pristine Savegre River, where possibilities include American Dipper, Torrent Tyrannulet and the migrant Louisiana Waterthrush. Optional night birding may reveal Dusky Nightjar or Bare-shanked Screech Owl.

The highlands could also produce species such as Spotted Wood Quail, Sulphur-winged Parakeet, Ruddy Treerunner, Acorn Woodpecker, Flame-colored Tanager, Black-capped Flycatcher, Yellow-winged Vireo, Collared Whitestart, Slaty Flowerpiercer and Black-thighed Grosbeak.

Savegre to Carara National Park. Today we descend from the cool highlands of the Talamanca Mountains towards the warmer Pacific lowlands, enjoying spectacular scenery and changing habitats along the way. As we travel, the forests gradually transition into tropical lowland woodland and lush Pacific rainforest.

Carara National Park. Carara National Park offers some of Costa Rica's most enjoyable and accessible lowland forest birding, with an excellent network of relatively flat trails allowing for comfortable exploration throughout the day. The reserve protects an important transition zone between humid and dry forest habitats, resulting in an exciting diversity of birds and wildlife.



Baird's Trogon by Stephan Lorenz

One of the park's star attractions is the spectacular Scarlet Macaw, and we can expect excellent views of these magnificent parrots flying over the forest canopy. Other exciting possibilities in the surrounding lowland forests include the stunning Turquoise Cotinga, one of Costa Rica's most sought-after canopy species. Strange snapping noises from the undergrowth may reveal displaying Orange-collared Manakins, while White-throated Magpie-Jays often move noisily through the trees overhead. We may also encounter White-nosed Coati along the trails.



Orange-collared Manakin by Stephan Lorenz

Some of the regional specialties we will search for include Baird's and Graceful Black-throated Trogons, Fiery-billed Aracari, Golden-naped Woodpecker, Rufous-breasted Wren, Riverside Wren and Black-hooded Antshrike.

Mixed feeding flocks can provide a constant source of excitement and may include White-whiskered Puffbird, Tropical Royal Flycatcher, Trilling Gnatwren, Pale-billed Woodpecker, Dot-winged Antwren, Chestnut-backed Antbird, Red-capped Manakin and Northern Bentbill. More secretive forest species such as Black-faced Antthrush and Streak-chested Antpitta also occur here and may reward patient observers.

Ferruginous Pygmy Owl often responds well during the daytime, while an optional evening excursion could produce nocturnal birds such as Lesser Nighthawk and Spectacled Owl. Mammals are also well represented and sightings of Panamanian White-faced Capuchin, Mantled Howler, White-nosed Coati and Central American Agouti are likely, whist Northern Tamandua is scarce.

Rio Tarcoles boat trip. We will enjoy a relaxing boat excursion along the famous Tárcoles River, a wonderful way to experience the birds and wildlife of Costa Rica's Pacific lowlands. The calm waters and surrounding mangroves provide excellent opportunities for photography and wildlife viewing.



Crimson-collared Tanager by Lev Frid

Possible birds include the impressive Boat-billed Heron, Bare-throated Tiger Heron, Wood Stork, American White Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Northern Jacana, American Pygmy Kingfisher and Mangrove Swallow. Mantled Howler may be heard calling from the treetops, while enormous American Crocodiles bask along the muddy riverbanks.

The mangrove forests near the river mouth support a fascinating collection of specialized species including Mangrove Hummingbird, Mangrove Vireo, Northern Scrub Flycatcher,

Panama Flycatcher and Common Black Hawk. This relaxed and scenic excursion provides a fitting conclusion to our introduction to the remarkable birdlife and wildlife of Costa Rica.



American Crocodile by Keith Valentine

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Designed specifically for first-time international birders and travellers. Moderate travel days, comfortable accommodations and limited strenuous activity. Some early starts are required for the best birding opportunities.
Birding Ease / Pace		Easy to moderate. Birding is conducted at a relaxed pace with a strong emphasis on enjoying common and visually rewarding species rather than pursuing difficult or highly elusive birds.
Accommodation		Comfortable tourist lodges and hotels with private bathrooms and reliable amenities.
Walking / Trails		Generally easy walks on roads, lodge grounds and well-maintained trails. Some uneven surfaces, steps and short inclines may be encountered.
Vehicles / Roads		Travel is conducted in comfortable vehicles. Some longer drives are unavoidable, but road conditions are generally good.
Climate		Warm and humid in the foothills and Pacific lowlands, with cooler temperatures in the highlands around Savegre. Conditions are generally comfortable but can vary considerably between regions.
Photography		Excellent. Many birds are seen well, and several locations offer excellent photography opportunities.
Annoyances		Warm tropical conditions, occasional rain and humidity. Some early mornings are necessary. Tropical insects may occasionally be encountered.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 11;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve & site entrance fees;
- All guiding services,
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- International and domestic flights unless specifically stated;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);

- Optional excursions;
- Optional gratuities for your Rockjumper leader/s;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Typical additional personal costs may include travel insurance, airport hotels, alcoholic beverages, personal shopping and optional tour leader gratuities.

***Optional Miami Gateway Start Package**

For travellers who may feel uncertain about international travel, we offer an optional pre-tour (Day 0) overnight stay in Miami, Florida, where guests can meet a Rockjumper tour leader prior to the international portion of the journey. On Day 1, the group will travel together from Miami to San José, Costa Rica.

The package includes a group dinner on Day 0 and breakfast on Day 1, one night of airport hotel accommodation, and assistance from a Rockjumper tour leader during airport check-in and international travel procedures.



White-nosed Coati by Clayton Burne

Single Supplement: Many accommodations use twin-bed rooms. Guests who prefer private accommodation may request a single room for an additional fee. If you elect to share accommodation but a suitable roommate cannot be found, the applicable single supplement will become payable. We will always make reasonable efforts to match guests wishing to share.
Tipping: Gratuities for drivers, hotel staff, restaurants and local services are included on this tour. Tipping your Rockjumper leader/s is entirely optional and based on your satisfaction with the tour.

- **Tour prices are fixed in the primary currency shown in bold on our website. Prices listed in other currencies are approximate and may vary slightly due to exchange rate fluctuations at the time of final invoicing.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement may be offered to confirm departure.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour-related costs and may need to be adjusted accordingly.**
- **Designated tour leader/s may change due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only and minor adjustments to the order of travel, accommodations or sites visited may occasionally be necessary.**

Rockjumper Gateway Tours are specially designed for travellers taking their first steps into international birding travel, as well as those seeking a more comfortable and approachable tropical birding experience.

These tours combine enjoyable birding, comfortable accommodations and manageable travel days with a relaxed pace and a high level of support throughout the journey.

While birding remains the primary focus of these tours, the overall pace and structure are designed to be enjoyable and accessible rather than intensive. We avoid demanding hikes, difficult travel schedules and overly strenuous birding conditions wherever possible, allowing guests to focus on enjoying the birds, wildlife, scenery and overall travel experience.

Gateway Tours are intentionally designed around comfort, atmosphere and enjoyable birding experiences rather than long species lists or physically demanding schedules. These tours provide an ideal introduction to tropical birding travel while still offering exciting wildlife encounters and memorable birding throughout.

These tours are not suitable for guests seeking demanding, fast-paced, highly target-driven birding experiences or intensive photography-focused itineraries.

Most days begin with optional early morning birding session when bird activity is at its best, followed by breakfast and a relaxed mid-morning pace. Afternoons generally include additional birding, wildlife viewing or travel between locations, with time available to enjoy the lodges and scenery. Optional evening outings may occasionally be offered in search of nocturnal wildlife.

Guests are welcome to participate at a pace comfortable to them throughout the tour.

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly limit luggage to 20kg (44lb) for checked baggage and 8kg (18lb) for hand luggage.
- Costa Rica can be warm and humid, particularly in the lowlands and coastal regions. We recommend bringing lightweight clothing, a hat, sunscreen and plenty of water to remain comfortable while birding.
- Temperatures in the highlands can be surprisingly cool, especially during the evenings and early mornings, so some warm clothing is also recommended.
- Mosquitoes and small biting insects can occasionally be present, particularly in humid areas. We recommend bringing a good quality insect repellent containing DEET or a suitable alternative.
- Accommodation throughout the tour is comfortable and well situated for birding. A good variety of western and local cuisine is generally available throughout the trip.
- Costa Rica is generally regarded as one of the safest and most traveller-friendly destinations in Central America, with a well-developed tourism infrastructure and excellent hospitality standards.
- Electricity, Wi-Fi and mobile coverage are widely available throughout most of the tour, although internet speeds can occasionally be slower in more remote areas.

Arrival and Departure Details

Day 1 of the tour is set aside as an arrival day, allowing guests time to settle in after their international journey. Guests may arrive in San José at any time during the day, with a welcome dinner held in the evening to meet your fellow travellers and tour leader before the tour begins. The tour will conclude in San José after breakfast on Day 11.

Guests joining the **Optional Miami Gateway Start Package** may arrive in Miami at any time on Day 0 and check in to the group hotel at their convenience. That evening, guests will meet their Rockjumper tour leader and fellow travellers during a relaxed group dinner, providing an opportunity to get acquainted and discuss the exciting adventure ahead.

On Day 1, the group will travel together from Miami to San José, Costa Rica, with assistance provided throughout airport check-in and international travel procedures where required.

The above information regarding arrivals and departures is intended as a general guide only. Precise arrival and departure details will be provided in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive earlier and/or depart later and require assistance with additional accommodation or travel arrangements, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Please do not book any flights until the Rockjumper Team has officially confirmed the tour.

Rockjumper Gateway Tours are specifically designed around destinations with straightforward entry requirements for most travellers, with little or no visa or travel authorization requirements typically necessary. At the time of booking, we will advise guests of any known visa, entry or travel authorization requirements relevant to the tour.

Visa and entry requirements can vary depending on nationality and may occasionally change at short notice. Guests are ultimately responsible for ensuring they meet all entry requirements for the countries visited and should verify the latest information with the appropriate consulate, embassy or official government authority prior to travel.