Colombia

Antioquia & Chocó



Black-and-gold Tanager by Clayton Burne

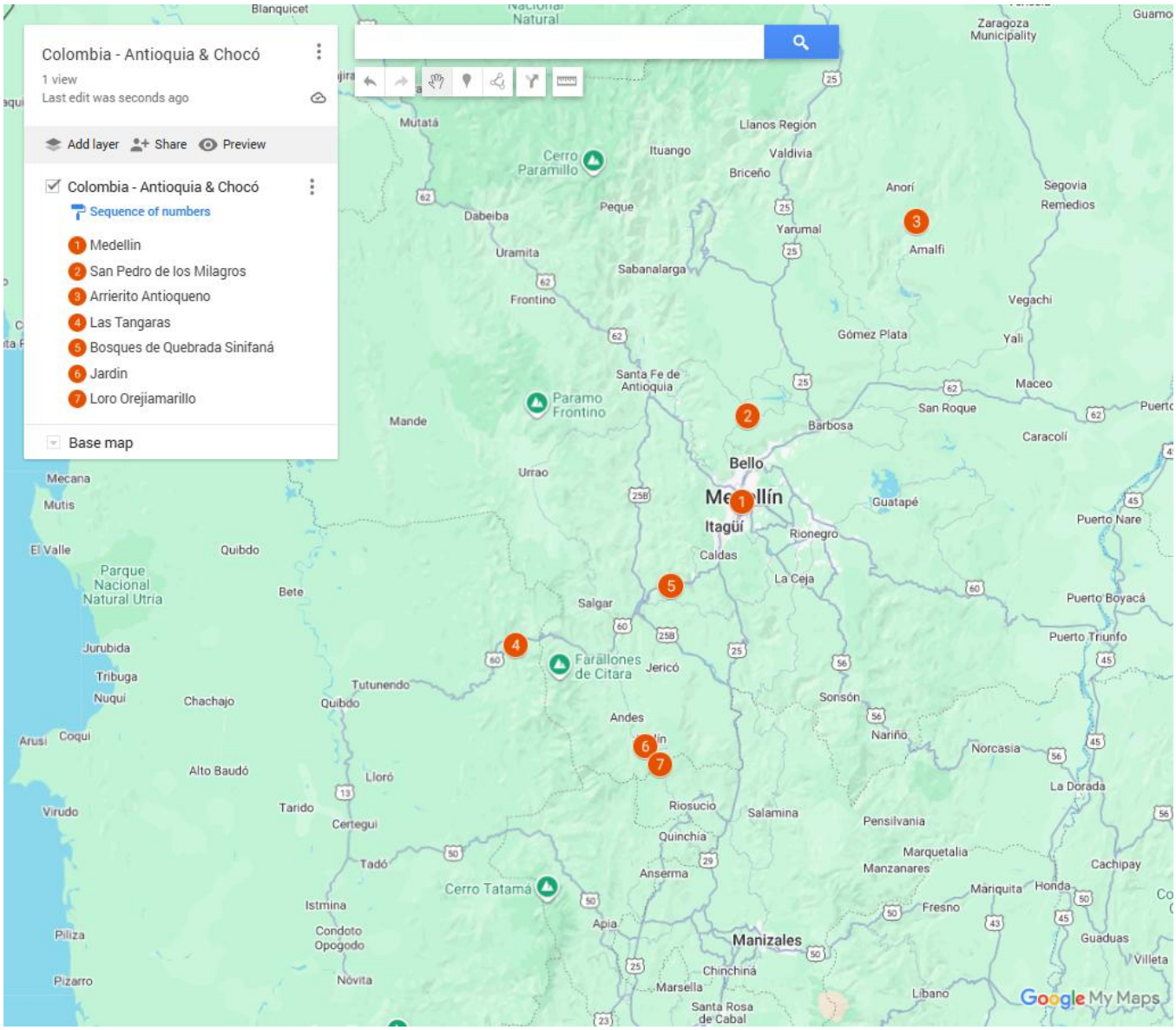
Colombia has more species of birds than any other country - a staggering 1900 species are to be found within the confines of this incredible nation; of which, at least 89 are endemic. This huge diversity of species results from the equally diverse range of habitats: three Andean Cordilleras (Western, Central and Eastern Andes), two inter-Andean valleys (the Cauca and Magdalena Valleys), the lowland forests of the Amazon and Orinoco regions, the isolated snow-capped Santa Marta Mountains, the Pacific and Caribbean coasts, deserts and lakes, and the rich wet forests of the Chocó all help to make it one of the most exciting countries to bird on earth!

The Antioquia & Chocó tour takes us to Arrierito Antioqueno, Medellin, Las Tangaras, Gorrion de Andivia, Jardin and Loro Orejiamarillo for Antioquia Brushfinch, Red-bellied Grackle, Gold-ringed, Flame-rumped, Multicolored & Black-and-gold Tanagers, Chestnut-capped Piha, Velvet-purple Coronet, Crested Ant Tanager, Munchique Wood Wren, Antioquia Wren, Apical Flycatcher, Greyish Piculet and Yellow-eared Parrot.

Itinerary & Map

Medellin & Surrounds

Day 1	**Arrival in Medellin**
Day 2	**Medellin to RNA Arrierito Antioqueno via San Pedro de los Milagros**
Day 3	**RNA Arrierito Antioqueno**
Day 4	**RNA Arrierito Antioqueno to Medellin**
Day 5	**La Romera Park to RNA Las Tangaras**
Day 6	**RNA Las Tangaras**
Day 7	**RNA Las Tangaras & Gorrion de Andivia**
Day 8	**RNA Las Tangaras to Jardin via Bosques de Quebrada Sinifaná**
Day 9	**Loro Orejiamarillo Reserve to Medellin**
Day 10	**Final departure**



Birding sites in detail

San Pedro de los Milagros. This is the type locality for the recently re-discovered Antioquia Brushfinch. Described from museum specimens taken in 1971, the species had not been seen alive until 2018!



Antioquia Brushfinch by Stephan Lorenz

RNA Arrierito Antioqueno. This protected area was set up to protect the endemic Chestnut-Capped Piha Reserve, one of our many sought after endemics here. Given the elevation range of the preserve and the access to pristine habitat, it's no wonder that this reserve has become one of the most-revered birding sites in the country.

We have a full day to explore the network of well-marked trails near our lodge. The localized endemic Parker's Antbird may be one of the first birds we coerce from the vine tangles as we begin slowly hiking up towards the ridgeline along a forested trail. Andean (Highland) Motmot can often be quite confiding compared to undergrowth skulkers we'll be searching for, including the endemic Stiles's and Northern White-crowned Tapaculos, Chestnut-crowned Gnateater, Southern Nightingale-Wren (Scaly-breasted Wren), Chestnut-capped Brushfinch and the tough White-bellied Antpitta.

Bird flocks can be quite a spectacle in this area, and the higher we climb to reach the increasingly stunted, immaculate forest laden with bromeliads, the more chances we have for some of the rarer specialties of the reserve. These include the gorgeous but elusive endemic, Red-bellied Grackle, which moves in flocks uttering extraordinary shrieks as they search for fruits and invertebrates, stunning Black-and-gold Tanager and the fairly-recently described Chestnut-capped Piha.



Chestnut-capped Piha by Adam Riley

Sifting through flocks and listening for species we have not yet encountered, we'll continue exploring the area for birds such as the eye-searing, near endemic, Purplish-mantled Tanager, the near-endemic Sooty-headed Wren, Golden-headed Quetzal, Rufous-rumped Antwren, Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner, Golden-winged Manakin, Wing-barred Piprites, Blue-black Grosbeak, the shy White-throated Spadebill, and the widespread but very inconspicuous Lanceolated Monklet. Greenish Puffleg is

also found in this forest in low densities, so we will be keeping our eye out for likely-looking flowers to attract this specialty as well as an opportunity to find the outrageously beautiful Multicolored Tanager.



Gold-ringed Tanager by David Hoddinott

Our lodge overlooks the surrounding mountains, perfectly situated at the edge of the forest. We'll likely spend our afternoon here watching the active hummingbird feeders which could produce Green-crowned Brilliant, Western and Andean Emeralds, Steely-vented Hummingbird, Crowned Woodnymph and possibly the erratic Rufous-crested Coquette. Fruit feeders maintained by the friendly staff also attract a dazzling array of birds such as Black-winged Saltator, Great Thrush and a host of tanagers including Scrub, Silver throated, Golden and Crimson-backed. In the evenings, we look for the resident Tropical Screech Owl that is often found nearby.

On departing Arrierito Antioqueno, we may have some time to bird the drier, lowland habitats en route back to Medellin where we may find Bay Wren, Dusky Antbird and Red-billed Scythebill.

La Romera Park. The narrow watershed of La Romera Municipal 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 the endemic Stiles's Tapaculo that is found in the same dense undergrowth where Chestnut-capped Brush Finch also lurks. The hyper-energetic 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 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 endemic, Red-bellied Grackle moves around in small flocks, uttering extraordinary shrieks as they search for fruits and invertebrates.



Red-bellied Grackle by Adam Riley

RNA Las Tangaras. In this biodiverse region, some 2 000m above sea level on the Pacific Slope of the Andes, it seems that nature has decided to throw an additional splash of wild colour onto the palette, with the birds being as bright and colourful as the orchids, bromeliads, ferns and hanging

epiphytes that cover every visible foot of branch, trunk, or root. Even the ground is a riot of blooming plants and moss.

We'll spend some time birding near the lodge, holding vigil at the hummingbird and banana feeders set about the grounds. Some of the dazzling and bright species that visit the feeders and lodge grounds include Violet-tailed Sylph, the eye-searing Velvet-purple Coronet, scarce Empress Brilliant, Wedge-billed Hummingbird, Masked Trogon, Crimson-rumped Toucanet, and 12 species of Tanagers including Flame-rumped, Metallic-green, Fawn-breasted, Golden and the showy, endemic Crested Ant Tanager...right at the lodge!



Velvet-purple Coronet by Bobby Wilcox

Las Tangaras is home to some of Colombia's best-known and most mythical birds. From the fantastic Gold-ringed and Black-and-gold Tanagers, known in bygone eras of Colombia's difficult past as the "guerrilla tanagers", to the recently described Tatama (Alto Pisones) Tapaculo, which proves there are yet species to be found in accessible areas. Las Tangaras and the road travelling down from the mountain village of El Carmen into the foothills and Choco rainforest will provide some of the most, if not the most, exciting birds and birding of the entire tour. Mixed flocks are nearly constant; bird song emanates from behind every leaf the day long. No amount of enthusiasm would oversell this memorable site, remote in the forests and pastures of the rural West Andes.

The total bird list here seems more akin in quantity to a list from humid lowland rainforest, rather than a mountain slope. However, the mystique of the endemic habitats and species that populate Las Tangaras is given away by the high-quality endemic and range-restricted species present on the list.



Tanager Finch by Bobby Wilcox

Tantalising species we will search for along the car tracks and trails include Cloud Forest Pygmy Owl, Pacific Tuftedcheek, Golden-headed Quetzal, Toucan Barbet, Yellow-vented, Crimson-mantled and Powerful Woodpeckers, Uniform Treehunter, Star-chested Treerunner, Bicolored Antvireo, Yellow-breasted Antpitta, Rufous-breasted Antthrush, Tatama, Narino and Choco Tapaculos, Handsome Flycatcher, Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Olivaceous Piha, Choco Vireo, Beautiful Jay, Chestnut-breasted Wren,

Black Solitaire, Black-chinned Mountain Tanager, Purplish-mantled, Glistening-green, Rufous-throated and Flame-faced Tanagers, Indigo Flowerpiercer, and both Chestnut-breasted and Yellow-collared Chlorophonias – to name just some of the potential highlights!



Munchique Wren by Bobby Wilcox

Gorrion de Andivia. There are few places to access the high-elevation temperate forests that rim the upper ridges of the West Andes. One of the best places is at Gorrion de Andivia above the village of El Carmen del Atrato. With luck we will find all the high-elevation specials we are searching for, with the most notable of these being Black-collared Jay, the vociferous Munchique Wood Wren, skulking Tanager Finch, and the bulky, glowing White-capped Tanager.

Other species we may find include Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied and Slaty-backed Chat-Tyrants, Rufous Spinetail, Lacrimose and Hooded Mountain Tanagers, Black and Spillmann's Tapaculos, White-browed Spinetail, Black-capped Hemispingus, Citrine Warbler, Speckled Hummingbird, Green-and-black and Barred Fruiteaters, the rarely seen Chestnut-crested Cotinga, small flocks of White-capped Parrot, Rufous-headed Pygmy Tyrant, Grey-hooded Bush Tanager, Grass-green Tanager. Although very rare here, previous tours have even had the endemic Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer and Dusky Starfrontlet here.

Bosques de Quebrada Sinifaná. We will make a stop in a dry forest patch for some of Colombia's most range-restricted species including Greyish Piculet, Apical Flycatcher and the recently described (2012) Antioquia Wren.

Jardin. We'll visit one of the most accessible lekking sites on earth of the exquisite Andean Cock-of-the-rock. This can be an overwhelming frenzy of more than twenty eye-searing males in full raspy song and ostentatious display, while we marvel from only a few feet away! In the river below, we will scan for White-capped Dipper feeding along the rocks, plus several possible tanagers including the boldly pattered Saffron-crowned, Lacrimose Mountain, vivid Grass-green and near-endemic Flame-rumped.



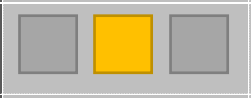
Andean Cock-of-the-rock by Bobby Wilcox

Loro Orejiamarillo Reserve. Setting out this morning with 4x4 jeeps along a dirt road, we will enter the highland reserve of Loro Orejiamarillo above Jardin, also known as Las Ventanas. This ProAves owned reserve is frequented by nearly 600 Yellow-eared Parrots, a critically endangered species that use the higher montane forest with tall wax palms for roosting, feeding, and nesting.

Obtaining views of this diagnostically green and yellow patterned parrot will be our primary target early this morning before we continue birding along the little-travelled road through the reserve.

Here Black-billed Mountain Toucan, the near-endemic monotypic Tanager Finch and bands of Black-collared Jay are likely to make an appearance, along with a superb selection of montane specialities that include White-browed Spinetail, Rufous-headed Pygmy Tyrant, Yellow-bellied Chat-Tyrant, Yellow-vented Woodpecker, the radiant Tourmaline Sunangel and Strong-billed Woodcreeper. Although rare throughout its range, this forest also supports a small population of the arboreal Chestnut-crested Cotinga and we will keep an eye peeled for this highly sought-after species.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Moderate to difficult. Endemic and target focussed trip. Not suitable for dedicated photographers; inexperienced birders; or anyone with mobility or health challenges. Tour pace is fast.
Birding Ease		Challenging. Several skulkers and low-density targets that require repeated efforts.
Accommodation		Comfortable, some lodgings are simple/basic.
Walking / Trails		Moderate to difficult walking, mostly on flat ground with variable substrate. High altitude walking is mostly downhill or kept to short distances, but some optional steeper hikes.
Vehicles / Roads		Several drives, some long or impacted by heavy city traffic. Mostly sealed roads between towns, changing to dirt in remoter areas. Mountain passes & eroded dirt roads can be bumpy. Risk of landslides & road closures.
Photography		Reasonable to good. Typical forest lighting difficulties. Several feeders.
Annoyances		Temperatures vary from hot & humid, to cold at altitude. Rain is to be expected.

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 10;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- 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.

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 you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is 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. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- This tour involves moderate to arduous walking and hiking. We will be at high altitude on some days and many days we will be on our feet for most of the day. Guests must be in good health fitness to undertake these tours.
- 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.
- The hotels are of comfortable, yet sometimes basic/simple standard.
- 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.
- There will be times where we switch to smaller 4x4 vehicles where necessary.
- Traffic in and around the larger cities of Bogota and Medellin is often heavy, which impacts our time in vehicles.
- We expect the weather to be mostly dry and often sunny; it can be hot and occasionally humid in the lowlands.
- At higher elevations, it can be quite cold, especially at night. There is likely to be some rain, which can be heavy.
- Our guides are experienced Neotropical birders who have led numerous tours to Latin America.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour will depart from José María Córdova International Airport, Medellin (IATA: MDE) on day 1 and, as it is an arrival day, you are welcome to arrive any time before 17:00. The tour will conclude mid-morning in Medellin on day 10 after breakfast.

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.

El Dorado International Airport, Bogotá (IATA: BOG) is the main port of entry and exit for international flights to Colombia.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.