Colombia

Perijá & Santa Marta Endemics

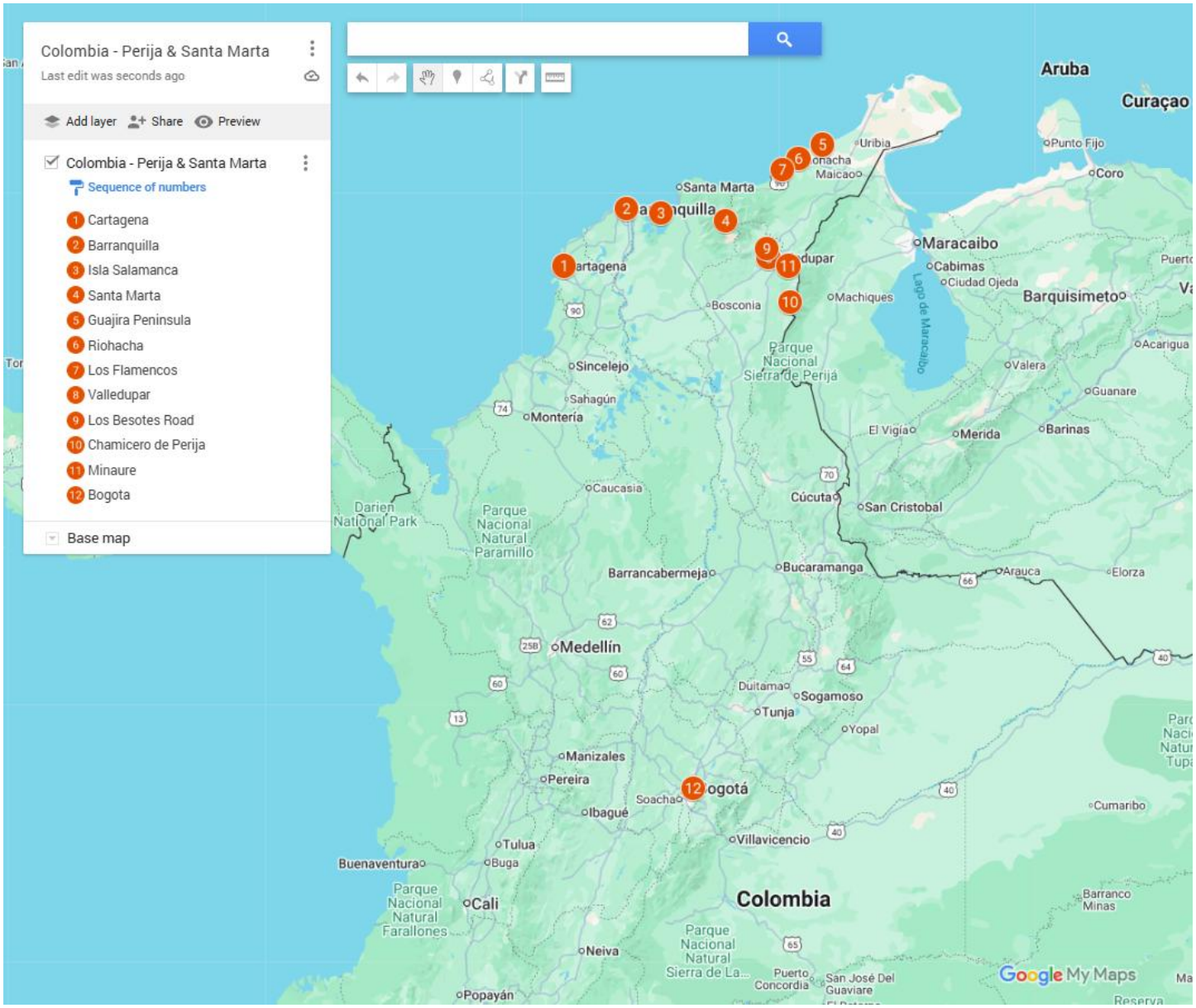


Santa Marta Blossomcrown by Bobby Wilcox

Colombia has more bird species than any other country; a staggering 1 900 species occur within the confines of this incredible nation, nearly 100 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 recently described Perija Tapaculo, Perija Starfrontlet, Perija Metaltail, Perija Thistletail and other proposed splits that require more conclusive documentation.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival into Cartagena**
Day 2	**Cartagena to Barranquilla**
Day 3	**Barranquilla to Santa Marta via PNN Isla Salamanca**
Day 4	**Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta**
Day 5	**San Lorenzo Ridge, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta**
Day 6	**Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta to Riohacha via the Guajira Peninsula**
Day 7	**Riohacha to Valledupar**
Day 8	**Los Besotes Road to Chamicero de Perija**
Days 9 & 10	**Chamicero de Perija**
Day 11	**Minaure to Valledupar; flight to Bogota & final departure**



Birding sites in detail



Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Cartagena. Formerly known as Cartagena de Indias, the superbly preserved old town is certainly worth a few hours of exploration and sightseeing for anyone arriving a day early. 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.

Our tour will start with a visit to 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.

Cartagena to Barranquilla. As we start moving east towards Barranquilla, we'll make several stop to bird the numerous marshes and drier scrubby habitat for the likes of Northern Screamer amongst a host of more regular waterfowl as well as Russet-throated Puffbird, Brown-throated Parakeet, Caribbean Hornero and Carib Grackle.

PNN Isla Salamanca. We start our day searching for perhaps the most range-restricted hummingbird species of the week: 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 tour off with a bang!



Santa Marta Screech Owl by Rob Williams

Santa Marta. The isolated Santa Marta Mountain range supports a phenomenal array of biodiversity, including numerous endemics and localised bird specialities,



Santa Marta Bush Tyrant by Bobby Wilcox

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 through the foothills, 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.

The lodge hummingbird feeders buzz with activity, with the likes of White-tailed Starfrontlet and tiny Santa Marta Woodstar, the endemic race of Tyrian Metaltail, and sometimes a surprise such as Lazuline Sabrewing. 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.

El Dorado. Time permitting, we may sto pin at El Dorado to check the compost for the scarce Black-fronted Wood Quail, Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Black-hooded Thrush, gaudy Blue-naped Chlorophonia and Sierra Nevada Brushfinch.

Santa Marta – 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 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.



Santa Marta Antpitta by Adam Riley



Santa Marta Parakeets by Adam Riley

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.

Minca & surrounds. 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!

As we descend towards Minca, we'll again 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. We'll try to 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.

Around the village itself, 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.

Hummingbird feeders around our lodge typically hold Steely-vented Hummingbird, Coppery Emerald, White-necked Jacobin and Rufous-tailed Hummingbird.

Minca to the Guajira Peninsula. We'll change gears and begin heading eastward into the increasingly arid Guajira Peninsula. 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.



Chestnut Piculet by Rob Williams



Vermilion Cardinal by Clayton Burne

Guajira Peninsula. The cactus-studded scrub and xerophytic vegetation support several Colombian near endemics that share only a minuscule corner, barely accessible, in north-western Venezuela. 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.

Los Flamencos National Park. It doesn't take long for the temperature to warm up in these desert conditions, so we 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.

Valledupar area. 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. 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!



Glaucous Tanager by Stephan Lorenz

Perija Lodge (Chamicero Reserve). The Chamicero Reserve was purchased in



Perija Thistletail by Bobby Wilcox

2014 after the discovery of good forest tracts on accessible land for the entire suite of Sierra de Perija endemics, including the recently described Perija Tapaculo, Perija Antpitta, Perija Starfrontlet and another 30 odd subspecies that need further research. The local form of Emerald Toucanet and Rufous Spinetail 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 1 800 hectares of temperate and treeline forest, sub-paramo scrub and true paramo grassland, while the road in transects several fincas with intact native vegetation ranging from dry forests at 800m through lush foothill and lower subtropical habitats. Our focus this morning will be directed to the higher elevation forests and scrub, where the harder-to-reach Perija endemics occur. Perija Metaltail, Perija Thistletail, Perija Starfrontlet and Perija Antpitta only occur in treeline scrub and forests above the lodge, all accessible by vehicle. The road up is a wonderful transect of foothill to mid-elevation cloud forest, though some human interference and habitat degradation has occurred up to the lower border of the reserve proper.

In the paramo, we'll be searching for Perija Metaltail and Perija Thistletail, though many other splendid species occur 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, apparently, fairly common! Many species are attracted to the feeders at the lodge itself, including Black Flowerpiercer, Amethyst-throated Sunangel, Mountain Velvetbreast and both Chestnut-capped and Slaty Brushfinches all regularly putting in appearances, while the toucanet and other fruit-eating birds only come sporadically.



(Perija) Lacrimose Mountain Tanager by Rob Williams

We'll also bird the 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.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Moderate. 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		Moderate to difficult. Several skulkers and low-density targets that require repeated efforts. Many species that require patience, persistence & repeat attempts (ie: Antpittas & Tapaculos).
Accommodation		Mostly comfortable, one lodge is simple to basic.
Walking / Trails		Moderate walking, mostly on flat ground with variable substrate. High altitude walking is mostly downhill or kept to short distances, but some optional steeper/difficult hikes.
Vehicles / Roads		Several drives, some long or impacted by 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		Occasional landslide interruptions, small biting insects. 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 lunch on day 11.
- 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 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 varies from reasonably basic at Perija Lodge to good.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour begins with a welcome dinner in Cartagena in the evening of Day 1. The tour concludes after an early morning flight from Valledupar to Bogota on day 11.

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.

Rafael Núñez International Airport, Cartagena (IATA: CTG) is the main port of entry, whilst El Dorado International Airport, Bogotá (IATA: BOG) is the main port of departure for this tour.

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.