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BIRDING TOURS COLOMBIA



10-days tour

COLOMBIA: GOLDEN BIRDS OF THE CENTRAL ANDES

Birding in Colombia along the Cauca Valley & core of the Central Andes with the greatest variety of birds in dry tropical forests, premontane forests, cloud-forests and tree-line ecosystems.

This medium-length tour (9 nights / 10 days) aims at seeing an extraordinary collection of birds, including a large number of endemic & near-endemic Antpittas, Tanagers and Flycatchers, along with many beautiful Hummingbirds and Mountain Toucans. Tour itinerary has been carefully planned in order to cover the greatest number and variety of nature ecosystems, in a big altitudinal gradient from 4,200 to 13,100 ft (1,300 – 4,000 m).

You will visit the most magnificent landscapes of the western slope of the Central Andes of Colombia within the buffer zone of Los Nevados National Park, where well protected watersheds are home to some of Colombia's nicest, rarest and most threatened species.

The tour provides a list of 523 plausible species! This includes 67 species of flycatchers, 63 species of tanagers, 49 species of hummingbirds, 29 species of furnarids, 13 species of woodpeckers, 11 species of antpittas and 11 species of wrens! This is a huge kaleidoscope of feathered jewels!



Los Nevados National Park seen from the air: In front, Nevado del Tolima (conic), on the left Nevado de Santa Isabel (covered with a small cloud) and on the back right the big Nevado del Ruiz (5,400m). The conic Crater La Olleta (extinct, not active) lies further back in between Santa Isabel and Ruiz.

The trip at a quick glance:

- Day 1: Arrival at Cali's Alfonso Bonilla Aragón international airport, meet & greet, and transfer to a city hotel.
- Day 2: Birding iconic Km18, Finca La Florida & Finca Alejandría.
- Day 3: Finca La Florida, Doña Dora's site & Atuncela dry forest.
- Day 4: Sonso marsh & Parque de la Uva. Transfer to Otún-Quimbaya.
- Day 5: Birding at Otún-Quimbaya Wildlife Sanctuary & Cameduadua marsh.
- Day 6: Tinamú Nature Reserve & transfer to Manizales.
- Day 7: Río Blanco Nature Reserve.
- Day 8: Hacienda El Bosque.
- Day 9: Los Nevados National Park.
- Day 10: Transfer to Pereira's Matecaña international airport and departures back home.

Tour highlights:

- Having a chance to see 49 species of hummingbirds and 63 species of tanagers, most at very close range.
- Watching the magnificent endemic Multicolored Tanager, and the Red-headed Barbet and Crimson-rumped Toucanet coming to the same feeder.
- Enjoying the calm presence of the endemic Chestnut Wood-quail and the elegant White-throated Quail-dove in their home habitat.
- Birding the sub-xerophytic enclave of Atuncela, a unique dry forest surrounded by one of the rainiest regions on earth! Harboring endemics such as Apical Flycatcher, Grayish Piculet and Colombian Chachalaca.
- Visiting the scrubland of the Sonso marsh in search of the Dwarf & Little Cuckoo, Jet Antbird, Bar-crested Antshrike, Great Antshrike, Cinereous Becard, Cocoa Woodcreeper and many other specialties.
- Visiting a lek of the splendid Golden-collared Manakin!
- Many photo opportunities of stunning birds! Although this is not a bird photography tour, many great chances will be there! At 19 different feeders!!
- Seeing a large number of stunning hummingbirds, including the Long-tailed Sylph, White-booted Racket-tail, Green Thorntail, Velvet-purple Coronet, Tourmaline Sunangel, Crowned Woodnymph, Andean Emerald and many more.
- Sighting a large list of charming tanagers, such as the Scarlet-bellied & Blue-winged Mountain-tanager; White-capped, Flame-rumped, Beryl-spangled, Blue-capped, Grass-green, Saffron-crowned, Golden, Blue-necked and Bay-headed Tanager, among many others.
- Exploring the vegetation for the presence of strong endemics such as the Rufous-fronted Parakeet, Parker's Antbird, Stiles's Tapaculo, Buffy Helmetcrest and Crested Ant-tanager.
- Good possibilities for seeing the White-capped Tanager, the Black-billed Mountain-toucan and the very rare Masked Saltator!
- Enjoying the smashing and glamorous looks of the Golden-headed Quetzal and Masked Trogon in a superb cloudforest.
- Feeling the jubilant presence of the Sword-billed Hummingbird and the blissful endemic Buffy Helmetcrest.
- Viewing handsome antpittas at very close range: the Crescent-faced & Hooded Antpitta, the endemic Brown-banded Antpitta, beautiful Bicolored & Chestnut-crowned Antpitta and the small Slate-crowned Antpitta, among others.
- Spotting some of the rarest parrots, parakeets & allies, such as the Rusty-faced Parrot, Golden-plumed & Scarlet-fronted Parakeet, and Spectacled Parrotlet.
- Experiencing the 1994 rediscovery of the endemic Cauca Guan thanks to the serendipitous planting of the exotic Ash tree that not only favored the Cauca Guan but also boosted the populations of the rare Red-ruffed Fruitcrow and the Howler Monkeys!
- Admiring the magnificent landscapes of the Andes at Los Nevados National Park: the Ruiz Volcano, snow peaks, extinguished craters, small lagoons, isolated paramos & tree-line ecosystems.
- Scanning the waters for the presence of Torrent Duck and White-capped Dipper on fast, crystalline Andean rivers.
- Building your life list with a considerable number of Colombian endemics, near-endemics & specialties.

DETAILED ITINERARY:

Day 1: Arrival in Cali's Alfonso Bonilla Aragón international airport, meet & greet, and transfer to hotel.

Tour takes advantage of international (American Airlines, LATAM, Avianca, others) & domestic flights (Avianca, others, from Bogota) landing in the city of Cali, located in the southern end of the Cauca Valley. After immigration procedures and luggage pick-up, we will meet & transfer (45min) to a comfortable hotel in the city of Cali.

Day 2: Birding iconic Km 18, Finca La Florida & Finca Alejandría.

After an early breakfast we will transfer to Kilometer 18 above Cali (40min drive), lodging at Finca La Florida, a well-known site to enjoy montane hummingbirds & tanagers, with very active feeders, nice gardens & gentle forest trails. Admittedly, Km18 belongs to the Western Andes and for the first two days of the trip we take advantage of this magnificent locality near Cali.

We will bird all the morning at Finca La Florida, with an afternoon visit to Finca Alejandría for more fabulous hummingbirds & tanagers. We will also stroll along the forested road to Dapa for key species.

Main targets for the day include the endemics Multicolored Tanager, Colombian Chachalaca and the usually rare and hard to see Chestnut Wood-quail, for whom a dedicated feeder has been established. The Scaled Antpitta visits a feeder seasonally. The widespread but otherwise difficult to see Little Tinamou and White-throated Quail-dove come to a third feeder deep in the forest.

The list of hummingbirds for this day is extensive, including the Purple-throated Woodstar (NE), the White-necked Jacobin, Green & Tawny-bellied Hermit, Brown Violetear, Green & Sparkling Violetear, Tourmaline Sunangel, Speckled Hummingbird, Greenish Puffleg, Long-tailed Sylph, Bronzy Inca, Buff-tailed Coronet, White-booted Racket-tail, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Crowned Woodnymph, Andean Emerald, Black-throated Mango and Steely-vented Hummingbird.

Tanagers and fruit-eating species at this altitude (1,900mt = 6,200ft) are abundant, including Red-headed Barbet, Southern Emerald & Crimson-rumped Toucanets, Orange-bellied Euphonia, Green Honeycreeper, Flame-rumped Tanager, Blue-capped Tanager, Blue-gray & Palm Tanager, Blue-winged Mountain-tanager, Golden-naped Tanager, Black-capped Tanager, Scrub Tanager (NE), Beryl-spangled Tanager, Blue-and-black Tanager, Metallic-green Tanager, Saffron-crowned Tanager, Golden Tanager and Hepatic Tanager, among others.

Garden flowers are often visited by the Western Emerald, Masked, Rusty & White-sided Flowerpiercer.



The endemic **Colombian Chachalaca** (VU) can be seen at Kilometer 18 & El Vínculo Reserve.

The forested road to Dapa is a very birdy one, with good chances for seeing the Scarlet-fronted Parakeet (NT), Masked Trogon, Red-faced Spinetail, Streak-capped Treehunter, Lineated & Montane Foliage-Gleaner, Plain Antvireo, Montane Woodcreeper, Uniform Antshrike, Nariño Tapaculo (NE), Golden-bellied Flycatcher, Bright-rumped Attila, Barred Becard, Black-billed Peppershrike, Northern Chestnut-breasted Wren, Andean Solitaire, Black-winged Saltator and Slate-throated Redstart, among many others.

We will be attentive to spot other specialties such as the Golden-headed & Crested Quetzal, Highland Tinamou, Ornate Hawk-eagle, Yellow-vented Woodpecker, Green-and-black & Scaled Fruiteater, Golden-winged Manakin, and others.

Day 3: From Finca La Florida to Doña Dora's place & Atuncela dry forest, with an overnight at Buga.

With a good early morning coffee on our hands, we will enjoy the birds that come to explore the light screens that have been attracting moths and bugs throughout the night. These birds include the gracious Gray-breasted Wood-wren, the charming Russet-crowned Warbler, Southern House Wren, Slate-throated Redstart, Lineated Foliage-gleaner and Chestnut-capped Brushfinch, among others. When the migrants are present, the Canada Warbler and the Black-and-white Warbler like to perform quick searches for bugs.

After breakfast we will transfer (1hr) to Doña Dora's place at the Upper Anchicayá Valley. This is the Pacific slope of the Western Andes, where a different set of birds thrive. We will spend the entire morning scouting the feeders in the garden and the upper deck, visited by a wide array of birds.

This will be a good opportunity to see the amazing Toucan Barbet (NT), Black-headed Brushfinch (NE), Choco Brushfinch, Rufous-throated Tanager (NE), Glistening-green

and Silver-throated Tanager. Sometimes the Chestnut-headed & Russet-backed Oropendola and Crimson-rumped Toucanet show up to devour bananas.

A nice set of hummingbirds is present, including the White-whiskered Hermit, Rufous-gaped Hillstar (NE), Empress Brilliant (NE), Velvet-purple Coronet (NE), Green Thorntail, Crowned Woodnymph, Andean Emerald, Brown Violetear, Purple-throated Woodstar (NE) and Purple-bibbed Whitetip (NE), among others.

The upper deck looks directly into the tree tops where many species forage and move through, including the Black-chinned Mountain-tanager (NE), Spot-crowned Barbet, Golden-faced Tyrannulet, Olive-striped Flycatcher, Red-faced Spinetail, Moustached Puffbird, Grayish Piculet (E), Slate-colored Grosbeak, White-lined Tanager, Smoky-brown Woodpecker, Plumbeous & Ruddy Pigeon, Gray-and-gold Tanager (NE) and Common Tody-flycatcher.

Along the forest edges it's possible to find birds such as the endemics Crested Ant-tanager & Tatama Tapaculo, and the near-endemic Choco Tapaculo. Also, the Ornate Flycatcher, Black-headed Tody-flycatcher, Sooty-headed Wren (NE), Bay Wren, Andean Solitaire and Yellow-throated Chlorospingus.

Raptors include the Barred Hawk, Black Hawk-eagle, Ornate Hawk-eagle and Swallow-tailed Kite, among others.

After lunch we will head towards our next destination (Buga), birding *en route* the gorgeous sub-xerophytic (semi-dry) scrubland at the small village of Atuncela in the Dagua river canyon. This enclave of dry weather in the otherwise very humid Pacific (Choco) Bioregion is home to an unusual set of birds adapted to the rigor brought by the scarcity of rains.

We will leisurely walk along gravel farm roads with open views into the splendid scenery and vegetation where birds often perch at exposed branches and cacti. Our main targets will include three Colombian endemics: the tiny Grayish Piculet, the Apical Flycatcher and the Colombian Chachalaca (VU), but many other birds will also be high on our search list, including the Bar-crested Antshrike (NE), Blue-headed Sapphire (NE), Scrub Tanager (NE), the beautiful Spectacled Parrotlet and the striking Ruby-topaz Hummingbird.

Specialties include the uncommon Ultramarine Grosbeak (NE), Dwarf & Dark-billed Cuckoo, Orange-crowned Euphonia and Chivi Vireo.

Many interesting and nice birds are possible at Atuncela, including a wide variety of flycatchers, such as the Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Yellow-olive Flatbill, Mouse-colored Tyrannulet, Southern Beardless-tyrannulet, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, Greenish & Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Streaked Flycatcher, Rusty-margined Flycatcher, Sooty-headed & Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet, and the rare Black-tailed Flycatcher, among many others.



The Colombian endemic **Apical Flycatcher** can be seen at El Vínculo Reserve and Sonso Lagoon.

But there is a bunch of birds to enjoy besides endemics and flycatchers, such as the Squirrel & Striped Cuckoo, Spot-breasted, Red-crowned and Lineated Woodpecker, Cocoa & Streak-headed Woodcreeper, Cinereous Becard, Crimson-backed & Guira Tanager, and Black-striped Sparrow, among others.

We will keep an eye for the always nice Vermilion Flycatcher, Crested Bobwhite, Tropical Mockingbird, Common Ground-dove, White-tipped Dove, Gray Seedeater, Yellow-faced, Blue-backed & Dull-colored Grassquit, Streaked Saltator, Pale-breasted Spinetail, Saffron Finch and Clay-colored Thrush.

This is the proper habitat for the Hook-billed Kite that thrives on ground snails, Aplomado Falcon, White-tailed & Short-tailed Hawk, Crested & Yellow-headed Caracara and American Kestrel.

After birding Atuncela we will drive to Buga for a good meal and comfortable stay at a nice colonial hotel.

Day 4: Birding the gallery forests & scrubland at Sonso marsh; afternoon transfer to Otún-Quimbaya Wildlife Sanctuary birding *en route* Parque de La Uva.

After a good breakfast, we will transfer (10min) to nearby Sonso marsh. This is a very birdy site encompassing a diverse collection of habitats, including gallery forests, scrubland & wetland.

The Horned Screamer and a threatened resident subspecies of Cinnamon Teal will be high in the target list, along with Black-bellied, White-faced & Fulvous Whistling-Duck. Glossy & Bare-faced Ibis are also present, along with Black-Crowned Night-heron, Snowy & Great Egret, Cocoi Heron, Striated Heron, Little Blue Heron, Limpkin,

Anhinga, Snail Kite, Purple Gallinule, Wattled Jacana, Black-necked Stilt and many other aquatic and riparian species.

But most interestingly, the semi-dry forests of Sonso Lagoon provide the right habitats for several endemics and specialties, including the Grayish Piculet (E), Apical Flycatcher (E), Spectacled Parrotlet, Bar-crested Antshrike (NE), Cinereous Becard and Jet Antbird.

Also of interest are the Dwarf & Striped Cuckoo, the salient Common Potoo, Yellow-olive Flatbill, Greater Ani, Pale-vented Pigeon, Common Potoo, Red-crowned, Spot-breasted & Lineated Woodpecker, Great Antshrike, Pale-breasted Spinetail, Yellow Oriole, Yellow-hooded Blackbird, Masked Cardinal & Oriole Blackbird (these two from introduced populations), among others.

After birding Sonso Lagoon and a good lunch at a road restaurant, we will head north towards the city of Pereira (2.5hr drive), crossing the city (30min) and lodging at Hotel Kumanday in the small village of La Florida, in the vicinity of the Otún-Quimbaya Wildlife Sanctuary.

Time and weather depending, we will bird *en route* at Parque de La Uva for Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, continuing to the Otún River for Torrent Duck, White-capped Dipper & Torrent Tyrannulet.

Day 5: Otún-Quimbaya Wildlife Sanctuary & Cameduadua marsh in Chinchiná.

This day we will bird the lush pre-montane forest at the Otún-Quimbaya Wildlife Sanctuary, on smooth terrain. Once thought to be extinct but rediscovered in 1994, the endemic Cauca Guan thrives in the Ash tree plantations. Gladly, the place harbors healthy populations of Red-ruffed Fruitcrow and endemic Chestnut Wood-quail. With luck, we may encounter a mix flock with the endemic Multicolored Tanager. In the undergrowth, we will look for the endemic Stiles's Tapaculo and the master singer – the Northern Chestnut-breasted Wren.

Key species include the gracious Hooded Antpitta (NE & VU), the vocal but otherwise hard to see Moustached Antpitta (EN), Wattled Guan (NT), endemic Crested Ant-Tanager along the ravines, Rufous-breasted Flycatcher (NE), and the rare Rufous-bellied Nighthawk gliding on early mornings or late afternoon.



Endemic **Multicolored Tanager** (female) at Otún-Quimbaya Sanctuary.

Nice birds to look for include the Golden-headed Quetzal, Collared Trogon, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, White-capped Tanager, Golden-plumed (VU) & Scarlet-fronted (NT) Parakeet, and Speckle-faced & Bronze-winged Parrot. And among the hummingbirds, the Green-fronted Lancebill, White-booted Racket-tail, Bronzy Inca, Tawny-bellied Hermit, Western Emerald and White-throated Daggerbill.



Red-ruffed Fruitcrow seen on the road to Otún-Quimbaya Wildlife Sanctuary above Pereira: Here, a healthy population of this otherwise rare species shares the nice forests with the endemic - and once thought to be extinct - **Cauca Guan**.

We may bump into mixed flocks of birds skulking through the low shrubs and vine tangles, with a variety of woodcreepers, furnarids & allies, such as the Streaked Xenops, Montane & Lineated Foliage-gleaner, Streak-capped Treehunter, Strong-billed, Black-banded and Montane Woodcreeper. In the undergrowth, the Spotted Barbtail, Slaty & Azara's Spinetail, Orange-billed Nightingale-thrush, White-naped Brushfinch, Three-striped & Russet-crowned Warbler.

Among the flycatchers we will seek for the very special Bronze-olive Pygmy-tyrant, Ashy-headed & Plumbeous-crowned Tyrannulet, Variegated & Marble-faced Bristle-tyrant, Streak-necked, Slaty-capped, Golden-bellied, Pale-edged & Dusky-capped Flycatcher.

Our eyes will screen the forest edges for the beautiful Green Jay, Golden-olive & Acorn Woodpecker, and the Red-headed Barbet, and ears will be tuned for the distinctive calls of the White-winged Becard, Pale-eyed Thrush and Andean Solitaire. More melodious calls will surely come from the Northern Chestnut-breasted Wren, Chestnut-crowned Antpitta, Whiskered Wren and Gray-breasted Wood-Wren.

Among the aquatic and riparian birds, we will look for the graceful Torrent Duck, White-capped Dipper, Ringed Kingfisher, Torrent Tyrannulet and Black Phoebe.

After lunch we will head further north (2hr) to Tinamú Lodge in the vicinity of Manizales, birding *en route* the Camaguada marsh, a small but very productive wetland conveniently located at mid-distance between Pereira and Manizales.



Male **Bar-crested Antshrike** (*Thamnophilus multistriatus* - NE): an amazing skulker at semi-open areas, favoring coffee plantations and life-fences in the region.

Most deserved birds at Camaguada marsh include the Grayish Piculet (E), Blackish Rail, the regionally rare Olive-crowned Yellowthroat, the awesome Great Antshrike,

Bar-crested Antshrike (NE) and the beautiful Spectacled Parrotlet. The regrowth at the edges of the marsh is home to Striped & Dwarf Cuckoo, Spot-breasted & Lineated Woodpecker, Slaty & Pale-breasted Spinetail, Sooty-headed Tyrannulet, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Ruddy-breasted & Gray Seedeater, Thick-billed Seed-Finch, Grayish & Streaked Saltator, Scrub (NE), Blue-necked & Bay-headed Tanager, and Yellow-hooded & Red-breasted Blackbird, among others.

Aquatic birds here include the Least & Pied-billed Grebe, Neotropical Cormorant, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Striated Heron, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron and the abundant Bare-faced Ibis. The Ringed, Amazon & Green Kingfisher are also possible, as well as the Black-necked Stilt.

This is a good place for enjoying the beauty of the Purple Gallinule, Pied Water-Tyrant, American Coot, Wattled (Chestnut-backed) Jacana and Common Gallinule. Also, Black-bellied & Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Blue-winged & Cinnamon Teal, which are seasonally present.

After birding Camaguadua we will drive (45min) to Tinamu Lodge, a unique forest remnant in the heart of Colombia's coffee region.

Day 6: Tinamú Birding Lodge.

Located at an altitude of 1,400 meter or roughly 4,600 feet, Tinamú Lodge hosts a dynamic second growth surrounded by pastures, coffee plantations, scrubland and scattered trees. It is a very birdy place, with a nice set of feeders in the garden.

Trails are nicely settled, and they hold many specialties, including the endemics Parker's Antbird, Grayish Piculet & Colombian (Speckle-breasted) Wren. Also, Little Tinamou, Blue-lored Antbird, Gray-headed Dove, Moustached Puffbird, Bar-crested (NE) & Great Antshrike, Jet Antbird, Scaled Antpitta, Rufous-naped Greenlet, Golden-collared Manakin, Common Potoo, Scaly-breasted Wren, Cocoa, Streak-headed & Plain-brown Woodcreeper, among others.



The endemic **Parker's Antbird** (male) can be seen at Tinamú Birding Lodge.

Birds often seen at the forest edges & trails include the Bronze-winged & Blue-headed Parrot, Brown-throated Parakeet, Spectacled Parrotlet, Squirrel Cuckoo, Lineated, Spot-breasted & Red-crowned Woodpecker, Cinereous & White-winged Becard, Black-chested Jay, White-breasted Wood-Wren, Golden-crowned Warbler, Tropical Parula, Buff-rumped Warbler, Yellow-backed Oriole and others.

A fair number of flycatchers & allies can be seen, including Sooty-headed & Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet, Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Yellow-olive Flatbill, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Mouse-colored & Golden-faced Tyrannulet, Scale-crested Pygmy-tyrant, Common Tody-flycatcher, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, Vermilion Flycatcher, Cattle Tyrant, Rusty-margined & Streaked Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, Fork-tailed Flycatcher and Dusky-capped Flycatcher, among others.

The forest is home to hummingbirds that do not attend feeders, including the Stripe-throated, Rufous-breasted & Green Hermit. Hummingbirds that visit the feeders includes the White-necked Jacobin, Long-billed Starthroat, Black-throated Mango, White-vented Plumeleteer, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird and Steely-vented Hummingbird.

The ripe bananas attract a wide diversity of tanagers, including: Flame-rumped, Guira, Gray-headed, Hepatic, Summer, White-lined, Scrub, Blue-necked, Crimson-backed and Bay-headed Tanager.

These feeders also attract the Andean Motmot, Green Honeycreeper, Thick-billed Euphonia and the Black-billed & Clay-colored Thrush.

Many other birds are found along the gravel road that leads to the reserve, including the rare Large-billed Seed-Finch, Crested Bobwhite and the beautiful Golden-rumped Euphonia. Also, Pale-breasted & Slaty Spinetail, Thick-billed Seed-Finch, Yellow-

faced & Blue-black Grassquit, Gray, Yellow-bellied & Ruddy-breasted Seedeater, and the Buff-rumped Warbler, among others.

Finalizing the day we will head to Manizales (45min drive), a splendid city engraved in the mid-elevations of the mountain and close to Río Blanco, Hacienda El Bosque and Los Nevados National Park.

Day 7: Birding Río Blanco.

After a good 6am hotel breakfast we will transfer (30min) into the wonderful Río Blanco watershed, an extremely bird-rich area protected by Aguas de Manizales, the city's water supply company.

Here, we will visit a series of feeding stations for antpittas, where earthworms are offered to these graceful and seldom seen birds. The main figures here are the endemic and endangered Brown-banded Antpitta, the near-endemic and vulnerable Bicolored Antpitta, the beautiful Chestnut-crowned Antpitta and the small, semi-arboreal Slate-crowned Antpitta.

Gray-browed Brush-finch and Green-and-black Fruiteater are graceful birds that have learned to take advantage of the antpitta's popularity, and they also come to feed on the earthworms. The Chestnut-naped Antpitta used to visit the feeders, but for some unknown reason it quit coming. Thus, this antpitta needs to be searched the original way, as a timid inhabitant of dense undergrowth.



Left: The endemic **Brown-banded Antpitta** (*Grallaria milleri*). **Right:** Near-endemic & Vulnerable **Bicolored Antpitta** (*Grallaria rufocinerea*), seen both at Río Blanco (Manizales).

We will then stroll around the local road and trails, looking for a close encounter with rich mixed flocks, having a pretty good chance to enjoy beautiful and special birds such as the Crimson-mantled, Yellow-vented & Bar-bellied Woodpeckers, Black-banded, Tyrannine & Montane Woodcreepers.

Tanagers accompanying mixed flocks will likely include the Blue-capped, Beryl-spangled, Golden, Black-capped, Blue-and-Black & Grass-green Tanager. Mixed flocks will also hold a wide array of Hemispingus and bamboo specialists, including the Black-capped, Superciliaried, Oleaginous & Black-eared Hemispingus. Furthermore, we may spot an assembly of beautiful Mountain-tanagers, including the elegant Buff-breasted, Hooded, Blue-winged and Lachrymose Mountain-tanager.

The Plushcap, a jewel of nature, may also be seen following mixed flocks.

Nice flycatchers that can be seen include the Streak-necked, Rufous-breasted (NE), Cinnamon and Pale-edged Flycatcher. Also, the very elegant Chestnut-bellied Chat-Tyrant and the Black-capped Tyrannulet, among others.

The Cotingas are represented by the Green-and-black Fruiteater and Dusky Piha. We may very well hear - or luckily see - a handful of Tapaculos confined to dense thickets, mainly the Blackish, Spillman's & Ash-colored Tapaculo.

Surely, we will invest special efforts for a view of the astonishing Ocellated Tapaculo and much appreciated skulkers – the most amazing Flammulated Treehunter, the graceful Streak-headed Antbird and the always beautiful Rufous Spinetail.

The very graceful Rufous-crowned Tody-flycatcher might show up in the bamboo tangles, in close proximity perhaps with the Sharpe's Wren, Yellow-bellied Chat-tyrant, Yellow-billed Cacique, Mountain Wren and Gray-breasted Wood-wren.



From left to right: The striking **Ocellated Tapaculo**, **Flammulated Treehunter** and **Chestnut-naped Antpitta** can be seen in Río Blanco.

Lunch will be at the “hummingbird house”, where more than 23 species of hummingbirds have been reported visiting the feeders and gardens. The most consistent visitors of garden flowers and feeders are the Tourmaline Sunangel and Buff-tailed Coronet - the two most abundant species -, White-bellied Woodstar, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Collared & Bronzy Inca, Long-tailed Sylph, Speckled Hummingbird, Lesser and Sparkling Violetear. In the gardens we will likely see the White-sided, Rusty and Masked Flowerpiercer.

Rio Blanco is a place for big specialties including the rare Masked Saltator (NT), Rusty-faced Parrot (NE & VU), Golden-plumed Parakeet (VU), Black-billed Mountain-Toucan (NT), Powerful Woodpecker, Golden-headed Quetzal, Brown-billed Scythebill, Red-hooded Tanager, White-capped Tanager (VU), Black-Collared Jay, Slaty Finch, Chestnut Wood-quail (E & NT), Pale-footed Swallow and Andean Guan.



The amazing **White-capped Tanager** can be seen in this tour at Río Blanco & Otún-Quimbaya Wildlife Sanctuary.

By birding Rio Blanco we expect to become well acquainted with the rich mixed flocks that the tropics has to offer birdwatchers of all tastes, including the Pearled Treerunner, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Barred & White-winged Becards, Brown-capped Vireo, Black-billed Peppershrike, Montane Woodcreeper, Capped Conebill, Ashy-throated Chlorospingus, Gray-hooded Bush-tanager, Black-crested & Russet-crowned Warbler and the graceful Golden-fronted Whitestart (NE).

The splendid cloud-forest has much to offer, and we will strive for seeing well birds such as the Mountain Cacique, Sickle-winged Guan, White-tailed & Black-capped Tyrannulet, Mountain Elaenia, Spotted Barbtail, Striped Treehunter, Black-throated Tody-tyrant, Cinnamon Flycatcher, Smoke-colored Pewee, Smoky Bush-tyrant, Yellow-bellied & Rufous-breasted Chat-tyrant, Pale-edged Flycatcher, Brown-capped Vireo, Slaty-backed Nightingale-thrush, Glossy-black Thrush, Bluish Flowerpiercer, Slate-throated Redstart, Yellow-bellied Siskin, Lesser Goldfinch and many others.

Surely, we will not leave Rio Blanco without enjoying beautiful birds such as the Masked Trogon, Black-collared Jay, Southern Emerald Toucanet and the more ubiquitous but always astonishing Andean Motmot.

Between the months of October and April, Rio Blanco hosts a large number of migrants, including the Golden-winged Warbler (NT), Tennessee & Blackburnian Warbler, American Redstart, Black-and-white Warbler & Canada Warbler.



Beautiful **Pearled Treerunner**: a regular member of the very rich mixed flocks of birds in Rio Blanco & Los Nevados National Park.

Day 8: Hacienda El Bosque.

With good weather and some luck, this day can provide lots of fun birding and spectacular birds to enjoy. After our hotel breakfast (6am) we will drive (45min) up the mountain to our birding destination. Hacienda El Bosque is both a dairy farm and private nature reserve at 3,300mt altitude (10,826ft) in the Central Andes of Colombia, immediately below the Los Nevados National Park.

The landscape is a matrix combination of green pastureland and native gallery forests on steep slopes and along mountain ravines. Normandy cattle quietly graze on pastures and a horde of resident and migrant birds thrive on the forests.

We will visit a series of feeders and birding spots as we move leisurely from one place to the other. The first feeding station is devoted to the Equatorial Antpitta and competitors such as the Gray-browed Brushfinch and White-browed Spinetail. The Ash-colored Tapaculo and Sharpe's Wren might be heard or seen moving through the thick bamboo stands.

Along tall grasses and low bushes we might encounter the Paramo & Plain-colored Seedeater, Grass Wren, Andean & Yellow-bellied Siskin.

Forest edges are adequate for spotting the Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Green-and-black Fruiteater and Black-billed Mountain-toucan. The Red-crested Cotinga like to perch exposed on tree tops and the Smoke-colored Pewee catches insects from exposed branches. Bloomed trees with small flowers are visited by Purple-backed Thornbill, Tyrian & Viridian Metaltail. Mix flocks are frequently joined by the Golden-fronted

Redstart (NE), Pearled Treerunner, Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia, Black-crested Warbler, Blue-backed Conebill, Blue-and-black Tanager, Beryl-spangled Tanager, Bluish Flowerpiercer, Blue-capped Tanager, Mountain Wren and the Lacrimose, Scarlet-bellied & Blue-winged Mountain-tanager, among many others.

Nectar feeders are visited by the Shining Sunbeam, Collared Inca, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, the rare Black-thighed Puffleg (NE & NT) and the striking Sword-billed Hummingbird. Also, by the Mountain Velvetbreast, Great Sapphirewing, Buff-tailed Coronet, Sparkling & Lesser Violetear.

Bloomed bushes are frequently visited by the Speckled Hummingbird, Tourmaline Sunangel and the Black & Masked Flowerpiercer.

Most specially, a second feeder is devoted to the rare and gorgeous Crescent-faced Antpitta (VU), a small creature that prefers the very dense undergrowth and bamboo stands. At this feeder, a nice array of birds are very much welcomed, including the gorgeous Barred Fruiteater, Yellow-bellied Chat-tyrant, Mountain Wren and Northern Slaty Brushfinch.

The final feeder visited on this morning often attracts the gorgeous Gray-breasted Mountain-toucan, sharing with the Hooded Mountain-tanager, Andean & Sickle-winged Guan. The White-throated Quail-dove indulges on corn starch, along with the Gray-browed & Chestnut-capped Brushfinch, the Rufous-collared Sparrow and Eared Doves.

After a good lunch at Hacienda El Bosque, we will have a second chance on missed species and will head towards the lower altitudes of Los Nevados National Park, birding along the road for the rest of the afternoon.

Day 9: Los Nevados National Park & hummingbirds at Hotel Termales del Ruiz.

Early morning we will drive (50min) up the mountains of the Central Andes, into the páramo ecosystem and elfin forest of Los Nevados National Park. Birding will take place along the park road, starting with a first stop at 3.300 meters. Through successive birding stops at key points along the road, we will ascend up to 3.960 meters – equivalent to 12,970 feet – which will be our highest point in the mountain.

With proper attire for the low temperatures characteristic of páramo ecosystem, we will slowly stroll along internal roads hoping to find big specialties such as the endemic Rufous-fronted Parakeet (VU), the very special Black-backed Bush-tanager and the astonishing Golden-crowned Tanager.



The very nice **Golden-crowned Tanager** often joins mix flocks along the road to Los Nevados.

We will stop at Laguna Negra to get acquainted with the high altitude. From a wooden deck we will scope the lagoon for the Andean Teal and Andean Duck. Soaring high in the sky we may see a Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle or even an Andean Condor. More sporadically, Noble Snipe, Andean Lapwing and Plain-capped Ground-Tyrant are also present.

We will head towards the Park's Visitor Center, which is the best place to see the marvelous Buffy Helmetcrest (E & VU). This stop also provides a good chance to see the Western Tawny Antpitta hopping around, the Pale-naped Brushfinch, the White-chinned Thistletail, the Andean Tit-spinetail and the Plumbeous Sierra-finch.

Road banks covered with dense vegetation are habitat for the Paramo Tapaculo, Equatorial Antpitta, Crowned Chat-Tyrant, White-browed Spinetail and Black & Glossy Flowerpiercer.

Within mixed flocks we will expect to see the gorgeous Golden-fronted Redstart (NE), Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager, Blue-backed Conebill, Pearled Treerunner, Black-crested Warbler, Superciliaried Hemispingus, and White-throated & White-banded Tyrannulet, among others.



The male **Buffy Helmetcrest** (E): Gorgeous high-altitude hummingbird, endemic to Colombia, seen here at Los Nevados National Park.

Along the road we will look for the Stout-billed Cinclodes and Brown-bellied Swallow nesting on cliffs. The Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant, Paramo & Plain-colored Seedeater, Andean & Hooded Siskin can be seen along road fences, tall pastures and bushes.

Typical species of the páramo ecosystem are the Andean Tit-spinetail, Many-striped Canastero, White-chinned Thistletail, Pale-naped Brushfinch and the Grass Wren.

Hotel Termas del Ruiz is located along the Old Road to Los Nevados, at 3.300 meters altitude. Besides providing a good lunch, the hotel has established nice gardens with a fabulous set of hummingbird feeders that are often visited by the Black-thighed (NE & NT) & Golden-breasted Puffleg (NE), Tourmaline Sunangel, Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Great Sapphirewing, Shining Sunbeam, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Mountain Velvetbreast, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Tyrian & Viridian Metaltail.

We will drop down the mountain late afternoon, arriving at our hotel in Manizales for dinner and rest.

Day 10: From Manizales to Pereira's Matecaña international airport for flight back home (or alternatively, taking a domestic flight to Bogota w/ connections back home).

After a good breakfast and morning birding, we will transfer to Pereira's Matecaña airport for your outbound flight. It takes 2 hours to drive from Manizales to Pereira's airport. Participants should arrange their flight for a departure not earlier than 11am (for a domestic flight to Bogotá) or no earlier than 12:30pm (for an international flight). Participants can take a direct flight back to the USA w/ American Airlines, or a domestic flight to Bogotá (Avianca Airlines is recommended) with connections back

home the same day or the following day (in which case Hotel Hilton Garden Inn Bogota Airport is recommended, at client's expense).



The Tatamá National Park at the Western Andes of Colombia: seen from the baranda of Río Blanco's lodge in the Central Andes. Within this amazing park lies Cerro Montezuma, arguably the best place in the world to see and enjoy Mountain Chocó endemics & specialties. Naturally, Cerro Montezuma is one of our favorite birding spots in Colombia. See more of our tours to find out the enchantments of the place.

TOUR SIZE: Minimum four (4), maximum eight (8) participants.

TOUR LEADER: Daniel Uribe, Fabio Arias or José Luna.

PRICE:

US \$3,950 per person, for a group of 4-8 participants.

Single supplement costs US \$275 per person (covering all nights of tour).

Price includes ground transportation, lodging, all meals (from breakfast on day 2 to breakfast on final day of the tour), entrance fees to all parks & reserves, daily water intake and guidance.

Price does not include international nor domestic flight tickets, alcoholic drinks or beverages in addition to those served in meals, laundry and personal expenses.

BOOKING: To book a tour, we require a 50% deposit with six (6) months in advance. The other 50% should be paid three (3) months prior to the first day of the tour.

PAYMENT: Payment must be done by wiring money to our bank in Colombia (Bancolombia). An instruction sheet will be emailed with the indications for wiring money. This is an easy and fast procedure.

CANCELLATION POLICY: If cancellation is made 90 days or more before the tour departure date, we will refund your money minus a cancellation fee of US\$500 per person. If cancellation is made fewer than 90 days before tour departure, no refund will be available. Please have in mind that refunding might be affected by changes in foreign currency exchange rates. The client will be solely responsible for any refunding costs or surcharges imposed by banks or money exchange procedures.

PLEASE NOTE: All efforts will be done to comply with the specified itinerary, sites and attractions. However, Birding Tours Colombia reserves the right to introduce variations in the itinerary, services (lodges, restaurants, guides) and sites at short notice, if need arises due to unpredictable events. In all cases, we will preserve attractions and activities as much as possible and special efforts will be done to maintain the same quality and characteristics that have been offered.

Abbreviations used:

E = Endemic
NE = Near Endemic
NT = Near Threatened
VU = Vulnerable
EN = Endangered
CR = Critically Endangered

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