

# WILDLIFE TRAVEL



19th March to 3rd April 2019 (16 days)

## COSTA RICA

Easy birding and natural history

"wonderful, a holiday I will remember for many years"

"excellent"

Costa Rica 2017

**From the western Pacific habitats to the eastern Caribbean slope, this holiday is a perfect introduction to the Tropics, exploring Costa Rica's exciting landscapes and bird life.**

Costa Rica is a natural history paradise, as discovered by those who travelled with us on our four previous visits to this biodiverse country, where a high percentage of the land is managed for conservation. The wildlife in the tropics will captivate both the new and the more seasoned traveller as we explore coastal forests and mangroves, cloud forests, rain forests and dramatic volcanic cones. Visiting national parks and reserves, we pass through several different regions. As we travel we will also find out about the ecology, agriculture, and the culture and history of Costa Rica. Accommodation is mostly at attractive lodges and our travel is at a comfortable pace.

We begin at Poas Volcano where there are spectacular tropical rainforests and beautiful waterfalls. Moving to the Talamanca mountains, we explore high cloud forest with a chance to see the Resplendent Quetzal! We then move to La Ensenada Wildlife Refuge set amongst the dry forests of the Pacific coast, before exploring the Arenal N.P. and visiting this famous volcanic area. At Caño Negro we will travel by boat, looking for monkeys and forest birds along the banks of the Rio Frio. At La Selva Biological Station in the Caribbean lowlands we join local conservationists to gain an insight into conservation work in the Tropics. The exciting Tortuguero National Park on the Caribbean coast is not accessible by road but, travelling by boat to our lodge, we have a wonderful tour through the waterways. Walks on easy trails will give us many chances to see howler monkeys, fruit-eating bats, poison-dart frogs, and many tropical plants.



### Price

£4475

### Single Room Supplement

£320

### Full board

- Day 1** flight to San Jose
- Day 2** Volcan Poas
- Day 3** Talamanca Mntns
- Day 4** Los Quetzales NP
- Day 5** Tarcoles River
- Day 6** La Ensenada
- Day 7** Arenal volcano area
- Day 8** Rio Frio, Cano Negro
- Day 9** Arenal
- Day 10** Sarapiquí area
- Day 11** La Selva
- Day 12-13** Tortuguero
- Day 14** return to San Jose
- Day 15** San Jose, departure
- Day 16** arrive UK

### Leader

Mike Symes  
with local guides

tropical natural history

Wildlife and culture holidays



Our profits are donated to **The Wildlife Trusts**



## FOCUS OF INTEREST

*This is one of our 'Easy birding and wildlife' trips which means that the itinerary is based mainly on birds and/or other animals (rather than plants or general wildlife) and this also reflects the knowledge of the leaders and guides. However, as with all of our trips, the pace is comfortable with time to enjoy other aspects of the natural history, rather than rushing from one place to another for specific species.*



Our itinerary is planned to provide **a range of wildlife experiences**, particularly for seeing **birds and other animals** but, as we pass through the different regions, we will see much of the native vegetation and enjoy some **wonderful tropical plants**. As we travel, we will see something of the country's interesting culture and history as well as its wildlife. Although we cannot always guarantee the wildlife on our trips, in Costa Rica we can certainly say that you will see plenty - monkeys and sloths, butterflies and birds, tropical flowers and interesting reptiles are everywhere!

## ITINERARY

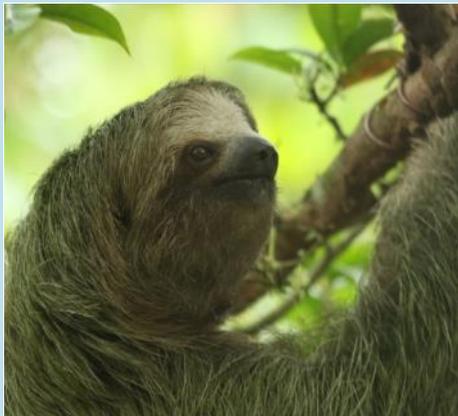
**Please note that we may change the itinerary to suit local weather and road conditions or for other practical reasons, at the leader and guide's discretion**

**Day 1 Tuesday 19th March** Morning flight from UK to **San Jose**, arriving Santamaria International airport in the late afternoon. Transfer to **Hotel Robledal**, San Jose (2 nights).

**Day 2 Wednesday 20th** Before breakfast, the early risers will begin to familiarise ourselves with the 'garden birds' of central Costa Rica: Hoffmann's Woodpecker, White-winged Doves, Rufous-backed Wren and the fierce little Ferruginous Pygmy Owl can all be found in the gardens at the hotel, along with Variegated Squirrels. From San Jose, we will visit **Poas Volcano** enjoying the wonderful view of one of the most accessible volcanoes in the country: the access to the crater is about 30 minutes slow walking from the main entrance, and we hope to find Volcano Hummingbird and Poas Squirrel amongst others along the way. We then go to La Paz Waterfall, located in the cloud forest of the Caribbean slope, where we will see many hummingbirds and tanagers, Blue-throated Toucanet and Prong-billed Barbet coming to the feeders. Night at **Hotel Robledal**.

**Day 3 Thursday 21st** Today we leave the central valley and head off to the area of San Gerardo de Dota, a small community in the middle elevations (2000m-2200m) of the **Talamanca Mountains**. We travel through deep cloud forest filled with huge oaks and other native species, stopping along the way to watch more hummingbirds, paying particular attention to two local specialities, the Talamanca Hummingbird and Fiery-throated Hummingbird. We will also look out for the beautiful Long-tailed Silky Flycatcher.

**Mammals of Costa Rica** (l to r): White-nosed Coati, Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth, Mexican Porcupine



Further along the road we will look for one of the most beautiful birds of the Americas, the **Resplendent Quetzal**, which feeds on the wild avocados in this area. We finally arrive at our attractive lodge, in an area famous for its birdlife. Night at **Trogon Lodge** (2 nights).

**Day 4 Friday 22nd** Depending on our success yesterday, this morning we may have a pre-breakfast trip (optional) to look for the quetzals again. We will then travel higher, to the paramo habitat of **Cerro de la Muerte** (approx. 3100m), home to a very different flora, and the endemic Volcano Junco.

After a leisurely lunch in a local café, with yet more birds coming to the busy feeders, we will explore part of the famous **Los Quetzales NP** along the Savegre River, an area rich in birdlife. Night at **Trogon Lodge**.

**Day 5 Saturday 23rd** Today we have some miles to cover: we head back down the mountains and cross the central valley, passing through the urban sprawl of San Jose, before travelling down to the sunny Central Pacific area. After a short stop at the famous 'crocodile bridge', where the large American Crocodiles can be seen sunbathing on the river bank, we will head to the **Tarcoles River** for a boat trip. We hope to spot Scarlet Macaws flying overhead, various waders, kingfishers and herons will be seen along the river banks, and we will look in particular for the shy Boat-billed Heron.

We finally arrive down at the Pacific Ocean and the **Gulf of Nicoya**. The dry forest in this area is a wonderful contrast to the cloud forest and has a very different set of species. After dinner, we will have a 'night walk' around the grounds of the lodge: Nine-banded Armadillo, Hooded Skunk and Mexican Porcupine may all be found around the lodge, with American Barn Owl and Pacific Screech Owl both possible nearby. Night at **Ensenada Lodge** (2 nights).

**Day 6 Sunday 24th** This morning we will no doubt have been woken up by the local **Mantled Howler Monkey** troop, as they proclaim their territory. Early risers will find plenty of great birds to keep them entertained around the lodge. We will spend all of today exploring the reserve that surrounds our lodge, **La Ensenada Wildlife Refuge**. We will spend our time in the unique and endangered dry forest, home to White-throated Magpie Jay, White-fronted Parrot and Turquoise-browed Motmot amongst others. After lunch, we will go on a tractor ride through the reserve to find shorebirds at the salt ponds and wetlands; a variety of waders, egrets, White Ibis and Roseate Spoonbill should all be possible. We will have a 'sundowner' as we watch the sun set out over the Pacific, before heading back to the lodge, keeping our eyes peeled for Common Pauraque along the way. Night at **Ensenada Lodge**.



**Monkeys of Costa Rica** (from top): Panamanian White-faced Capuchin, Central American Spider Monkey and Mantled Howler Monkey.

**Day 7 Monday 25th** Today we leave the Pacific and transfer to the northern area of the country. The landscape around the **Arenal Volcano** is lushly picturesque, surrounded by rain forest interspersed with orchards of sugar cane, pineapple and papaya. We will have a short stop on the shores of Lake Arenal. Here a new suite of rainforest birds can be found, including both Broad-billed and Keel-billed Motmots, and we will also keep our eyes peeled for White-nosed Coati at the roadside. After a lunch at a local finca we will learn about the sugar cane industry (and taste some of the local rum! ) before finally arriving at our hotel later in the afternoon. After checking in, we will have time to explore the hotel grounds along the river bank, looking out for plenty of birdlife, Green Iguanas and perhaps our first sloth. o/n **Hotel Tilajari** (3 nights).

**Day 8 Tuesday 26th** Today we head out to **Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge**, where we will go on two river boat safaris along the Rio Frio. We will have great and close up views of the abundant wildlife found along the river. Along with plenty of herons, kingfishers and Anhinga, we will hope to spot the strange **Sungrebe** at one of the best places for this normally shy species in the world. The riverside forest is also home to **three species of monkey**, and with luck we should enjoy good views of Mantled Howler, Panamanian White-faced Capuchin and Central American Spider Monkeys. Back at the hotel, a night walk around the grounds could reveal Common Opossum, Nine-banded Armadillo and the impressive Spectacled Owl. Night at **Hotel Tilajari**

**Day 9 Wednesday 27th** We will spend today in the **Arenal National Park**. In the morning, we will walk an easy trail around the lake, looking for Great Curassow, Keel-billed Toucan and many other species. An afternoon visit to a nearby private reserve should give us a chance to see the tiny Strawberry Poison Dart Frog and the equally beautiful Red-eyed Tree Frog, plenty of interesting birds, and both Hoffmann's Two-toed and Brown-throated Three-toed Sloths. Night at **Hotel Tilajari**.

**Day 10 Thursday 28th** Today we head down to the lowlands of the Caribbean side of the country in the **Sarapiquí region**. After a couple of stops along the way, we will end up at our lodge, located on the edge of the rainforest on the banks of the Puerto Viejo River. The grounds include several lakes, with gardens full of flowers and plenty of wildlife. A night walk could reveal frogs, Great Potoo or even Kinkajou, which visit the fruiting trees around the rooms to feed. Night at **Sueno Azul Resort** (2 nights).

**Day 11 Friday 29th** We will spend all day at **La Selva Biological Station**. Operated by the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS), this reserve has wonderful trails and walkways through stands of primary rain forest. We will be find out more about the research being carried out here, at one of the most famous places for tropical research studies in the world. A great variety of birdlife could include trogons and manakins, Great Currasow and

**Hummingbirds of Costa Rica** (l to r): Lesser Violetear, White-throated Mountain Gem and Fiery-throated Hummingbird



Crested Guan. The mammal life here is less concerned by people, and we will be looking out for Collared Peccary and Central American Agouti, as well as Eyelash Pit Viper and other reptiles. Night at **Sueno Azul Resort**.

**Day 12 Saturday 30th** After breakfast, we travel to the sultry Caribbean coast and the **Tortuguero National Park**, which can be reached only by boat or plane. Near the mouth of the Parismina River we will meet our boat that will be our transport through the Tortuguero canals, finding plenty of wildlife along the way. Night at **La Baula Lodge (2 nights)**

**Day 13 Sunday 31st** This morning we will take a boat trip along the canals, keeping our eyes peeled for otters and monkeys, turtles and numerous birds, including various species of herons and kingfishers. In the afternoon we will walk one of the easy trails through the forest to the sandy beach beyond, ending up in the village. Night at **La Baula Lodge**

**Day 14 Monday 1st April** Time to leave Tortuguero, we again travel by boat through the canals, exploring the riverside habitat on the way. Back on dry land, we will head towards San Jose, stopping along the way to explore another area of rainforest, before making our way back around the city to our hotel. Night in **Hotel Robledal**

**Day 15 Tuesday 2nd** For our last morning, we will visit a local 'finca', an area of dry forest and grassland close to our hotel where we will find a very **different vegetation**, and new birds including Pearl Kite, Spot-bellied Bobwhite and Plain-capped Starthroat. We will head back to the hotel for a late lunch, before making our way to the airport for our flights home, arriving **Day 16 Wednesday 3rd April**.



**Birds of Costa Rica** (from top): Red-headed Barbet, Blue-throated Toucanet, Boat-billed Heron, Sungrebe, Silver-throated Tanager  
Left: Resplendent Quetzal and Ferruginous Pygmy Owl

## Fitness and health

- No strenuous walking is involved but you need to have a **reasonable level of general fitness** to be able to participate in the holiday. The tour visits several locations and travelling in the tropics can be tiring if you are not used to it. However, the trip is designed to be relatively comfortable so please discuss any concerns with us.
- Although most of the walks are not long, we will sometimes be walking on **rough or wet ground**. Walking boots (lightweight ok) are essential for most areas. There are a few occasions when we walk uphill but this is not excessive.
- The highest altitude will be c 3100m at Cerro de la Muerte (the lodge is at a lower elevation). There is some risk of altitude sickness although rest and drinking plenty of water usually relieve any mild effects (headaches and tiredness). If you have suffered from altitude problems before or are suffering from any medical condition, you should take your doctor's advice. We will be taking it easy at these higher altitudes and none of the walking will be strenuous. Altitudes elsewhere are lower - Poas Volcano being c 2,800m.
- As we are in the tropics, the sun is very strong, even when it appears overcast. Sun protection (hat, sunglasses and suncream) is essential. We avoid walking far in the hottest part of the day.
- There are no compulsory inoculations for Costa Rica but some are recommended. We do not visit any yellow fever areas. NB If you are travelling from any country where there is yellow fever, you must have an inoculation certificate so if you are not taking the group flight, please check this. There is no longer any risk of Malaria in Costa Rica. You should consult your own doctor for specific advice. General inoculations for overseas travel are recommended. You must drink only purified drinking water at all times.
- At times, we will travel in small boats on the canals and rivers. Safety regulations will be adhered to when travelling in this way. Safety guidelines must also be followed when using canopy walks or in relation to volcanic areas or regarding other natural risks. Safety advice given by the leader and guides must be heeded at all times.

**It is essential that, PRIOR TO BOOKING, you ring us to discuss any potential fitness or health problems that may affect you 01954 713575.**

## Insurance

Personal travel insurance providing good medical cover is essential for this trip.



## Passports and Visas

You must have a valid passport for this trip (recommended valid for at least 6 months after the end of the holiday). A temporary tourist visa is issued on arrival in Costa Rica if you hold a UK passport. For holders of other passports it is essential that you check with your embassy or consulate and obtain the necessary documents prior to travel.

## Weather and seasons

We will be travelling in the dry season making travelling easier and with less likelihood of rain in some areas.

In the lowland rainforest of the Caribbean side, a number of plant species are in flower at any one time, depending on local climate patterns, and this area, and the mountains, can be visited at any time of year to see a good variety of birds, other animals and plants. March is a good time of year to visit the drier Pacific coast.

In the lowlands, particularly on the coast, it can be humid and relatively hot but we will adapt our plans to the temperatures. The cloud forest is, effectively, a higher altitude rain forest and we can expect generally cooler weather with, perhaps, some showers.

## Leaders

Our leader for this trip is **Mike Symes**. Mike is an excellent all-round naturalist and professional ecologist who has worked for Devon Wildlife Trust for almost ten years. Mike has led previous holidays for Wildlife Travel from Norfolk and the Burren, to the Danube Delta and the Serengeti, and has previously spent time in Costa Rica. His enthusiasm for all aspects of natural history, together with his keenness to share this knowledge with others will help to ensure that you enjoy a wonderful holiday.



**Wild flowers of Costa Rica** (from top):  
*Bomarea acutifolia*, *Centropogon granulosus*,  
*Passiflora vitifolia*  
Left: *Heliconia wagneriana* and *H. psittacorum*

## Accommodation, meals and transport

All of the lodges and hotels are of a good standard, some with very attractive settings. All the rooms have private bathrooms with hot water and are either air-conditioned or have ceiling fans where needed. Some lodges may have a swimming pool available. Single rooms are available in all locations. The exact lodge or hotel used may be changed if local conditions change or if we feel a different choice would suit our needs better.

All meals are included - some lunches will be in local restaurants, and we will take a picnic on some days.

We will do our best to ensure that our travelling is as comfortable as possible. There will be days when we are transferring from one area to another where the journey may take much of the day but we will take plenty of stops for comfort breaks and to enjoy interesting areas. Some journeys will be made by boat (to Tortuguero).

### Flights

Group flights are with Iberia from London Heathrow, as follows:

19th March	depart Heathrow 06.30, arrive Madrid 09.55 depart Madrid 11.35, arrive San Jose 15.40
2nd April	depart San Jose 16.20 arrives Madrid 10.40 (3rd)
3rd April	depart Madrid 12.10, arrive Heathrow 13.35

Costa Rica is 6 hours behind GMT.



**Alternatively, you can fly direct from Gatwick with BA.** You would need to stay one extra day and fly home on 3rd April, arriving on the 4th (no flight on the 2nd). This would give you the opportunity to enjoy the cultural sites of San Jose or have an extra day's excursion for wildlife. **Contact us for options, costs and flight details.**

It is also possible to fly from Manchester with Delta Airlines, via Atlanta and JFK - check with us for options and costs. You can book the trip without flights — please contact us for the price reduction.

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### TO BOOK

Contact us to check availability and reserve a place. Complete the Booking Form and send to Sunvil Holidays (CAA-ATOL Licence 808, ABTA V6218), our tour operator, with your deposit. All details about booking are given in the Booking Pack.

**DEPOSIT PER PERSON £1500,  
SECOND INSTALLMENT ON CONFIRMATION OF HOLIDAY £500.  
BALANCE DUE BY 18/12/2018**

**INCLUDED:** Return flights from London to San Jose. All airport taxes except Costa Rica departure tax. Local transport as specified in itinerary, 14 night's accommodation (one extra night is overnight flight), full board basis (breakfast, lunch and dinner). Entrance fees except during optional sightseeing. Services of leader and guides.

**NOT INCLUDED:** Drinks and refreshments. Gratuities. Travel insurance.

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### WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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