

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

12th to 27th March 2020 (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 previous 11 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.

We begin at Poas Volcano where there are spectacular tropical rainforests and beautiful waterfalls. 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. Moving to the Talamanca mountains, we explore high cloud forest with a chance to see the Resplendent Quetzal! We then move to the Pacific coast, visiting the tropical forests in the far south west of the country, home to Scarlet Macaw and several species of monkey, and the dry forests close to the Tarcoles River.

As we travel we will 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. Walks on easy trails will give us many chances to see howler monkeys, fruit-eating bats, poison-dart frogs, and many tropical plants.



Price

£4850

Single Room Supplement

£750

Full board

- Day 1** flight to San Jose
- Day 2** Volcan Poas
- Day 3** La Selva
- Day 4-5** Tortuguero
- Day 6-7** Rancho Naturalista
- Day 8** Talamanca Mntns
- Day 9** Los Quetzales NP
- Day 10** transfer to south west
- Day 11-12** Tiskita
- Day 13-14** Carara and Tarcoles
- Day 15** San Jose, departure
- Day 16** arrive UK

Leader

Mike Symes
with local guides

Group size

min 6, max 14

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

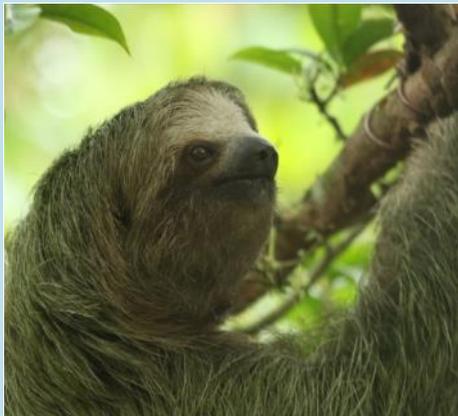
Day 1 Thursday 12th March Morning flight from UK to **San Jose**, arriving Santamaria International airport in the late afternoon. Transfer to **Bougainvillea Hotel**, San Jose.

Day 2 Friday 13th 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 may 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.

From here we will set off to the lowlands of the Caribbean side of the country in the **Sarapiquí region**, to our lodge, located on the edge of the rainforest on the banks of the Puerto Viejo River.

After dinner, a night walk around the grounds could reveal frogs, Great Potoo or even Kinkajou, which visit the fruiting trees around the rooms to feed. Night at **Selva Verde**

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

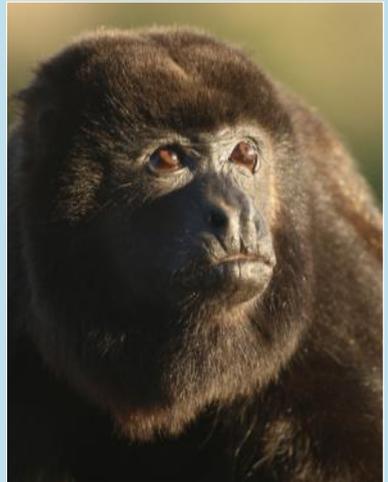


Day 3 Saturday 14th We will spend all day at **La Selva Biological Station**. Operated by the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS), this reserve has wonderful trails and walkways through stands of primary rain forest. We will find out more about the research being carried out here, at one of the most famous places for tropical research studies in the world. A great variety of birdlife could include trogons and manakins, Great Curassow and 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 **Selva Verde**

Day 4 Sunday 15th 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 **Mawamba Lodge** (2 nights)

Day 5 Monday 16th 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 **Mawamba Lodge**

Day 6 Tuesday 17th 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 southwards, stopping for lunch along the way, before arriving at our lodge close to Turrialba. In the afternoon we will have time to explore the grounds of the lodge, renowned in particular for their hummingbirds, with the lovely Snowcap and Black-crested Coquette two regular visitors to the garden's flowers. Night at **Rancho Naturalista**



Mammals of Costa Rica (from top): Panamanian White-faced Capuchin, Central American Spider Monkey, Mantled Howler Monkey, Collared Peccaries at La Selva.

Day 7 Wednesday 18th We will spend the day exploring the trails of the Rancho Naturalista Forest Reserve. Night at **Rancho Naturalista**

Day 8 Thursday 19th Today we head up 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. 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 9 Friday 20th 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 10 Saturday 21st Today we have some miles to cover, as we head down into the remote south west of Costa Rica, near the border with Panama. Our home for the next three nights is Tiskita, about as remote as one can get, located at the end of the road on the secluded southwest coast of Costa Rica, facing the Golfo Dulce and the Osa Peninsula, home to Corcovado National Park. Night at **Tiskita Jungle Lodge** (3 nights)

Day 11-12 Sunday 22nd/Monday 23rd We will spend two full days, leisurely exploring the Tiskita area, described as 'the best kept secret in Costa Rica, a family-run eco-lodge that offers the opportunity to experience pristine tropical rainforest in its 800 acre private biological reserve. The reserve comprises primary tropical rainforest, secondary rainforest, and areas of reforestation.

Tiskita hosts and helps to support a long-running Scarlet Macaw conservation programs. Since 2002, over 75 Scarlet Macaws were released in Tiskita in the context of a reintroduction program. In 2014, the Wild Macaw Association was founded, a nonprofit for the protection and study of the macaws released in Tiskita, and their wild-born offspring. The conservation program includes habitat protection, community involvement in macaw

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



related conservation activities, and more.

During our time here, we will take at least one night walk, depending on weather conditions. The forest comes alive at night: various tree frogs and reptiles are easier to find at night, while nightbirds include potoos, owls and nightjars. Nocturnal mammals could include various species of opossum, Nine-banded Armadillo, Kinkajour and Mexican Porcupine. Nights at **Tiskita Jungle Lodge**.

Day 13 Tuesday 24th Today we travel northwards, stopping for lunch along the way before we arrive on the Central Pacific coast, at our lodge.

The dry forest in this area is a wonderful contrast to the rain- and cloud-forests we have seen elsewhere, and has a very different set of species. We will hope for a good sunset over the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Nicoya, with frigatebirds, pelicans and macaws flying to their roosts in the evening light. Night at **Cerro Lodge, Carara** (2 nights).

Day 14 Wednesday 25th The Carara Biological Reserve, located between two major habitats, the dry forest of the north-west and the rain forest of the south Pacific slope. The area is described as a 'must' for anyone interested in tropical biology, with high species diversity and relatively easy access.

After lunch, we will take a boat trip on the **Tarcoles River** looking for many birds including Scarlet Macaw and Boat-billed Heron, as well as American Crocodile. Night at **Cerro Lodge**.

Day 15 Thursday 26th Today we head back towards San Jose, stopping along the way at the famous 'crocodile bridge', where the large American Crocodiles can be seen sunbathing on the river bank.

In the afternoon we arrive back at the airport for our flights home, arriving **Day 16 Friday 27th March**.



Birds of Costa Rica (from top): Red-headed Barbet, Blue-throated Toucanet, Boat-billed Heron, Scarlet Macaw, 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

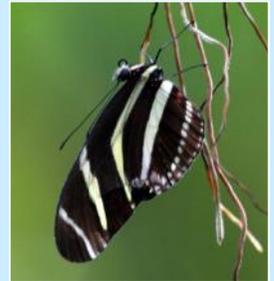
Group flights are with British Airways from London Gatwick

12th March depart Gatwick 11.15, arrive San Jose 16.50

26th March depart San Jose 18.40, arrive Gatwick 11.00 (27th)

Costa Rica is 6 hours behind GMT.

It may also be 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.



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 £1000.
BALANCE DUE BY 12/12/2019**

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.

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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