

Bolivia - Lowlands

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Fly Santa Cruz
Day 2	Santa Cruz
Day 3/5	Monte Blanco, Tambo
Day 6/7	Los Volcanes, Amoro NP
Day 8	Santa Cruz
Day 9/10	Fly London



Red-fronted Macaw

Departs

October

Focus

Birds

Grading

Grade B - A traditional birding tour involving some early starts and late finishes.

Dates & Prices

See website (Tour code BOL02)

Highlights

- Search for the rare endemic Red-fronted Macaw
- King Vulture, Sunbittern & Band-bellied Owl in Los Volcanes
- Andean Condor & Buff-necked Ibis around Samaipata
- Endemics such as Bolivian Earthcreeper & Rufous-faced Antpitta
- Visit Amoro National Park, Samaipata, Tambo, Comarapa & cloudforests of Siberia



Amoro National



Spot-backed Puffbird



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NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

In Flight

We depart London this afternoon on a flight to Santa Cruz, via Madrid.

Day 2

Santa Cruz

Our overnight flight lands at Viru Viru airport (named after a local plant) in Santa Cruz. The airport is surrounded by beautiful natural grasslands and it is hard to resist picking up the binoculars even before we leave the airport!

After collecting our baggage and meeting our local guide and driver – and depending on flight schedules and arrival times – we will explore some of the nearby woodlands and grasslands in search of species like White-bellied Nothura, Red-winged Tinamou, Long-winged Harrier (uncommon), Golden-collared Macaw, White-bellied Seedeater, White Woodpecker and Greater Rhea amongst others (we will have access to our luggage and facilities at the airport if we need to change clothes). After lunch and a well-earned rest at our hotel after the long journey, we will continue birding in the afternoon visiting the Lomas de Arena Regional Park, where some of the many target birds include Peach-fronted Parakeet, White-eared Puffbird (rare here), Rufous-fronted Thornbird, Barred Antshrike, Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant and Chalk-browed Mockingbird. After an exciting start to the tour we will have a good night's sleep back in our hotel in Santa Cruz.



White Woodpecker

Day 3

Jardin Botanico, Santa Cruz/birding drive to Tambo

We start this morning with breakfast at the hotel, followed by a short drive to the botanical gardens just to the west of Santa Cruz, where the car park and varied trails provide some really exciting birding.

Here we'll be watching for species like Amazonian Motmot, Little Woodpecker, Black-crowned Tityra, Plush-crested Jay, Guira Tanager, Golden-crowned Warbler, White-wedged Piculet, Plain-crowned Spinetail, Black-capped Antwren, Greenish Elaenia, Yellow-olive Flatbill and Fuscous Flycatcher, Gilded Hummingbird and Solitary Black Caciue. Imitating the voice of a Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl may bring in such birds as Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Bolivian Slaty Antshrike, Yellow-olive Flatbill and Fuscous Flycatcher, while some of the common species of the eastern lowlands include Cattle and Snowy Egrets, Cobalt-rumped Parrotlet, Black-fronted Nunbird, Yellow-tufted Woodpecker, Buff-throated Woodcreeper and Black-billed Thrush.



Black-crowned Tityra

After lunch at midday or thereabouts, we'll pick up our baggage and begin the long afternoon drive to Monte Blanco (140 miles away). With a birding stop or two along the way, we will pass through dry deciduous forests before eventually entering into a zone of arid inter-Andean valleys lying within a rain shadow formed by the surrounding mountains. Around dusk we will pull into the little town of Tambo (about 1,700 metres in altitude). This area of Bolivia is rural to say the least, and distant from any large town. We will check into the one small hotel, the Monteblanco (it's actually a Christian conference centre), which offers clean rooms with private bathrooms and a canteen for food.

Day 4/5

Birding around Tambo

The main purpose of our trip to this remote region of Bolivia is to attempt to see the endemic Red-fronted Macaw about 20 miles away near the small village of Saipina. This large green macaw, sporting a scarlet forehead and underwings, brilliant blue primaries and tail and flaming orange epaulets, is not only one of the most spectacular of all macaws, it also ranks as one of the rarest birds in South America. It is possible that only a few hundred Red-fronted Macaws remain in the wild, and they are restricted to the arid canyons of the central Bolivian Andes. The birds are erratic, moving to food supplies, but with perseverance and a little bit of luck, we could come away with excellent views of these magnificent birds.

Birding the hot, dry habitats near Tambo and Torrecillas dictates that we concentrate our efforts in the early morning and late afternoon. In the Andean foothills and the semi-deciduous woodlands and shrub-desert near Tambo we hope to see Tataupa Tinamou (rare), Caatinga Puffbird, the endemic Bolivian Earthcreeper and White-tipped Plantcutter. A short distance away from Tambo and during the nights we will be looking for Scissor-tailed Nightjar.



Olive-crowned Crescent-chest

The higher elevation dry scrub near the tiny village of Torrecillas should produce Red-tailed Comet, Olive-crowned Crescentchest, the endemic Bolivian Warbling-Finch (rare), Rusty-browed Warbling-Finch, Fulvous-headed Brush-Finch, and the endemic Grey-bellied Flowerpiercer among others.

On one of the days we will go to a very different habitat: the cloud forests of Siberia. Just a couple of hours west of Tambo, the mountain range is high enough (2,600m) to catch the last of the moisture-laden easterlies and thus represents the southernmost limit of humid-temperate cloud forest (called 'Yungas' in Bolivia) in South America. It also marks the southern terminus in the distribution of numerous species of high-elevation forest birds. Birding will be mainly along level roads in both the arid zone and in the cloud forest. The roads are quite poor (dusty or muddy, depending on the prevailing weather conditions), and

stout footwear is recommended. In this habitat we will be looking for Violet-throated Starfrontlet, Blue-capped Puffleg, the endemic Rufous-faced Antpitta, Trilling Tapaculo, Andean Tyrant, Spot-breasted Thornbird, Pale-footed Swallow (seasonal) and Pale-legged Warbler.

Day 6 Birding drive to Los Volcanes, Amoro National Park

We'll make another early start today as we pack up and head eastwards towards Samaipata, a town that we passed through on day 3, principally looking for any species that we may have missed thus far. We'll break up the 120-mile journey with a few leg stretches and birding stops, decamping into 4 wheel drive vehicles for the last section of the journey from the small village of Montero to Refugio Los Volcanes. The disturbed habitat here might produce the very rare Huayco Tinamou, White-eared Puffbird, Giant Antshrike and Green-winged Saltator.

Our lodge for the next two nights, Refugio Los Volcanes is located on the edge of the Amoro National Park, a large wilderness area of 1.5 million acres that straddles the eastern foothills of the Andes in the Department of Santa Cruz. It is conveniently situated at the confluence of four very different biogeographical zones: the southern rim of the Amazon Basin (with its humid tropical rainforests), the western edge of the Brazilian shield (with its subtropical deciduous forests), the northern limit of the Chaco (temperate woodlands), and the very diverse subtropical and temperate forests of the Andes. This mosaic of ecosystems shelters a correspondingly rich diversity of plants and animals, including no less than 830 bird species!

Tucked away in a deep valley, Refugio Los Volcanes offers spectacular views of sandstone rock cliffs, as well as the tropical forests which surround the sanctuary. The location is breathtakingly beautiful.

Day 7 Amoro National Park



Sunbittern

The lodge is located in a valley which is favoured by many species of parrots, including Mitred, Blue-crowned, Green-cheeked, and Yellow-chevroned Parakeets, and in November the strikingly beautiful Military Macaws breed here. Two-banded Warblers are almost guaranteed, and we have also had past success with King Vulture, Sunbittern, Band-bellied Owl, Toco Toucan, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Ocellated Woodcreeper, Black-capped Antwren, Western Fire-

Eye, the shy and elusive Slaty Gnateater, Bolivian Tapaculo, Sclater's Tyrannulet, Sepia-capped Flycatcher, Yungas Manakin, Rufous-bellied Thrush, and Plush-crested Jay. We'll hope to track down good mixed species flocks that feature a diverse group of tanagers, Guira Tanager and Black-goggled Tanager.

Between the months of May and November, cold fronts from the Antarctic drive higher altitude species down to lower elevations providing us with opportunities to see White-winged, Saffron-crowned and Blue-necked Tanagers. This is definitely one of the most exciting times to visit the lodge as figs begin to fruit during this time period. Other species we will be looking for include Andean Condor, King Vulture, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Yungas (Large-tailed) Dove, Military Macaw (seasonal), Scaly-headed Parrot, Turquoise-fronted Parrot, Planalto Hermit, Buff-bellied Hermit, Versicolored Barbet, the endemic Bolivian Recurvebill (rare), Ochre-cheeked Spinetail, Grey-throated Leaf-tosser, Blue-naped Chlorophonia and Straw-backed Tanager, amongst others.



The pace at the lodge is normally relatively relaxed. We will be waking up very early to have breakfast before dawn, then bird until late in the morning when the sun becomes too hot and the bird activity dies down. This is a perfect time to enjoy the crystal clear waters of the streams found near the lodge and we will even have the opportunity to swim in a natural pool that has formed at the base of a small waterfall. We will continue birding in the afternoon and into the early evening when nocturnal birds such as Band-bellied Owl will become our target.

Day 8

Santa Cruz

We will once again enjoy the productive morning period around the lodge environs and on the trails, looking for any birds we missed yesterday. We then undertake a birding transfer back to Santa Cruz, before arriving back at our hotel in the early evening.

Day 9

In Flight

After a relaxing morning we transfer to the airport for our flight to Madrid. Alternatively, for those continuing on with the Highlands leg of this holiday, there's a short domestic flight to Cochabamba.

Day 10

London

For those taking the group flights, we arrive in Madrid before our onwards flight back to Gatwick, arriving mid-morning.

Tour Grading

A traditional birding tour involving some early starts and late finishes. As with other South American birding itineraries "off the beaten track", one should be prepared at times for some longish drives along rough roads, simple accommodation and plenty of time spent on foot, sometimes on steep trails. This is very much a tour for the keen birder.

Weather

Mixed. Hot and humid temperatures can be expected in the lowlands. In the cloudforest it will likely be cooler but with the possibility of heavy rain at any time.

Clothing

Please inspect the separate clothing list, sent to you on booking, thoroughly.

Food & accommodation included in the price

All accommodation and meals (+ mineral water) are included, except for dinners in Santa Cruz on days two and eight.

Extra expenses

Please note that we do not include the following in the cost of this holiday: dinners in Santa Cruz and all items of a more personal nature.

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.