

# Colombia – Multicoloured Tanager Tour

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

### Outline itinerary

- Day 1** Fly Bogota
- Day 2** Otun Quimbaya
- Day 3/4** Manizales
- Day 5** Termales del Ruiz
- Day 6/8** Montezuma
- Day 9/10** Araucana Lodge, Cali
- Day 11** Cali/Bogota/Depart
- Day 12** Arrive London

### Departs

October, November and January/February/March

### Focus

Birds

### Grading

B – see paragraph at end of itinerary

### Dates and Prices

See website (tour code COL02)



Multicoloured Tanager



Cerro Tatama from Montezuma



Gold-ringed Tanager



Naturetrek Mingledown Barn Wolf's Lane Chawton Alton Hampshire GU34 3HJ UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk)

W: [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)

## Introduction

Colombia, with almost 1,900 recorded species at the last count, including around 80 endemics, is the undisputed number one country on the planet for bird diversity. Unfortunately, for most of the 90's and 'noughties', civil unrest had made visiting remote areas within the country inadvisable. Whilst ecotourism flourished in neighbouring Panama, Ecuador, Venezuela, Brazil and Peru, Colombia remained in the doldrums, waiting patiently for the chance to reveal its wonderful landscapes, birds and people to the world once more. Happily, Colombia has changed dramatically in the past few years and birders worldwide are now flocking to this beautiful country in search of its many avian jewels.

Colombia's topography is both diverse and breath-taking, with snow-capped mountains, cloud-filled valleys, savannas and rainforests providing habitat for a magnificent birdlife ranging from tiny hummingbirds to Andean Condors. This tour concentrates on endemics as well as the trademark hummingbirds, antpittas and tanagers which are always a feature of birding tours in the subtropical Andes.

As an added bonus, one site now has three antpitta "feeding stations" where up to four species of antpittas come regularly and others occasionally. Another site offers an excellent possibility of seeing the rare Cauca Guan, a species once feared extinct. This area also boasts one of the highest known concentrations of Red-ruffed Fruitcrows, a species that is typically scarce and hard to find elsewhere. At another site, which has some of the most beautiful cloud forest in Colombia, our focus will be on two rare *Bangsia* tanagers (Gold-ringed and Black-and-gold) and other endemics. There will be hummingbird feeders at many of the areas we visit, which is sure to produce a remarkable list of hummingbirds. At all sites we should have the opportunity to see plenty of other exciting highland birds.

## Itinerary

***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

### Fly Bogota

We leave London Heathrow in the evening on a direct overnight scheduled flight with Avianca to the Colombian capital Bogota.

### Day 2

### Pereira – Otún Quimbaya

Arriving in Bogota in the very early morning local time, we will clear passport control and have a couple of hours to wait for our onward flight west to Pereira. From here we will drive for a little over an hour or so to Otún Quimbaya where we hope to see Torrent Duck, Red-ruffed Fruitcrow, Crested Ant-Tanager and Cauca Guan. This reserve protects the Otún river basin, which supplies drinking water to the inhabitants of Pereira, the capital of Risaralda department in the Coffee Region. The

reserve covers more than a thousand hectares and has well-preserved forests where it is possible to observe a large number of birds foraging in mixed flocks.

### Day 3

### Cameguadua – Recinto del Pensamiento

After some early morning birding around Otún Quimbaya we drive 40 miles or so north to Cameguadua marsh. At the marsh we can look for Striated Heron, Blackish Rail, Purple Gallinule, Spectacled Parrotlet, Blue-headed Parrot, Steely-vented Hummingbird, both Ringed and Green Kingfishers, Great Antshrike, Bar-crested Antshrike, Slaty Spinetail, Vermilion Flycatcher, Pied Water-tyrant, Rusty-margined Flycatcher, Gray Seedeater, Rudy-breasted Seedeater, Grayish Saltator and Streaked Saltator and others. Recinto del Pensamiento is another hour or so further on – a well-located lodge with extensive forest fringed grounds located at an altitude of 1,950 meters. It presents fragments of very humid premontane forest and boasts a bird list of 192 species (although we won't see all of these).

### Day 4

### Rio Blanco – Recinto del Pensamiento



This wonderful reserve, located just thirty minutes from Manizales, is owned by Aguas de Manizales, a municipal water company. A guest house and visitor facilities are operated by the Fundación Gabriel Arango Restrepo (FUNDEGAR). The area offers several excellent forest trails with busy mixed species flocks, active hummingbird feeders and, more recently, several remarkable antpitta feeding sites run by resident guide Albeiro Uribe where Chestnut-crowned Antpitta and Brown-banded Antpitta are regular visitors, and

Bicolored Antpitta and Slate-colored Antpitta are also possible, although less reliable.

Antpittas, however, are only a small part of the appeal of this reserve as many rare and other infrequently-seen species also occur here, including Rusty-faced Parrot, Golden-plumed Parakeet, Black-collared Jay, Powerful Woodpecker, Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Ocellated Tapaculo (occasionally visits the antpitta feeding stations), Black-billed Peppershrike, Golden-faced Redstart, Plushcap, and two prize species, the Red-hooded Tanager and Masked Saltator. These last two are local in distribution and much sought by birders. The saltator is perhaps more easily seen here than anywhere else in its range but even here there are days when it



Chestnut-crowned Antpitta

is quiet and unresponsive and cannot be found. Other species, including a few that occur in low density, include Tyrannine Woodcreeper, Montane and Lineated foliage-gleaner, Rusty-winged Barbtail, Pearled Treerunner, Dusky Piha, Oleaginous Hemispingus, Grass-green and White-capped Tanager, Buff-breasted Mountain-Tanager, and (Northern) Mountain-Cacique. Buff-tailed Coronets dominate the hummingbird feeders, but over ten species of hummers are regular attendees here



Buff-breasted Mountain Tanager

including Green Violetear, Sparkling Violetear, Speckled Hummingbird, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Mountain Velvetbreast (seasonal), Bronzy Inca, Collared Inca, Tourmaline Sunangel, Long-tailed Sylph, and White-bellied Woodstar. Patches of bamboo above the guest house are frequented by Black-capped Tyrannulet, Sharpe's Wren, Citrine Warbler, Black-capped, Oleaginous, Superciliaried, and Black-eared Hemispingus, Plushcap and Yellow-billed Cacique.

We return to Recinto for another night.



## Day 5

Today's birding will start at an exciting private reserve a short drive outside Manizales, called Hacienda el Bosque. The reserve has been formed around a working dairy farm, and the owners have created wonderful antpitta stations, hummingbird gardens and fruit feeders also. Our antpitta targets here include the wonderfully marked and otherwise highly elusive Crescent-faced Antpitta as well as the recently split (from Rufous) Equatorial Antpitta. While neither is guaranteed, we stand a good chance to see both of these highly secretive species!

Other potential highlights include the chance to see the beautiful Grey-breasted Mountain Toucan up close as they come in for juicy grapes! Other spectacular species regularly encountered here include stunners such as Hooded Mountain Tanager and Barred Fruiteater, to mention only a few. Throughout the morning we'll also enjoy the active hummingbird feeders which attract a dazzling selection including Sword-billed Hummingbird, Tourmaline Sunangel, Sparkling Violetear and White-bellied Woodstar. Also looking to get in on the sugar feeder action might be both Masked and White-sided flowerpiercers, while an eye to the sky might spot Broad-winged Hawk.

We'll plan to spend the morning here, before continuing our journey into the higher reaches of Colombia's central Andes and the famous Los Nevados National Park.

## Hacienda el Bosque / Nevado Ruiz



Grey-breasted Mountain Toucan



Hooded Mountain Tanager



Crescent-faced Antpitta

Later this afternoon we shall start to ascend and explore the magnificent Nevado del Ruiz National Park, which offers access to some of the most easily accessible páramo (a tropical alpine grassland above the tree line) vegetation anywhere in Colombia. Nevado del Ruiz, at 5,429 m. (17,788 ft.), is the northernmost volcano in the Andes and is glacier-covered but still active. It will be chilly here, as we begin birding at elevations above 13,000 feet, so it will be a day to be fleeced, hatted and gloved-up.



We will go as far as the national park HQ as all the key high elevation specialists of the low, damp elfin woodland mixed with páramo can be found here and a little lower. Initially birding from the rustic national park café (just under 13,500 feet or 4,100m) and a viewing platform which is perfect for the delightful little Buffy Helmetcrest (formerly known as Bearded Helmetcrest before a four-way split) as it does its regular feeding rounds, we'll also look for Stout-billed Cinclodes, Tawny Antpitta, Andean Tit-spinetail, White-chinned Thistletail, Brown-backed Chat-tyrant, Páramo Tapaculo, Sedge Wren, Plain-colored Seedeater and Plumbeous Sierra-Finch. If the weather is clear and mild, it will also be worth keeping an eye skywards for Andean Condor.

At slightly lower elevations, and in grassy areas, we'll be searching for the Many-colored Canastero



and continue birding downward in elevation through patches of montane forest, searching for such species as Viridian Metaltail, Tyrian Metaltail, White-throated and White-banded Tyrannulet, Golden-crowned Tanager, Scarlet-bellied Mountain-tanager, Buff-breasted Mountain-tanager, Lacrimose Mountain-tanager, Blue-backed Conebill and Glossy Flowerpiercer. The endemic and very local Rufous-fronted Parakeet occurs in this area but is unpredictable and difficult to find. A small lake, Laguna Negra, sometimes harbors

Andean Teal and Ruddy Duck (Andean form with all or mostly black head).

There will be time this afternoon to enjoy the magnificent hummingbird garden at our fabulous hot springs hotel where we'll be staying the night. Arguably the star species here is the dazzling Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, although other gems include Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Shining Sunbeam and both Black-thighed and Golden-breasted Pufflegs. This evening, you might fancy a dip in the hotel springs, so bring swimming costumes!



## Day 6

## Montezuma



Montezuma Lodge hummingbird garden

We have the morning to try for any key missing species before we start the long drive west, past Manizales and on to Pueblo Rico, from where it's a further hour by 4X4 to the lodge. The total journey is just under 100 miles but will take 4-5 hours or so, plus stops for birding and leg-stretches. The lodging at Montezuma is basic but has been recently remodeled and updated to include private bathrooms each with an electric shower providing just enough of a trickle of hot water to wash comfortably! The rooms are

very clean, the food excellent and the owner (a delightful lady called Leopoldina) is extremely hospitable as well as being a sharp birding guide! Our birding here will be within the Reserva Natural Cerro Montezuma and the Tatamá National Park, which is a well-known site within the history of Colombian ornithology, with a long list of Chocó-Pacific birds first known from this area. Our first afternoon will be spent birding leisurely around the lodge and in the lower altitudinal zones of the park between 1,350m - 1,650 m. The lodge itself is close to some small-scale agriculture and secondary forest, but also close to beautiful wet, mossy forest. Hummingbird feeders at the lodge usually attract several interesting species including Rufous-gaped Hillstar, Violet-tailed Sylph and Empress Brilliant. Olinguito, a relatively recently described member of the raccoon family, has been known to visit the bird tables for bananas after dark, as well as Tayra in the daytime.

We settle in for three nights at the lodge which is basic but clean.

## Days 7-8

## Montezuma

This region is one of the most biodiverse locations anywhere in the world, and with a lodge-list of over 600 species (including a host of prized endemics and range-restricted specials), the next two full days should prove a highlight of the tour! The lodge itself lies on the edge of the Chocó-Pacific region, and it 'enjoys' some of the highest rainfall in the continent (one of the main drivers of its biodiversity). Mornings tend to be clear here, but weather can change quickly so we'll leave very early (0500) on our first morning, by



Cerro Tatama from Montezuma

4WD for the 90 minute or so drive up to the end of the road where we will begin birding. The road, which leads up to an army base and communications centre at the summit, is rough and a bumpy

ride up is in store. Once at the top, the view across to Cerro Tatama should be fantastic given clear conditions, and we'll enjoy a packed breakfast and steaming coffee before the birding begins in earnest. At the very highest elevations (around 2,500m) the endemic Munchique Wood-wren is a target bird (a species first discovered in southwestern Colombia by Steve Hilty in the late 1970s but not formally described until 2003) as well as the endemic Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer. The rest of the morning will be spent walking down the same wide track we have driven up earlier, stopping for particular targets or connecting with a busy feeding flock. The



Purplish-mantled Tanager

tanagers may well steal the show, including jaw-droppers like Purplish-mantled Tanager, Glistening-green Tanager, Grass-green Tanager, Blue-winged and Black-chinned Mountain-tanagers plus Green and Black Fruiteater. The endemic Gold-ringed Tanager (not generally found in mixed flocks) is a key target and while patience is needed, over the course of the day we should enjoy great views of this emblematic species. After a packed lunch, the highlights may include Black Solitaire, Beautiful Jay and Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia, while lower down the slope, birds such as Parker's Antbird, Chocó Tapaculo, Chocó Warbler, Crested Ant-tanager and Black-and-gold Tanager will swell our list. This is Pacific-Andean birding at its best, with no traffic and no other birders in sight! Just a bumpy ride up and one mind-blowing flock after another!

Our second full day's birding from Montezuma will play out much the same as the first, although this time we'll start our birding from where we left off yesterday. By doing so we'll target mid-lower elevational species, and so find more new and exciting birds as we go!

## Day 9

## Cali/Araucana Lodge

We have a long day of driving today (180 miles or so) which will take us most of the day, factoring in lunch, birding stops and leg-stretches. Breaking the journey at Sonso Lagoon we'll hope to pick up some new birds including Horned Screamer, Oriole Blackbird, Jet Antbird, Dwarf Cuckoo, Little Cuckoo, Cinnamon Teal, Anhinga, Glossy Ibis, Green Ibis and Limpkin, together with a couple of endemics - Grayish Piculet and Apical Flycatcher. From here, we'll push on to our next destination where we'll be based at the wonderful Araucana Lodge for the final two nights of the tour. The remainder of the afternoon and early evening will be spent enjoying the lodge gardens, feeders and bird tables. Common species here include Southern Lapwing, Eared Dove, Ruddy Ground-dove, Squirrel Cuckoo, Andean Motmot, Red-headed Barbet, Acorn Woodpecker, Black-billed Thrush, Blackburnian Warbler, Flame-rumped and Scrub Tanagers, plus a whole host of hummers including White-necked Jacobin, Brown and Sparkling Violetears, Green Thorntail, Speckled Hummingbird, Buff-tailed Coronet, Booted Racket-tail and Purple-throated Woodstar.



The hospitality at Araucana is excellent and we'll retire to peaceful and well-appointed rooms after our evening meal.

## Day 10

## Queremal



Black-chinned Mountain Tanager



Flame-rumped, Rufous-throated and Silver-throated Tanagers

Queremal is located along the old road to Buenaventura which, before security became an issue, was regarded as one of the top birding roads in the world. With security no longer an issue, we're free to enjoy this largely traffic-free, heavily forested route. We'll depart early this morning (around 0500), initially across open farmland and hilly pasture, before stopping at likely sites as we gradually work our way to lower elevations. We'll be especially vigilant for Chocó-Pacific species, which during the course of the day will include some of the following: Barred Hawk; Blue-headed, Mealy and Rose-faced Parrot; White-whiskered Hermit; Rufous-breasted Hermit; Green Thorntail; Purple-crowned Fairy; Spot-crowned Barbet; Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher; Pacific Flatbill; Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant; Lemon-browed Flycatcher; Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher; Cinnamon Becard; White-thighed Swallow; Bay Wren; Golden-bellied (Chocó) Warbler; Orange-billed Sparrow; Tawny-crested, Dusky-faced, Golden-chested, Scarlet-browed and Scarlet-and-white Tanager, Grey and Gold Tanager, Black-winged Saltator and Toucan Barbet! This also is an excellent area for many *Tangara* tanagers, including Blue-necked, Golden-hooded, Rufous-winged, Rufous-throated, Bay-headed, Blue-whiskered and Silver-throated. In the late afternoon we return to Araucana.

## Day 11

## Km 18; Reserva La Florida

The sweet smell of Colombian coffee will rouse us one last time this morning (unless you choose to extend your Colombia birding adventure!) and we have an exciting final morning ahead, all in close proximity to our base.

After an early breakfast, we will drive up the mountain for a short distance to the fabled old birding site of "El 18," where the Buenaventura road crosses a low pass over the Western Andes at about 2,000 metres. 'El 18' and the small farmstead of La Florida is a great site for the highly-prized Multicolored Tanager (endemic, and the bird we chose to emblemize this tour) as well as many colorful *Tangara* tanagers including Saffron-crowned, Golden-naped, Metallic-green, Flame-faced,

Golden, Bay-headed, Black-capped and Beryl-spangled. Here, too, we'll also hope to visit a couple of feeding stations for Moustached Antpitta as well as Chestnut Wood-quail. Hummingbirds are active here as well and we'll be looking to supplement our list from just down the road with birds like Green Violetear, Black-throated Mango, Andean Emerald, Bronzy Inca, Fawn-breasted Brilliant and Long-tailed Sylph. Other birds possible in this area include Golden-headed Quetzal, Colombian Chachalaca, Scarlet-fronted Parakeet, Crimson-rumped Toucanet, Uniform Antshrike, Montane Woodcreeper, Red-faced Spinetail, Spotted Barbtail, Streak-capped Treehunter, Streaked Xenops, Nariño Tapaculo, Green-and-black Fruiteater, Marble-faced and Variegated Bristle-tyrant, Cinnamon Flycatcher, Andean Solitaire (with its beautiful song), Three-striped Warbler and Orange-bellied Euphonia.



Multicoloured Tanager

Having enjoyed a cracking final morning's birding, we will enjoy a delicious lunch and later transfer to Cali airport to catch a flight to Bogota, from where we connect with our overnight flight back to Heathrow.

## Day 12

## Arrive London

We land back at Heathrow in the early afternoon.

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## Tour Grading

Grade B - This holiday is a dedicated and fairly strenuous birding tour, suiting those with an adventurous spirit and a willingness to get up early and spend long days in the field off the beaten track.

Most sites on this trip are in cooler highland regions where temperatures are pleasant, and even in the Cauca Valley, where temperatures are warmer, it is not likely to be excessively oppressive. On this tour most walking is relatively easy and downhill as much as possible, although the terrain underfoot is rough in parts (no scrambling required). One or two sites may require some slow-paced uphill walking on a relatively narrow road, where there is little or no traffic. At Montezuma (Cerro Tatamá National Park) in the Western Andes, walking distances will be longer, although mostly downhill, but on a rough road that is fairly steep. In general our birding at all sites will be along roadsides/on jeep tracks. Most mornings we will be up well before dawn for early breakfasts (or coffee/tea and snacks to be followed by packed breakfasts later).

## Food & accommodation included in the price

All accommodation and meals are included, as well as drinking water. We encourage you to bring a refillable water bottle.

## Extra expenses

Please note that we do not include the following in the cost of this holiday: all items of a more personal nature such as alcoholic drinks, laundry and souvenirs.

## 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](http://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.

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