

Costa Rica's Raptor Spectacular

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	<u>Fly San José & overnight.</u>
Day 2/4	<u>Arenal Volcano National Park.</u>
Day 5/7	<u>Sarapiquí & La Selva.</u>
Day 8/10	<u>Tortuguero National Park.</u>
Day 11/13	<u>Puerto Viejo.</u>
Day 14	<u>San José</u>
Day 15	<u>Depart San José.</u>
Day 16	<u>Arrive London.</u>

Departs

September & October.

Focus

Birds, mammals, turtles & other wildlife.

Grading

Grade A/B (see Page 6 for additional information).

Dates and Prices

Visit website (tour code CRI07).

Highlights:

- Enjoy large flocks of migrating birds of prey heading south.
- Explore the Tortuguero National Park by boat & on foot.
- Look for hatching Green Turtles.
- Numerous colourful tanagers, trogons, toucans, hummingbirds & motmots.
- Wander the lowland rainforests of La Selva, one of the biologically richest reserves in the country.
- Small group of only 10 people.
- Led by an expert local naturalist guide.



From Top: White-necked Jacobin, Swallow-tailed Kite & hatching Green Turtle.



Naturetrek

Mingledown Barn

Wolf's Lane

Chawton

Alton

Hampshire

GU34 3HJ

UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Itinerary

NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather and 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

San José

We depart mid-morning from London to the Costa Rican capital, San José, arriving mid to late afternoon. Here we will meet our expert guide and make the short drive into San José where we will spend the night at in a comfortable hotel. Here we will have our briefing of what is sure to be an unforgettable tour ahead!

Overnight: San José

Day 2 – 4

Arenal Volcano National Park

Following breakfast, we will begin our exploration of Costa Rica with three nights on the edge of the Arenal Volcano National Park, which lies around three hours north-west of San José. If the weather is clear, then the views of the volcano are breathtaking, and the birding is first class too! Species to look out for include American Swallow-tailed Kite, Semiplumbeous Hawk, Great Curassow, Scarlet-rumped Tanager, Hepatic Tanager, Bay-headed Tanager, Emerald Tanager, Tawny-capped Euphonia, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Yellow-throated Toucan, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Golden-olive Woodpecker, Long-tailed Hermit, Violet-headed Hummingbird, Green Thorntail, Giant Cowbird and many more. Troops of White-nosed Coatis are also frequent sites around the park, whilst Central American Spider Monkey and the occasional Northern Tamandua are seen from time to time too.

Overnight: Arenal Volcano



Day 5 – 7

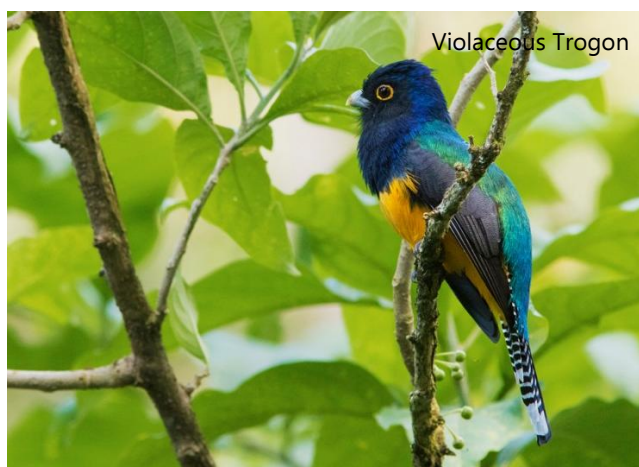
Sarapiquí & La Selva

This morning we will drive east into the forests of the Caribbean lowlands, arriving in time for lunch. We will stay at a comfortable lodge in the town of Sarapiquí, located on the edge of a tract of pristine lowland tropical rainforest adjacent to the Sarapiquí River. During our time here we will explore the numerous forest trails which will provide us with an excellent opportunity to seek out some of the often skulking forest-dwellers such as manakins, antbirds, jacamars, motmots and woodcreepers. We can also hope to see a good number of waterbirds, including up to five species of kingfisher and many herons and egrets (the elusive Fasciated Tiger-heron is even a possibility). There will also be a chance of seeing Sungrebe and the stunning Sunbittern, not to mention the many other bird species, as well as mammals such as Three-toed Sloths, that inhabit the forest along the riverbanks.

We will be spending a full day (returning to our lodge for lunch) at the well-known La Selva Biological Station run by the Organisation for Tropical Studies (OTS). La Selva was acquired by the OTS in 1960 and is today principally used for biological research, education and studies into the sustainable use of tropical forests. There is a good network of trails which meander through the 1,500-hectare reserve providing an excellent opportunity to observe birds in a range of habitats. Besides primary lowland tropical forest, there are areas of swamp, pasture, agricultural land, rivers and creeks and secondary forests in various stages of development. Over 400 species of birds, 100 species of mammals, and 2,000 species of plant have been recorded at La Selva; with such great diversity we have a very good chance of amassing an impressive selection of birds, many of which we will not have seen previously.



Sungrebe



Violaceous Trogon

Species to look out for include Great and Little Tinamous, Great Curassow, Semi-plumbeous Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Sungrebe, Band-tailed Barbthroat, Long-tailed Hermit, White-necked Jacobin, Violet-headed Hummingbird, Blue-chested Hummingbird, Violaceous Trogon, Rufous-capped Motmot, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Lineated Woodpecker, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Great Green Macaw, Snowy Cotinga, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, White-collared Manakin, Red-capped Manakin, Black-capped Pygmy-tyrant, Great Ant-Shrike, Dusky-faced Tanager, Red-throated Ant-tanager, Yellow-crowned Euphonia, Golden-hooded Tanager, Green Honeycreeper, Hooded Warbler, Chestnut-headed Oropendola and many many more!

Overnight: Sarapiquí

Day 8 – 10

Tortuguero National Park

Leaving Sarapiquí we will drive to La Pavona where we board a boat for the two hour journey along rainforest-lined canals and waterways into the heart of Tortuguero National Park, a remote wildlife haven covering over 310 square kilometres only accessible by water or air, and where we will spend the next three nights. Tortuguero Beach is the most important nesting site for the Atlantic population of the endangered Green Turtle. Every year, between June and October, these impressive reptiles laboriously haul themselves out of the warm Caribbean Sea to lay their eggs on the black-sand beaches of the national park. On one evening we will visit these nesting beaches after dark in the hope of witnessing this amazing natural spectacle and during the day hope to witness hatching turtles – from eggs laid in the beginning of the nesting season – emerge from the sand and scurry down to the water's edge. We will also explore Tortuguero by boat and on foot to look for the abundance of other wildlife that lives here including Mantled Howler Monkey, Central American Spider Monkey, Keel-billed Toucan and a wealth of waterbirds including Sungrebe and the striking Sunbittern, who's wings display the pattern of the setting sun when spread. Over 370 species of bird have been recorded in Tortuguero National Park, plus 57 species of amphibian, 60 species of mammal and a staggering 400 species of tree!



Hatching Green Turtle



Keel-billed Toucan

The programme for each of our days in Tortuguero National Park will follow a similar pattern. Shortly after sunrise we will take a pre-breakfast boat trip along the Tortuguero canals retuning for breakfast around 0730 hours. We will head out by boat once again after breakfast and then, after returning to the lodge for lunch and a siesta, take a final boat trip (or perhaps a forest walk) late in the afternoon once the heat of the day has subsided. On one evening we will round off the day with a nocturnal walk along the turtle nesting beaches.

Overnight: Tortuguero National Park

Day 11 – 13

Puerto Viejo

Next, we move south to a comfortable hotel in Puerto Viejo, a little way north of the Panama border. Over the next couple of days, we hope to witness Costa Rica's annual raptor spectacular from key vantage points in the hills and along the coast including the Kèköldi Observation Tower (*N.B. if the tower is closed then we will visit the Casa Calatea Observation Deck instead*). Whilst in the spring, birds of prey moving north through Costa Rica follow both coastlines, in the autumn the topography of the mountains funnels the vast majority along the Caribbean coastline concentrating them into ever larger flocks as they pass through a narrow passage between the Talamanca Mountains and the coast and on into Panama. Around 3.5 million birds of prey move through between September and November. The commonest species amongst the wheeling flocks include Broad-winged and Swainson's Hawks, Mississippi Kites and Turkey Vultures, but plenty of others pass over too including Osprey, Short-tailed Hawk, American Swallow-tailed Kite, Coopers Hawk, Peregrine and Merlin. The walk to the Kèköldi Observation Tower is uphill and around 1.5 kilometers in length. Whilst not an easy walk, the rewards are well worth the effort for the tower offers one the best views of the circling raptor flocks and a variety of other smaller forest birds enroute too.

During our time here we will also explore the forests and wetlands around Puerto Viejo, including a visit to the nearby Cahuita National Park. Here a boardwalk offers easy access to the forests where we can look for such birds as Shining Honeycreeper, Green Hermit, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Pale-billed Woodpecker, Black-crowned Antshrike, Purple-throated Fruitcrow and many others.

Overnight: Puerto Viejo



Day 14

San José

After a final morning enjoying the birdlife of Costa Rica's Caribbean coastline we will drive back to San José for our final night in Costa Rica.

Overnight: San José

Day 15

Depart San José

This morning is free to relax or explore the hotel grounds. Around early-afternoon we will be transferred back to San José Airport in time to catch our early to mid-afternoon flight to London.

Day 16

London

We are due to arrive back in London by mid-morning.

Grading

Grade A/B. This is a traditional birding and wildlife tour with no strenuous walking involved. Some of the trails, however, can be steep and muddy in places and it will be hot and humid in the lowlands. This holiday is best suited, therefore, for those with an average level of fitness who enjoy walking. Since wildlife activity is at its best during the first few hours of daylight, dawn starts will be encouraged!

Please be aware that the walk to the Kèköldi Observation Tower is around 1.5 kilometres in length and uphill most of the way. We will start the walk at first light and it will be taken slowly, stopping to birdwatch en route.

Weather

Costa Rica has a very varied climate considering its small size. Temperature variation is more to do with altitude rather than the time of the year and you will need to be prepared for hot and humid conditions in the tropical forests of the lowlands and cooler temperatures when in the highlands around Arenal. Midday temperatures on the Caribbean coast will be around 30s degrees (or higher) Centigrade with a high humidity. The dry season usually runs from December through to April and the wetter months from May to November. In September there will be rain showers from time to time with plenty of warm sunshine in-between. Rain showers tend to be short and sharp.

Food and accommodation included in the price

All meals and accommodation are included in the tour price excluding dinner on Day 1 in San José. The lodges and hotels we use on this tour are comfortable (not luxurious) and located in excellent locations

for birds and other wildlife. All rooms have private facilities and single accommodation is available at the supplement cost outlined on our website and brochure.

Extra expenses

Drinks, tips, laundry, any locally paid airport tax, and all items of a personal nature are not included in the cost of the holiday. Please allow around US\$100 for tips.

Guiding

This tour will be led by a local, English speaking, expert naturalist/birder guide who will meet the group in San José Airport.

Please note that we do not provide a trip report at the end of our locally led Costa Rica tours, although your guide will run through the checklist each evening so group members can keep a record of the birds, mammals and other wildlife that has been seen.

Your safety & security

Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website – www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/costa-rica or telephone 0870 6060290 prior to travel.

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 or book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk. Alternatively please 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.

Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek e-mailing list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers. Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk to sign up.