

Go Slow in Costa Rica

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Fly San José & overnight
Day 2	San José
Day 3/9	Excursions from Hotel El Lugar, Sarapiquí
Day 10	Depart San José
Day 11	Arrive London.

Departs

January.

Focus

Birds (main focus), plus other wildlife.

Grading

Grade A (see Page 5 for additional information).

Dates and Prices

Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code CRI09).

Highlights

- Enjoy the wonderful birdlife of Costa Rica at a leisurely and relaxed pace
- Direct flights to San José with British Airways
- Seven nights at Hotel El Lugar, a nature-focused boutique hotel
- Numerous colourful hummingbirds, tanagers, toucans & many others
- Explore the lowland rainforests of La Selva
- Enjoy a peaceful boat trip along the Sarapiquí River
- Mammals including Three-toed Sloth and Mantled Howler Monkey
- Led by expert local naturalist guides



From top: Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth, Sunbittern & Red-legged Honeycreeper (Shutterstock)



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Itinerary

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.



Keel-billed Toucan

Day 1

San José

We depart mid-morning on a direct British Airways scheduled flight from London's Heathrow Airport bound for the Costa Rican capital, San José, arriving mid to late afternoon. Here we will meet our expert naturalist/birder guide and make the short drive into San José where we will spend the night at the comfortable Hotel Bougainvillea.

Day 2

San José

We have this morning to relax after the long flight or join our guide for a gentle birdwatching walk around the extensive landscaped gardens of the Hotel Bougainvillea which cover 10 acres. Here – in one of the best urban birding spots in the whole of the Central Valley – we can begin to enjoy the abundant and colourful birdlife of Costa Rica and start to learn some of commoner species such as Blue-grey Tanager, Clay-coloured Thrush (Costa Rica's national bird), Hoffman's Woodpecker, Lesson's Motmot, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Baltimore Oriole and many more. The flower-filled gardens also attract numerous colourful butterflies and other insects and there's a pool to cool off in once the sun heats up and the birds start to hide away.



Blue-grey Tanager

After lunch we will join a tour of the Hacienda Doka coffee plantation which lasts between one and a half and two hours. The experience includes time in the coffee fields and then continues with a tour of a traditional processing

plant and roasting facility. Here we will learn of the historical importance of coffee in Costa Rica and be able to sample a variety of coffee blends.

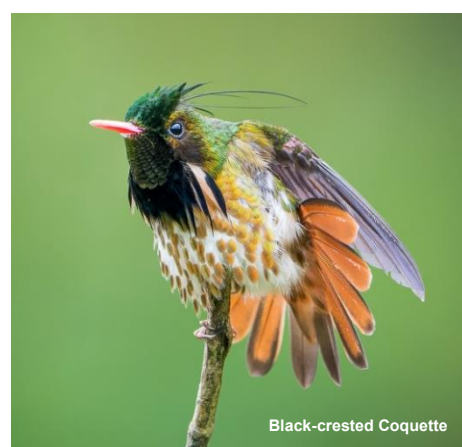
Once the heat of the day melts away, the varied birdlife of the Hotel Bougainvillea's lush gardens will spring into life once again and so we can spend a little more time back amongst the trees, bushes and flowers in search of a few additional species before retreating inside for dinner and a recap of the day.

Days 3 – 9

Excursions from Hotel El Lugar, Sarapiquí

After breakfast on Day 3 we will drive into the Caribbean lowlands to our base for the next seven nights at Hotel El Lugar, a journey of around two hours.

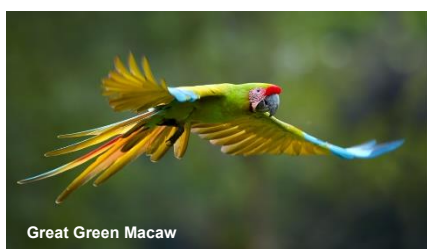
Hotel El Lugar is a nature-focused boutique hotel featuring 55 very comfortable en suite rooms, set in a mix of secondary rainforest and lush pasture bordering the Braulio Carrillo National Park and the La Selva Biological Station. It has a swimming pool, its own private reserve and is home to a wonderful abundance of birds, mammals, insects and other wildlife, including King Vulture, Ornate Hawk Eagle, Black-crested Coquette and Great Green Macaw. Hotel El Lugar has a strong commitment to sustainability, conservation and innovation and features, amongst other 'eco-friendly' adaptations, a thermodynamic water heating and gravity fed water distribution. It is the ideal base for those seeking a tranquil and comfortable experience centred on nature and wildlife observation.



Black-crested Coquette

Each day will start with an optional pre-breakfast birdwatching walk around the grounds of the lodge and its private reserve. We will then head out in our bus for a morning or afternoon visit one of the sites or venues listed below ensuring there is also plenty of time during the rest of the day to relax, swim or other engage in another activity of your choice back at the lodge. Excursions will include the following:

La Selva Biological Station – We will spend a couple of mornings at the well-known La Selva Biological Station run by the Organisation for Tropical Studies (OTS) which is only a ten minute drive from El Lugar. 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!



Great Green Macaw

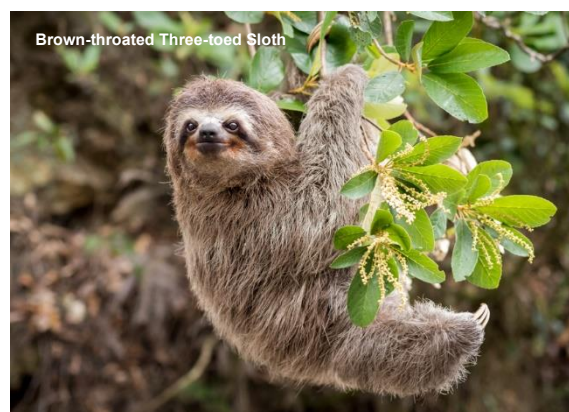
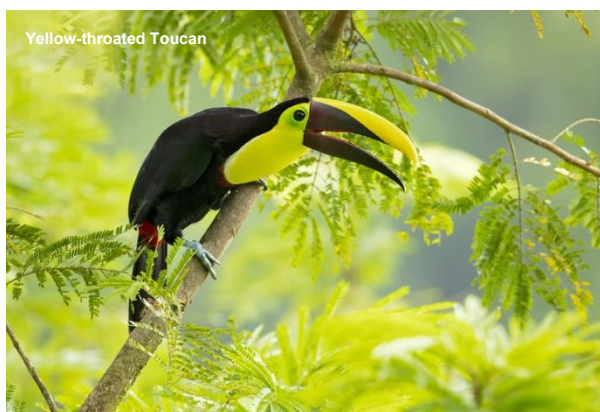


Zebra Longwing



Golden-hooded Tanager

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!



Cope's Art Garden – We will visit Cope's Art Garden one morning, a small private reserve (around 40 minutes from our hotel) home to a wide variety of rainforest birds including several hummingbirds such White-necked Jacobin, Long-billed Hermit and the rare White-tipped Sicklebill, amongst others. Feeders attract a wide variety of species including Yellow-throated Toucan, Collared Aracari, Golden-hooded Tanager and Red-legged Honeycreeper. The gardens and trails offer excellent photographic opportunities, and our time here will also include a visit to a nearby roost of White Tent-making Bats. Both Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth and Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth can be seen here on occasion too.

Sarapiquí River Boat Trip – On one day we will swap the bus and our feet for a relaxing boat trip down the Sarapiquí and Puerto Viejo Rivers from Puerto Viejo, a 15 minute drive from the hotel. For two hours our private boat will take us along waterways through a wonderful mix of open habitats and pristine lowland rainforest. Birds are abundant and may include Sungrebe, Boat-billed Heron, Anhinga, Green Ibis and a plethora of raptors, herons, waders, kingfishers, toucans, hummingbirds, flycatchers, swallows and many others. We will be especially on the lookout for the spectacular Sunbittern who's wings show the pattern and colours of the setting sun when spread. Mammals may include Mantled Howler Monkey and River Otter, along with reptiles such as American Crocodile and Green Iguana.



Other areas to visit include the forests around the Virgin del Socorro waterfall, the Pierella Butterfly Gardens and the river and rainforest trails around the nearby Selva Verde Lodge. We will keep the exact itinerary for your stay flexible, however, to take account of the weather, the interests of the group and the advice of your tour leader. Around halfway through our stay we will build in a relaxing day back at the lodge – with no activities planned – although your tour leader will be on hand at all times to take anyone not wishing to relax out in search of more wildlife!

Day 10

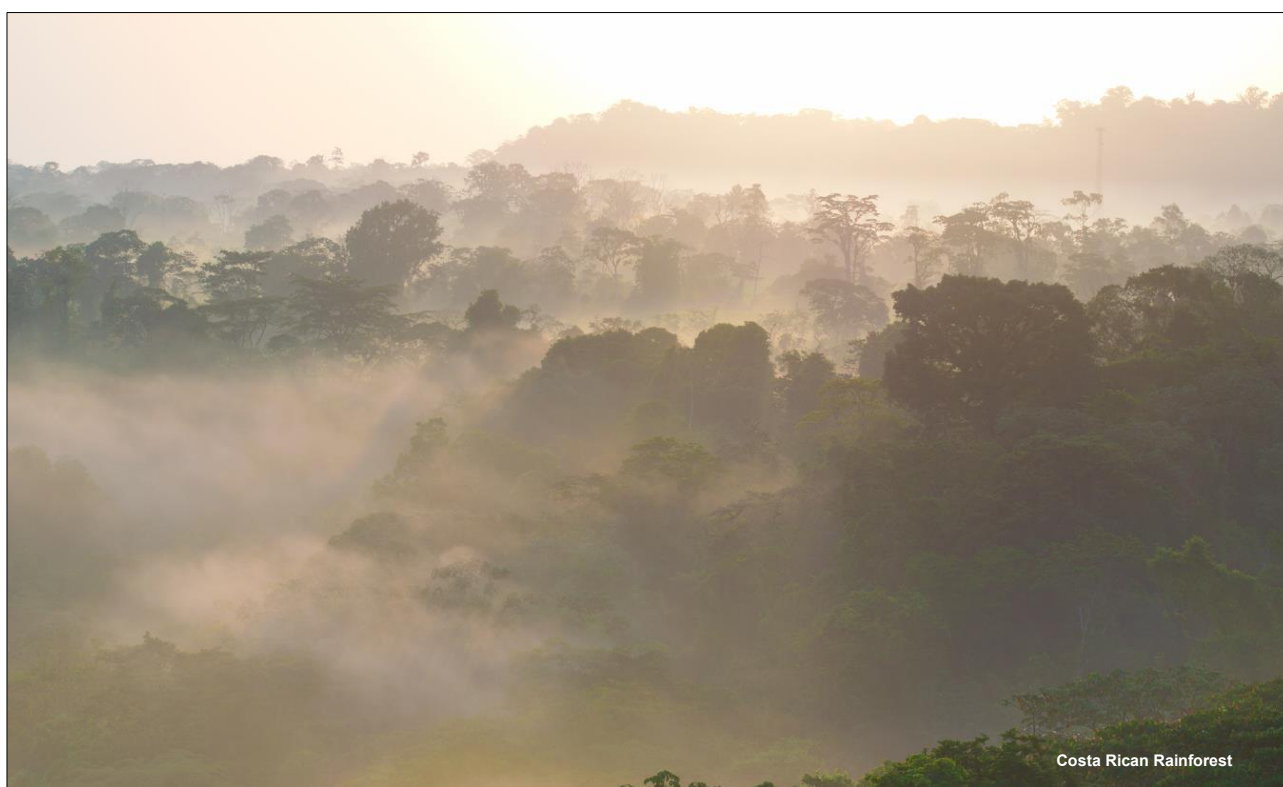
Depart San Jose

We will have a final few hours this morning free to relax or explore the hotel grounds. Around late morning we will be transferred back to San Jose Airport in time to catch our early evening direct British Airways flight to London's Heathrow Airport.

Day 11

London

We are due to arrive back in London's Heathrow Airport late-morning.



Extensions

Extensions are available on request to other areas of Costa Rica including, for example, the Talamanca Mountains (home of the Resplendent Quetzal) or Corcovado National Park in the south of the country. Please contact the Naturetrek office for more information.

Grading & Focus

Grade A – Since this is a ‘Go Slow’ holiday it will not be a difficult or strenuous tour with only limited amounts of easy walking (two to three miles a day maximum, and often less). Since the birds and other wildlife are at their most active during the first few hours of daylight, early starts will be encouraged (although many will be optional). These early starts will be compensated for by plenty of time to relax in the afternoon. Please be aware, however, that the footpaths we will be using are mostly forest trails, some are wide and flat, others are narrower and a bit more undulating. They can be criss-crossed by roots, a little muddy and a bit slippery when wet. All walks will be taken at a leisurely pace, however, with plenty of stops to admire the wildlife.

All of our Costa Rica tours are general wildlife holidays, but with a particular focus on the country’s abundant birdlife. Whilst those joining this tour do not need to be an expert ornithologist, a keen interest in birds and birdwatching is required to get the most out of the holiday. Please be aware that, being a primarily forested country, mammals can be a challenge to find (many are also nocturnal), although our groups still regularly see primates, sloths, coatis and others. Your guides will also be happy to point out the other wildlife you encounter such as the insects, reptiles and amphibians etc, but will not necessarily be able to put a name to all of them.

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, with midday temperatures into the 30s degrees C. The dry season usually runs from December through to April and the wetter months from May to October. Even during the dry season, however, you should still expect – and pack for – some rain.

Guiding

This tour will be led by a local, English speaking, expert naturalist/birder guide who will meet the group in San Jose Airport on Day 1 and leave once the group arrive back into San Jose at the end of the holiday. For additional information on our team of Costa Rican guides please give the Naturetrek office a call on 01962 733051.

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.

Food and accommodation included in the price

All meals and accommodation are included in the tour price with the exception of dinner on Day 1 and lunch on Day 10. For our two nights in San Jose we will be staying in the comfortable Hotel Bougainvillea. All rooms have private facilities

For our seven nights in Sarapiquí we will be staying in the Hotel El Lugar. Hotel El Lugar is a nature-focused boutique hotel featuring 55 very comfortable en suite rooms, set in a mix of secondary rainforest and lush pasture bordering the Braulio Carrillo National Park and the La Selva Biological Station. It has a swimming pool, its own

private reserve and is home to a wonderful abundance of birds, mammals, insects and other wildlife. We will be staying in 'Forest View Rooms', all of which have private facilities. A limited number of rooms are available for single occupancy at the supplement cost outlined on our website and brochure.



Flights

British Airways fly direct between London's Heathrow Airport and the Costa Rican capital, San Jose, five times a week from early November to the end of March. During these months we use BA's direct flights for all of our groups to Costa Rica (subject to seat availability). Outside these months there are no direct flights from the UK to San Jose.

Extra expenses

Drinks, tips (please allow around £150 for tips), laundry, locally paid airport taxes, and all items of a personal nature are not included in the cost of the holiday. The evening meal on Day 1 and lunch on Day 10 are also excluded from the tour cost.

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 & Development Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the FCDO 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, 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.

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