



COLOMBIA: AN ANDES INTRODUCTION JULY 12-24, 2023

Tour leader: Adam Sell with local guide
Maximum group size is 10 participants

Price: \$5250 sharing
Single room supplement: \$435

Check out the trip website here: redhillbirding.com/colombia-ias

To register, fill out the booking form here: redhillbirding.com/bookingform

Colombia is famous among birders for having the highest species list of any country in the world— more than 1850 species! This trip serves as an introduction to the birds of the Colombian Andes and some of the surrounding lowlands, which constitutes one of most biodiverse regions of the planet. The Colombian Andes are at the heart of hummingbird and tanager diversity and home to many endemics. This means we could see classic Andean species like Sword-billed Hummingbird, Crescent-faced Antpitta, White-capped Tanager, and Black-billed and Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucans, along with numerous Colombian endemics, including the likes of Hooded, Brown-banded, and Bicolored Antpittas, Crested Ant-Tanager, Buffy Helmetcrest, Multicolored Tanager and many more. We should expect to find well over 300 species of birds!

Bogotá, the Colombian capital where the trip starts and ends, is easily accessible from Chicago and provides access to some of the world's best birding. After many years of civil war and inaccessibility, Colombia is becoming increasingly popular as a birding and tourist destination. This is with good reason—besides the incredible birding, it has a fantastic network of lodges, guides, and protected areas, all of which we will take advantage of, that make birding and traveling there a real treat. On top of this, it is now a very safe country to visit. We will have a top Colombian birding guide with us for the duration of the trip, which coincides with the dry season, so the weather should be excellent.

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Day 1, Wed, July 12: This is an arrival day. You will be picked up from the airport and transferred to our hotel in the Colombian capital of Bogotá. We will gather in the evening for dinner and an orientation. **Night – Hilton Garden Inn Bogotá**

Day 2, Thu, July 13: We will transfer from our Bogotá hotel and bird our way north towards our hotel in the Magdalena River Valley. Our first stop will be Parque La Florida, a nice urban park on the outskirts of Bogotá. Here, we will enjoy some of the more common birds around Bogotá and will be targeting more specialized species like Bogota Rail (endemic), Spot-flanked Gallinule, Noble Snipe, Apolinar's Wren (endemic) and Silvery-throated Spinetail (endemic). As we continue the day's journey, we will stop in the small town of San Francisco to visit a famous hummingbird feeder setup where we hope to see up to 10 species including Black-throated Mango, Gorgeted Woodstar, Andean Emerald and the endemic Indigo-capped Hummingbird. We will continue on to visit Laguna Tabacal, a nice reserve with birds more typical of lower elevations, including Olivaceous Piculet, Bar-crested Antshrike (endemic), Rusty-breasted Antpitta, Speckle-breasted Wren, Blue-necked Tanager and many others. We will finally continue north and drop into the Magdalena Valley towards the small town of Doradal to check in to our lodging for the next three nights at Los Colores. If there is time and energy, we will bird the grounds around the lodge. **Night – Los Colores**

Day 3, Fri, July 14: Today we will be spending the full day at the fabulous Rio Claro Nature Reserve. A reserve with one of the highest bird lists in all of Colombia, it will be a day focused on many of the tropical lowland and foothills species of northern South America, including some endemic to the Antioquia region. Some of the birds we will be looking for include White-tailed and Black-throated Trogons, Barred Puffbird, White-mantled Barbet (endemic), Beautiful Woodpecker (endemic), and Magdalena Antbird. We will be sure to search out some of the caves in the region for the truly unique and bizarre Oilbird. **Night – Los Colores**

Day 4, Sat, July 15: Today is another day devoted to birding the Rio Claro region, and will be our last opportunity to see a many species restricted to the lowlands. We will continue to search out tough endemics of the region like Antioquia Bristle-Tyrant, but there will still be wonderful tropical species to see like Chestnut-fronted Macaw, Golden-headed Manakin, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Swallow Tanager, Bay Wren and many others. **Night – Los Colores**

Day 5, Sun, July 16: We will do some morning birding in the Magdalena River Valley before transferring to our high-elevation hotel just outside of Los Nevados National Park and some of

the best páramo (high-elevation ecosystem at or above treeline) habitat in all of Colombia. We will arrive at our lodging in time to check in and bird around the grounds, where the hummingbird feeder regulars include Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Black-thighed and Golden-breasted Pufflegs, and Shining Sunbeam. In the evening, we can relax in the thermal springs that make this lodging famous. **Night – Hotel Termales del Ruiz**

Day 6, Mon, July 17: Today will entirely focus on high-elevation habitat under the snow-covered peaks of Nevado del Ruiz. There will be a new suite of species as we trade the tropical lowlands for the near treeless páramo and surrounding high-elevation forest. We will be looking for specialty species that include the endemic Buffy Helmetcrest, Andean Condor, Tawny Antpitta, Rufous-fronted Parakeet (endemic), and Stout-billed Cinclodes. We are also in a region replete with tanagers including Lacrimose and Scarlet-bellied Mountain Tanagers, Golden-crowned Tanager, and Blue-backed Conebill. In the evening, we can return to relax in the hot springs and enjoy the incredible visitors to the hummingbird feeders. **Night – Hotel Termales del Ruiz**

Day 7, Tue, July 18: Our morning will start at slightly lower elevation at a location that is quickly becoming one of the best birding hotspots in the Andes. Hacienda el Bosque has beautiful grounds and feeders that will delight the birder and photographer. In recent years, it has become the only location known to host the near-mythical Crescent-faced Antpitta at a feeding station! We will also focus on finding other wonderful specialties including Sword-billed Hummingbird, Gray-breasted Mountain Toucan, Equatorial Antpitta and Barred Fruiteater. It is bound to be one of our better mornings. After peeling ourselves away, we will continue to bird down to our lodging, stopping in excellent cloudforest habitat to search for plenty of new birds like Andean Guan, Andean Pygmy-Owl, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Slaty-backed Chat-Tyrant and Beryl-spangled Tanager. We will arrive at Hacienda Venecia later in the day, which will serve as our base for birding the Manizales foothills the heart of Colombia's coffee-growing region. **Night – Hotel Tinamú**

Day 8, Wed, July 19: We will spend this day birding around the foothills of Manizales. Elevation plays a key role in the diversity of life in the Andes, and at this lower elevation, we have the opportunity to see some new species compared to our previous days higher up. We will enjoy birding the trail system and excellent feeders at Hotel Tinamú. Some birds we hope to see today include Colombian Chachalaca, Scaled Antpitta, Andean Motmot, Grayish Piculet (endemic), Moustached Puffbird, and Parker's Antbird (endemic). The hummingbird feeders are often active with Steely-vented Hummingbird, Black-throated Mango, and White-necked Jacobin. The fruit feeders can host quite a few tanagers including Flame-rumped, Crimson-backed, Scrub and Bay-headed Tanagers. **Night – Hotel Tinamú**

Day 9, Thu, July 20: Today will be mostly dedicated to travelling south towards the city of Cali, but we will break up the drive with a few birding spots, including the wetland complex at Laguna de Sonso. We will be looking for more birds of open lands and marsh including Horned Screamer, Dwarf Cuckoo, Buff-necked Ibis, Pied Water-Tyrant, Apical Flycatcher, and Yellow Oriole. In the late afternoon, we will arrive at the beautiful Araucana Lodge in the foothills of Cali where we can get in some time to relax and bird the grounds. **Night – Araucana Lodge**

Day 10, Fri, July 21: Today we be focused on birding the Anchicaya region, which will give us our first taste of the Eastern cordillera on our continued feast of the Colombian Andes. We will visit beautiful foothill trails and yet another wonderful feeder set-up. There will be a lot of birds today, with some potential highlights being Sickle-winged Guan, Empress Brilliant, Toucan and Red-headed Barbets, Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Tricolored Brushfinch, Glistening-green Tanager and Black-winged Saltator. We will enjoy a wonderful evening meal at Araucana Lodge and if there is time, we might head out for some night birding where we will look for Tropical Screech-Owl, Spectacled Owl, and Common Pauraque. **Night – Araucana Lodge**

Day 11, Sat, July 22: Today will be another full day spent in the foothills and cloud forest habitats around Cali, where we will visit a few more locations and support the fast-growing eco-tourism industry in the area. An incredible number of landowners are now seeing the economic benefits of preserving their land for birds and we will take full advantage. Some potential bird highlights include Chestnut Wood-Quail (endemic), Booted Racket-tail, Saffron-crowned Tanager and the beautiful endemic Multicolored Tanager. **Night – Araucana Lodge**

Day 12, Sun, July 23: Today we will spend the morning and early afternoon birding a location commonly known as “Kilometer 18.” The cloud forest and foothills in this region will continue to impress. We will be looking for any key targets we have missed, and some potential highlights for the morning could include Crimson-rumped Toucanet, Uniform Antshrike, Golden-winged Manakin, Green-and-black Fruiteater, and Saffron-crowned Tanager. We will then visit a wonderful finca with a nice hummingbird set up. Hummingbirds have the best names, and we will be looking for Long-tailed Sylph, Bronzy Inca, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Purple-throated Woodstar and Blue-headed Sapphire. Hummingbirds aside, we will also be keeping our eyes peeled for other species like Golden-headed Quetzal, Black-billed Peppershrike and Masked Flowerpiercer. We will take a late afternoon flight back to Bogotá. **Night – Hilton Garden Inn Bogota**

Day 13, Mon, July 24: Today is a dedicated travel day. You may book your flights home at any time.

IMPORTANT NOTES

Contact and Registration Information

The tour manager for this trip is Adam Sell. To sign up, each participant should complete the [booking form](#). Once we receive the form, we will send you information about paying the trip deposit. If you have any questions before registering, please contact the office at info@redhillbirding.com.

Timing

The trip will **begin on Wednesday, July 12, 2023, in Bogotá, Colombia**. The tour will **end on Monday, July 24, in the same location**. We will provide airport transfers to and from the airport on those days. The first and last nights are at a hotel near the airport. If you would like to arrive early or depart later, we can arrange airport transfers for those dates for an additional cost.

*Please do not book your flights until we confirm that the minimum number of participants (6) have registered for this tour.

Price

The price of the trip is \$5250 and the single supplement is \$435. This price **includes** all meals, from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 13, all transportation and accommodation during that period; internal flights; airport transfers on Day 1 and Day 13; bottled water and non-alcoholic beverages with meals; a Red Hill Birding guide and a local guide for the duration of the trip; tips for the local guides and drivers; \$100 donation to IAS; and all entrance fees. The price **does not include** international airfare; visa fees if applicable; alcoholic beverages; snacks; laundry; tips for the Red Hill Birding guide; tips for lodge staff; or other items of a personal nature.

A deposit of \$800 per person and the submission of the [booking form](#) will secure your place on the trip. Upon receiving your booking form, we will send you deposit details. Final payment is due by May 12, 2023. We accept payment by Zelle, check, and bank transfer. We also accept payment by credit card with an additional 3.1% processing fee.

Physical Difficulty

This trip is **physically moderate**. The terrain is varied, with a few relatively steep trails. We will primarily be birding along roads and forested trails. We will also be visiting several incredible feeder set-ups. Some trails may be slippery after rain. We will be birding at a wide range of elevations to maximize the diversity of birds that we see. We will be birding as high as 3700m (12,000 ft) and our lodging at Hotel Termales del Ruiz is located at 3500 m, (11,500 ft). Because of the nature of rainforest birding, we will have two guides to make sure that everybody sees as many of the birds as possible. We will be walking quite a bit, but we will be walking at a “birding pace.”

Pace

The pace of this trip is **relaxed to moderate**. We are staying at comfortable, modern eco-lodges throughout the trip. We are staying at each location outside of the airport hotel for a minimum of two nights to ensure we are surveying each habitat well, but to also enjoy each location at a more relaxed pace. In the tropics, we will take advantage of morning activity with early starts before the heat of the day. On most days, we will enjoy a siesta during the heat of the day and will have the opportunity to continue birding in the afternoon as bird activity begins to pick up. At all of our locations there are plenty of birds on site and often feeders. If there is any excursion or walk that a participant would like to opt out of, there will usually be the opportunity to stay back at the lodge to relax and enjoy the birds on the property. We will have a few longer drives between habitats, but we will break up those drives with birding opportunities.

Photography

The photographic opportunities in Colombia are **very good**. Bird photography inside the forest is always difficult, but some of our birding is along roads and wide trails and in more open habitats, where there is greater light and photography is easier. The many feeder set-ups that we will visit offer excellent photographic opportunities. That being said, this is primarily a birdwatching tour. While there will be ample opportunities for photography along the way, we will not be making special considerations for photographers.

Weather

We are visiting the Colombian Andes during the drier summer months. That said, we will be birding in rainforest and cloudforest habitats where occasional rain is to be expected. An umbrella and/or raincoat will prove useful. The weather overall will be comfortable because we will be at elevation, with cool nights and warm days. Lower elevations throughout the tour, especially at the start while visiting Rio Claro, will be more tropical in nature with warmer days and more humidity. While at the higher elevations around Termales del Ruiz, temperatures could get down into the 40s in the early morning before warming up. It will be important to pack layers due to the varied temperatures and conditions we will experience.

Accommodations & Food

The accommodations on this tour will be excellent. Lodging for ecotourism is incredible in Colombia. At every accommodation, outside of our airport hotel in Bogotá, the birding can be excellent on the grounds. All accommodations are modern and in tropical locations, we will have air conditioning. Each lodge has access to WiFi. The food on this tour is very good, with on-site restaurants being excellent and capable of meeting the needs of dietary restrictions and preferences. Bottled water will be provided throughout the tour. In the dry climate at relatively high elevations, it is important to stay hydrated. Soda and coffee/tea are included with meals; alcoholic beverages are extra.

Packing Considerations

You will generally want to wear comfortable clothing that you don't mind getting a little dirty. The dress for the tour is entirely casual. Comfortable, waterproof walking shoes are a must, with hiking boots preferred. A good raincoat or poncho is important, some rain is expected on this tour. You will not need rubber boots. Light-weight, quick-dry clothing that will allow you to stay cool in the tropical heat and dry quickly after rain is best. A jacket for cool mornings, especially at higher elevations, is important. If you are prone to feeling cold, a hat and light gloves will prove useful for the higher elevations as well. A headlamp or flashlight is useful for nighttime excursions and in case of power outages.

Electricity is available at all lodges and there is no need for power converters. Be sure to bring enough extra batteries and memory cards for cameras. As always, the essentials, such as binoculars and medications, should be packed in carry-on bags in case of lost luggage.

Resources

The best field guide for Colombia is the new (in 2021) *Birds of Colombia* by Steve Hilty, published by Lynx. Another good option is *Birds of Northern South America volume 2*.

The Merlin Bird ID App by Cornell University has a highly useful Colombian Andes pack (Colombia: Andes), which can be downloaded for free and has photos, information and songs/calls for most of the birds we will encounter.

Money

The currency in Colombia is the Colombian Peso. You can easily exchange money upon arrival at the airport; alternatively, ATMs are widely available and most of them accept American debit cards.

Tipping

We aim to provide **exceptional service**, using guides that are knowledgeable, interesting, personable, and experienced. While tipping is never expected, if you feel that your guides went

above and beyond, you are welcome to leave them a gratuity. Tips at restaurants and for local guides and drivers are included in the cost of the tour.

Travel Insurance

We do not require travel insurance for domestic trips. However, we recommend purchasing it to help protect you against the unexpected. For your convenience, we offer travel protection through Travelex Insurance Services. For more information on the available plans or to enroll, go to www.travelexinsurance.com or contact Travelex Insurance Services at 800-228-9792 and reference location number 13-0441.

Travelex Insurance Services, Inc CA Agency License #0D10209. Travel Insurance is underwritten by, Berkshire Hathaway Specialty Insurance Company, NAIC #22276. 55Y

Note that to be eligible for some benefits, travel insurance must be purchased within 1-2 weeks of paying the trip deposit.



The Buffy Helmetcrest is a beautiful hummingbird endemic to high elevation habitat around Los Nevados