



NEOTROPICAL®
NATURE & BIRDING TRIPS

NORTHERN COLOMBIA

SIERRA NEVADA, TAYRONA NATIONAL
PARK & PENINSULA DE GUAJIRA



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2026 ITINERARY



From mountains to the caribbean coast

Join us on an unforgettable journey through one of the most biodiverse corners of South America. This expertly guided tour explores a rich mosaic of ecosystems—from the lush foothills of Minca and the cloud forests of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, to the arid landscapes of La Guajira, the coastal mangroves of Isla Salamanca, and the tropical beauty of Tayrona National Park.

In just a few days, you'll have the chance to see and photograph a remarkable number of Colombia's endemic and range-restricted species. Whether you're a dedicated birder or a nature photographer, this tour offers exceptional opportunities to experience the unique birdlife and striking habitats of Northern Colombia.

DAY 1 **Transfer-in Barranquilla**

Arrival at Ernesto Cortissoz International Airport (**BAQ**) and transfer to the hotel.

Upon arrival in Barranquilla, you will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel for check-in and rest. Please note that check-in begins at 3:00 PM. If your flight arrives earlier and you would like to request an early check-in, let us know in advance. This service is subject to hotel availability and may incur an additional cost.

Overnight in Barranquilla – Hotel El Prado or similar



DAY 2 Isla Salamanca - Minca

We begin our journey early in the morning near Barranquilla, visiting a variety of productive birding hotspots. Here, we'll search for specialties such as the Northern Screamer, Caribbean Hornero, Turquoise-winged Parrotlet, Chestnut-winged Chachalaca, Brown-throated Parakeet, Dwarf Cuckoo, Chestnut Piculet, and Spot-breasted Woodpecker.

Our next destination is Isla Salamanca National Park (PNN Isla Salamanca), a prime coastal habitat home to standout species like the Sapphire-throated Hummingbird, Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird, Bicolored Conebill, Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, American Pygmy Kingfisher, and Pied Puffbird, among others.

We'll pause for lunch en route to Minca, then continue birding in the afternoon with stops to search for more regional highlights such as the Chestnut-winged Chachalaca, Keel-billed Toucan, Rosy Thrush-Tanager, and Whooping Motmot.

Overnight in Minca – Hotel Casa de Hadas or similar (B/L/D).

DAY 3 Minca

In the morning, we will visit different birding hotspots close to Minca, a richly biodiverse area nestled in the lower elevations of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

This site offers a mix of secondary forest, open woodland, and shade-grown coffee and cacao plantations—habitats that support a wide variety of birdlife. As we walk through the trails, we'll focus on locating some of the area's key species, including the striking Black-backed Antshrike, the vibrant Military Macaw (often seen flying over the canopy), and two charismatic manakins—the White-bearded and Lance-tailed—whose displays are a true highlight. We'll also keep an eye out for the Golden-winged Sparrow, a regional specialty often seen skulking in the understory.

The combination of lush landscapes, varied microhabitats, and the backdrop of the Sierra Nevada's slopes makes this day a rewarding experience for birders and photographers alike.

Overnight in Minca – Hotel Casa de Hadas or similar (B/L/D).



DAY 4 El Dorado reserve - Mountain House

After breakfast, we will begin our ascent into the heart of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, focusing on lower elevation habitats that host a remarkable concentration of endemic and near-endemic species.

This region is one of the most important hotspots for endemism in the Americas. Our targets during the morning include specialties such as Santa Marta Antbird, Santa Marta Tapaculo, Santa Marta Brushfinch, Sierra Nevada Brushfinch, White-lored Warbler, and the elusive Rusty-breasted Antpitta. We'll also be on the lookout for vibrant species like the Bay-headed and Black-headed Tanagers, as well as dazzling hummingbirds including Coppery Emerald, Santa Marta Woodstar, and the stunning Santa Marta Blossomcrown.

Later in the day, we will arrive at the renowned El Dorado Reserve.

Established in 2006 by Fundación ProAves, this private nature reserve was created with the mission to protect critical habitat for the endangered Santa Marta Parakeet (*Pyrrhura viridicata*). The reserve spans a diverse range of elevations and ecosystems—from humid montane forest to regenerating areas under active restoration—offering exceptional opportunities to observe both flora and fauna unique to this isolated mountain range.

In the afternoon, we'll continue birding along El Dorado road where many new species can often be seen as the unique Golden-breasted Fruiteater.

As night falls, we'll head out in search of the elusive Santa Marta Screech-Owl, a nocturnal endemic that inhabits the fascinating cloud forest around the reserve.

Overnight at Mountain House (B/L/D).



ENDEMIC BIRD AREA SIERRA NEVADA DE SANTA MARTA

Among the standout bird species are the Santa Marta Parakeet, Santa Marta Screech-Owl, Santa Marta Antpitta, White-tailed Starfrontlet, Vermilion Cardinal, Tocuyo Sparrow, Buffy Hummingbird, and Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird—just a few of the many endemics and regional specialties found only in this part of the world. Beyond birds, the tour also offers chances to encounter mammals such as the Cotton-top Tamarin and Red Howler Monkey, as well as fascinating reptiles and amphibians unique to these ecosystems. Every day in the field holds the potential for rare sightings and unforgettable moments in nature.



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DAY 5 El Dorado reserve - San Lorenzo

We will depart early in the morning toward the highest elevations of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, a region that offers some of the most sought-after high-altitude endemics in Colombia.

As we ascend along narrow mountain roads and trails, we'll explore elfin forests and montane habitats where several rare and range-restricted species occur. Our primary targets include the endangered Santa Marta Parakeet and Santa Marta Warbler, both of which inhabit the upper cloud forest and edges of paramo vegetation.

We'll also search for other highland specialties such as the Black-cheeked Mountain Tanager, Hermit Wood-Wren, Yellow-crowned Redstart, and the elusive Santa Marta Bush-Tyrant. With patience and luck, we may encounter two of the most difficult and coveted antpittas of the region—the Santa Marta Antpitta and Sierra Nevada Antpitta.

Throughout the morning, we'll be scanning the forest canopy and flower-laden understory for dazzling hummingbirds like the White-tailed Starfrontlet, and keeping our eyes open for the elegant White-tipped Quetzal, often seen perched quietly in the moss-laden trees.

Overnight at Mountain House (B/L/D).

PHOTOS BY SANTIAGO SALAZAR

- **Scientific Name:**
Pyrrhura viridicata
- **Population:** 3,300 -
6,700 adults
- **IUCN Status:**
Endangered
- **Trend:** Decreasing
- **Habitat:** Humid
mountain forests;
sometimes forest edges

The Santa Marta Parakeet is one of the most iconic and endangered bird species of Colombia's Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, a globally recognized biodiversity hotspot. Endemic to this isolated mountain range, the parakeet plays a vital ecological role in the high Andean cloud forests, contributing to seed dispersal and the overall health of its unique ecosystem. Due to habitat loss and a very limited range, it is currently listed as Endangered. The most important stronghold for this rare parakeet is found along the steep San Lorenzo ridge, which lies on the western edge of the Santa Marta mountain range. This area is critical for its survival, offering suitable nesting and feeding habitats within a fragile and highly specialized environment. Protecting this ridge and its surrounding forest is essential for ensuring the future of the Santa Marta Parakeet.



SANTA MARTA PARAKEET



TAYRONA NATIONAL PARK



LANCED-TAILED MANAKIN

DAY 5 **Tayrona National Park**

After breakfast at the lodge, we begin our gradual descent toward Minca, with planned birding stops along the way.

This return journey provides excellent opportunities to search for species we may have missed on the way up, as we move through a variety of habitats from cloud forest to lower elevation woodlands.

We'll continue directly toward the Caribbean coast, where the landscape shifts into tropical dry forest as we approach Tayrona National Park a region where the Sierra Nevada meets the sea, creating stunning natural contrasts.

Upon arrival, we'll enjoy lunch near the park, followed by some time to relax or explore the surroundings.

Overnight in Tayrona National Park - Bamboo lodge (B/L/D).



DAY 7 Tayrona - Guajira peninsula - Camarones

We begin the day with an early birding session in Tayrona National Park, where we'll explore the park's varied ecosystems in search of some of the region's most fascinating species.

Our primary focus will be on the elusive Blue-billed Curassow, a rare and striking bird that calls the park home, along with the vibrant Lance-tailed Manakin, whose dramatic courtship displays provide one of the most captivating sights in the forest. As we move through the park, we'll also be on the lookout for the iconic Cotton-top Tamarin, a small primate with a distinctive white tuft of fur, which is critically endangered and found only in this part of the world.

After our birding session, we will continue our journey toward Riohacha, stopping for lunch en route. In the afternoon, we will visit the Camarones area for some aquatic birdwatching, where we'll explore the lagoon to observe a variety of waders and waterfowl in their natural habitat.

Overnight in Riohacha – Hotel Taroa (B/L/D).



DAY 8 Guajira peninsula - Camarones - Santa Marta

In the morning, we'll embark on an exciting birding adventure through the arid landscapes of the Los Flamencos Reserve and the surrounding dry woodlands of Camarones.

This unique desert ecosystem offers the chance to see some of the region's most sought-after species, including the striking Vermilion Cardinal, the true star of this area. With its brilliant red plumage, this bird is a highlight for any birder and an unforgettable sight. Along with the cardinal, we'll search for other specialties such as the Orinocan Saltator, Chestnut Piculet, and the elusive Tocuyo Sparrow, as well as the White-whiskered Spinetail, Buffy Hummingbird, and Green-rumped Parrotlet. Keep your eyes peeled for the Rufous-vented Chachalaca and the iconic Double-striped Thick-knee, both of which add to the allure of this exceptional ecosystem.

Later in the day, we'll drive to the beautiful coastal city of Santa Marta, where we'll enjoy a relaxed lunch and spend the night. This charming city offers a perfect setting to unwind after our days of exploration, with time to stroll along the waterfront or simply reflect on the extraordinary wildlife and landscapes we've encountered.

Overnight in Santa Marta Hilton Garden Inn or similar (B/L/D).



DAY 9 **Transfer-out to Barranquilla**

After breakfast, we'll provide a comfortable transfer to the Barranquilla International Airport (approximately 2.5 hours), ensuring you arrive with ample time for your international departure.

Transfer-out to Barranquilla **(B/-/-)**



TOUR SUMMARY

- **Length: 9 days**
- **Start/End city: Barranquilla**
- **Physical difficulty: moderate**
- **Focus: Birding + Photography**

PRICING PER PERSON

Group size: 6 participants: USD \$3720

Single supplement \$240

WHATS'S INCLUDED

- Private transportation
- Private English-speaking birding & photography guide
- Private local guides
- Private 4WD vehicles for Sierra de Santa Marta - El Dorado reserve
- All meals, excursions, and activities listed in the itinerary (B= breakfast; L= lunch; D= dinner)
- Drinking water available throughout the tour
- Lodging as described in the itinerary
- Entrance fees to all reserves and activities listed in the itinerary

NOT INCLUDED

- Tips and gratuities
- Personal expenses
- Alcoholic and additional beverages
- Travel insurance
- International airfare
- Any items not explicitly mentioned above



CLIMATE

The climate in northern Colombia varies significantly depending on the region and altitude, contributing to a rich diversity of ecosystems. Throughout the tour, you will experience a range of weather conditions, from warm and dry lowlands to cool and humid mountain regions.

- Lowland Regions (Camarones, Los Flamencos, and Tayrona):
- In these areas, the climate is typically hot and dry, with daytime temperatures often exceeding 30°C (86°F). Coastal winds may provide some relief, but mornings and afternoons are usually sunny and warm. Nights are generally mild but can cool slightly. It is recommended to wear light clothing, sunscreen, and a hat for sun protection.
- Mountainous and Forested Areas (Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, El Dorado, Tayrona National Park):
- As we ascend to higher altitudes, the climate becomes cooler and more humid. In areas such as El Dorado and Tayrona National Park, daytime temperatures generally range from 20-25°C (68-77°F), while nights can be cool, especially in higher elevations. Rain is common in the afternoon or evening, so it's advised to bring waterproof clothing and appropriate footwear for wet trails.
- Transition and Variability:
- Throughout the tour, you'll notice a noticeable variation in climate, particularly when transitioning from the coast to the mountains. During hikes and explorations, light but frequent rain showers can occur, and temperatures may change quickly. It's advisable to wear layered clothing to adapt to fluctuating conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Bring lightweight and comfortable clothing for the day, but also pack extra layers for the cool mornings and rainy afternoons in the mountains.
- Don't forget sunscreen, insect repellent, and a hat for additional protection.
- Sturdy, waterproof boots and a lightweight rain jacket will be useful, especially in the more humid areas.

This tour offers a unique experience where the changing weather conditions will be an integral part of the adventure, allowing us to explore diverse ecosystems and enjoy an unparalleled biodiversity.

TIME ZONE: UTC/GMT -5 hours

VISA

·United States: U.S. citizens do not need a visa for tourism purposes. They can stay up to 180 days per calendar year with a valid passport. [Natvisa](#)

·Canada: Canadian citizens are also visa-exempt for short stays (up to 90 days). A valid passport is required.

- European Citizens Citizens of the European Union and several other European countries do not need a visa for short stays (up to 90 days).A valid passport or national ID card is sufficient.
- Asian Citizens: China, India, Thailand, and Vietnam: Citizens from these countries are visa-exempt if they hold a valid Schengen or U.S. visa. Upon arrival in Colombia, they can obtain a Permiso de Ingreso y Permanencia (PIP), allowing entry without a Colombian visa. [B A L | Berry Appleman & Leiden LLP](#)
- Other Asian Countries: Citizens from countries not listed above may need to apply for a tourist visa through a Colombian embassy or consulate.

· GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR VISA-EXEMPT TRAVELERS

- Passport: Valid for at least six months from the date of entry.
- Proof of onward travel: Return ticket or onward journey.
- Financial means: Evidence of sufficient funds for the duration of stay.
- Health insurance: Recommended for the duration of stay.

For the most accurate and up-to-date information, please consult the [Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#).

If you need assistance with visa applications or have further questions, feel free to ask!

HEALTH AND SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Vaccinations: No mandatory vaccinations are required for travelers.
- Yellow Fever: Recommended if visiting certain areas.
- Health Insurance: Strongly recommended for the duration of your stay.



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