

WILD PARROTS UP CLOSE – COSTA RICA 2017

COSTA RICA 2017 – 26th November to 7th December

Following very successful previous trips to Costa Rica where we saw 13 out of the 17 species of parrots that reside in this country and over 300 species of birds I am organising another trip for 2017 with a slightly different itinerary.



Once again, we will go to Carara Biological Reserve on the pacific coast where there is a population of Scarlet Macaws and in the north the amazing Laguna del Lagarta Lodge where we get really close to several Parrot species near to the Nicaraguan border and the best area in the world to see Great Green Macaws (Buffons) in the wild with some chill out time at Arenal Volcano. We also will be visiting the Ara Project breeding center for Scarlet and Great Green Macaws which is also their release site for the Scarlet Macaws, doing a river boat trip for the very large crocodiles and many bird species including some parrots and much, much more!!!

We will have the use of an air-conditioned coach with our own driver throughout this trip so that we can stop off wherever we want en-route to the various destinations within Costa Rica. We have a cool box on-board for keeping all the drinks etc. so that they are available at all times while we are travelling around the country.

Also we have Hector our Naturalist Guide travelling with us again to enable us to use his knowledge to find the Parrots and identify the other birds and wildlife on our travels to get the most out of the whole trip.

ALL Photographs in this itinerary were taken by Steve Brookes on previous Costa Rica trips.

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ITINERARY

26th November - Arrive at San Jose International Airport with a transfer to the 4* Aurola Holiday Inn Hotel where the group will meet for the first time. Depending how early we are, there may be some time to do some birding around the grounds of the Hotel and possibly see our first Parrots of the trip the **Crimson fronted Conures**.

27th November - Early transfer to the Central Pacific Region, calling in at a **Crimson-fronted Conure** roost site.

Here we will be staying at the Villa Lapas on the edge of the Carara National Park. We will check out the **Scarlet Macaw** nest sites and feeding areas.



28th November – Today we do a trip on the Tarcoles River with all the amazing birds that we find there including **Yellow naped, Red lored and Mealy Amazons**. Along the lanes to get to the river we will find **Scarlet Macaws** and **Orange fronted Conures** followed by a trip to Jaco to see the **Scarlet Macaws** feeding with a fantastic sunset to end the day



Tarcoles River boat trips:

*Located on the Central Pacific Coast of Costa Rica, the Guacalillo Estuary and the Tárcoles River offer the chance to observe one the largest colony of crocodiles in the world, the richest Mangrove Forest in the mid pacific coast and the most important conservation area for the **Scarlet Macaw** in the country. As the boat goes near the river banks, you have a great opportunity of a close up look of wild crocodiles up to fifteen feet long each. In addition, over two hundred and fifty different kinds of birds can be found in the area, including king fishers, roseate spoonbills, great herons, anhingas, night herons and much more.*

The Tárcoles River is one of the most important feeding sites for resident and migratory birds and a very important mating & refuge site for mammals and reptiles.



29th November – After an early birding outing we will have breakfast and then we set off north calling in at the **Santuario de Lapas (Macaw Sanctuary)** before moving onto Samara in the Nicoya Peninsula for **White-fronted and Yellow-naped Amazons**.

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It is here where we also find Punta Islita which is the home of the Ara Project. Not only is this the location for the breeding centre for the **2 Macaws** in this country but also one where the **Scarlet Macaw** is released into the wild on a slow-release basis – we will have a talk by the Project explaining all details about it and giving us many opportunities to take some fantastic photos.

*The Ara Project is a Costa Rican licensed zoological park and non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of the two native macaw species of Costa Rica: the critically endangered **Great Green or Buffon's Macaw** (*Ara ambiguus*) and the **Scarlet Macaw** (*Ara macao*). The Ara Project incorporates breeding techniques and aviary management in order to carry out controlled release programs in conjunction with Costa Rican wildlife laws imposed by MINAET (Ministry of the Environment, Energy & Telecommunications).*



30th November – Should we have run out of time on the previous day and unfortunately missed visiting the **Ara Project** then we will now have a chance or maybe re-visit or check out various sites for the naturally occurring Parrots in this region – we will decide on the day.



After breakfast we set off on our trip to Volcan Arenal with stops for birding on the way looking for more sightings of Parrots as we travel across the country and with a vast array of tanagers and other colourful birds including the **White-crowned Parrots** we will not know where to look next.



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1st December - Another early morning watching parrots and other birds then after breakfast we will take a steady drive to Laguna del Lagarta Lodge near the Nicaraguan border stopping for lunch and several other places to observe more birds as we travel including some nesting areas for the Great-green Macaws.

Arenal Volcano National Park:
The Arenal Volcano, in Spanish Volcán Arenal, is an active andesitic stratovolcano in north-western Costa Rica, around 90 km north-west of San José, in the province of Alajuela and district of La Fortuna. Arenal is the youngest and most active of all the mountains in Costa Rica. Arenal rises 1657 metres above sea level and overlooks Lake Arenal; both are part of Arenal Volcano National Park.



The country's most active volcano, Arenal's eruptions are strombolian in type, being frequent but moderate and can be viewed without danger as long as the viewers are

behind the safety perimeter. This constant activity and minimal endangerment makes Arenal a popular tourist destination, especially at night, because the lava and incandescent rocks make a spectacular sight. The last major eruption of Arenal occurred on August 23, 2000. Most of the time, the volcano is surrounded by clouds near the tip, and it is touted as good luck to see the whole volcano without clouds.



Once at Laguna del Lagarta it will not be long before everyone has discovered the bird feed area next to the dining room where an array of colourful birds including some parrots and toucans come to feed on a daily basis and only being about 3 metres away make very good photo opportunities.

2nd December – A full day at Laguna del Lagarta lodge where we shall soon settle in to the relaxed atmosphere of this smaller lodge and with **Great Green Macaws, Red lored**

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and Mealy Amazons, White crowned Pionus, Brown hooded Parrots, Orange chinned Parakeets as well as Olive throated and Crimson fronted Conures - it feels so good!!



Aracaris, Woodpeckers and Honeycreepers are also in abundance – it is so difficult to concentrate on eating your breakfast or lunch whilst all these birds are around it is a spectacle to savour.

While we are here we will also take a short walk through the forest to a clearing where there is an amazing tree with 3 **Great-green Macaw** nests as well as a **Scarlet Macaw** nest and several **Crimson-fronted Parakeet** nests - ALL IN THE ONE TREE!!



3rd December – We have more, close up encounters of the **Parrots** and other birds around the dining area.



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After breakfast, we will be travelling south to Sarapiquí where there are more chances of **Great-green Macaws** and very slight chances of the extremely rare **Red-fronted Parrotlets** when we visit La Selva.

La Selva has been a pioneer site in Education, Research, Conservation and Ecotourism in Costa Rica since 1953 and one of the first private protected areas in the country. La Selva is located in the Caribbean foothills of Costa Rica and comprises 1,614 hectares (3,988 acres) of old growth and disturbed tropical wet forest. Species diversity is spectacular, including more than 1,850 species of plants, 350 species of trees, 448 species of birds, and approximated 500 species of ants. The half day visit includes three hours hike led by a bilingual naturalist guide. Gives a glimpse of leading-edge research conducted at La Selva. High quality experience, enjoy and learn about the amazing natural history of the tropical forest, its flora and fauna.



4th December – After only one night here we say goodbye to Sarapiquí with a final morning checking out all the parrots and birds around this area before moving further south and west heading to San Gerardo de Dota for our final lodge of this trip, the beautiful Savegre.



Once we arrive at Savegre Lodge we will be checking out all the hummingbird feeders to see who can take photos of these fast moving but mesmerising birds before going in search of the **Resplendent Quetzal** which is the lure for most people to this lodge.

Whilst agreeing this is a really splendid bird to see and watch about its daily routines there are many more birds in this valley including Acorn Woodpeckers, Tanagers, and some **Parrots** including the **Sulphur-winged Conure** and **Barred Parakeets** and if we are really lucky the **Red-fronted Parrotlets** may turn up to give us a chance to photo this rarely seen **Parrot**.

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5th December – Our second day at Savegre Lodge with all its birdlife. We have an early morning drive back up the long drive down the valley to the best place for chances of the **Barred Parakeet** before coming back down to the lodge for breakfast.



After breakfast, we have another chance to see the **Resplendent Quetzal** as well as keeping an ear open for when the **Sulphur-winged Conures** come down into the valley for their morning feed. They love the apple orchards here so we will keep checking these out as often as we can.



In the afternoon, we will be going down some of the local trails for lots of other birds including many species that cannot be seen anywhere else in Costa Rica.



6th December – Another morning at Savegre to look for the birds that we have missed or have another look at the **Resplendent Quetzal** or the **Sulphur-winged Conures**. Which would you like to see? We can stay as a group with the guide or check out some areas on our own, it's very safe.

Afternoon transfer back to San Jose Overnight at Bouganvillea Hotel.

7th December - For those with later flights there is a chance to do some morning birding around the hotel where **Crimson-fronted Conures** tend to make early visits. Followed by a transfer to the airport for the flight home

PRICE

£ 2595 per person sharing a double/twin room
£ 495 single supplement (if you do not mind sharing a room I can sometimes organise this to avoid paying the supplement)

MAXIMUM 12 people on this trip

Includes all transfers within Costa Rica, accommodation, meals (from breakfast on the **27th November** to breakfast on **7th December**), water, transport including driver, naturalist guide, Tarcoles boat trip and all entry fees to National Parks including entries to Santuario de Lapas and the Ara Project (although maybe you want to donate extra to either or both projects – let us see how impressed we are with their work).

NOT included International flights, insurance, drinks, souvenirs, tips, any additional activities not mentioned in the itinerary.

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PARROTS TO BE SEEN ON THIS TRIP

Great-Green Macaw	<i>Ara ambiguus ambiguus</i>
Scarlet Macaw	<i>Ara macao cyanopterus</i>
Crimson-fronted Conure	<i>Psittacara finschi</i>
Olive-throated Conure	<i>Eupsittula nana astec</i>
Orange-fronted Conure	<i>Eupsittula canicularis canicularis</i>
Sulphur-winged Conure	<i>Pyrrhura hoffmanni hoffmanni</i>
Barred Parakeet (lineolated)	<i>Bolborhynchus lineola</i>
Orange-chinned Parakeet	<i>Brotogeris jugularis jugularis</i>
Red-fronted Parrotlet	<i>Touit costaricensis</i>
Brown-hooded Parrot	<i>Pyrilia haematotis haematotis</i>
White-crowned Parrot	<i>Pionus senilis</i>
White-fronted Amazon	<i>Amazona albifrons nana</i>
Red-lored Amazon	<i>Amazona autumnalis autumnalis</i>
Mealy Amazon	<i>Amazona farinosa virenticeps</i>
Yellow-naped Amazon	<i>Amazona ochrocephala auropalliata</i>

We should also see in the region of 300+ other species of birds as well as lots of other wildlife

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