



COSTA RICA: FINCA CANTAROS & THE OSA PENINSULA

*A Special Departure for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Chairman's Council*

March 12 – 19, 2027



Yellow-throated Toucan © Robert Oberfelder/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Costa Rica has all the elements that make a country a true birding paradise. Sometimes known as the Switzerland of Central America, this small, safe, and relatively prosperous country is committed to political stability and eager to welcome visitors from around the world. Easy and reliable travel and excellent accommodations combine with a dazzling variety of tropical birds to make this the perfect destination. Costa Rica's list of 950 species—roughly the same number as recorded in the entire Lower 48 of the United States—includes almost 60 hummingbirds, 35 hawks, and 30 wrens, and such classic tropical families as tinamous, guans, potoos, trogons, motmots, and toucans are just as richly represented.

The program for this special trip, created exclusively for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Chairman's Council, is focused on Puntarenas, the country's southernmost province, bordered

on the east by Panama and on the west by the Pacific Ocean. Puntarenas and its Osa Peninsula are famously the best place in Costa Rica, and perhaps in all of Central America, for finding the birds of the Pacific slope—including regional endemics found only here and in neighboring Panama and nowhere else in the world.



Scarlet Macaws © Oscar David/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Starting in the capital city of San José, our itinerary is centered on two very special localities: Las Cruces Research Station in the Golfito vicinity, and Lapa Rios Lodge at the outer end of the Osa Peninsula. Along with excellent birding, Las Cruces is also near Finca Cántaros, the site of a major conservation and education project spearheaded by Lilly Briggs, a Cornell Ph.D. who subsequently held a post-doc position in the Lab. Our visit will be a unique opportunity to learn more from Lilly and her team about how conservation efforts in the American tropics support the work of local communities in creating sustainable livelihoods and fostering greater appreciation of Central America’s precious wild landscapes.

From Las Cruces, we move to the Osa Peninsula and the elegant Lapa Rios Lodge. Among the common birds of this wildlife-rich area are Great Tinamou, Bare-throated Tiger Heron, Stripe-

throated and Long-billed hermits, and the spectacular parrot that gives the lodge its name, the Scarlet Macaw, known locally as “Iapa.” We will also be looking for Black-throated Trogon, Yellow-throated Toucan, and as many as a dozen species of colorful tanagers.

Both here and at Las Cruces, mammals, butterflies, and other wild creatures are also impressively diverse, and we can hope to view monkeys, coatis, or peccaries on our outings and even from the decks of our lodges.

Scheduled for the height of Costa Rica’s dry season and hosted by Ian Owens and another member from the Lab, with expert field leaders from Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, this event promises to be a superb birding experience—but we want it to be even more for this very special group. This one-of-a-kind natural history event is also a social occasion, a time to reconnect with old friends and make new acquaintances, to learn about recent news from the Cornell Lab, and to enjoy an amazing adventure together in a spectacular region in the Neotropics.

While Cornell is pleased to facilitate travel opportunities for its alumni and friends with tour operators that specialize in high-quality educational travel, please be aware that Cornell does not conduct, manage, or operate these travel experiences, or act as an agent for travelers interested in tours. Tour operators and travelers are responsible for making their own safety decisions concerning this travel, and, as a facilitator between travelers and the tour operators with whom travelers make arrangements for completing travel, Cornell’s role and liability are strictly limited.

Specific tour operator and national health and safety protocols will apply to each trip, and travelers should review all protocols and trip terms and conditions, including terms and conditions regarding cancellations, refunds, health and safety, and insurance prior to making a reservation. Cornell is not responsible for changes to trips or travel arrangements or for losses or additional expenses resulting from travel

March 12, Day 1: Arrival in San José and transfer to Xandari Resort and Spa

Participants should arrive no later than today, March 12, at San José's Santamaría International Airport (airport code SJO). Nonstop flights from the US to San José depart from most major hub airports daily, and convenient connecting service is available from anywhere in the world.

On arrival in San José, you will be met in the baggage claim area by a representative of our ground transportation service for the 25-minute transfer to Xandari Resort and Spa, a jewel-like accommodation set in a private nature reserve in Costa Rica's Central Valley. Accommodations in one of the resort's 24 villas will be reserved in your name. After checking in, you are free to rest up or to explore the resort's 40 acres of grounds, comprising tropical gardens, forested trails, and several waterfalls. Over the years, eBirders have recorded nearly 250 bird species on the Xandari property.



Sunset at Xandari; view from a guest room © Xandari Resort & Spa, Costa Rica

We will gather as a group in the resort this evening for a welcoming reception, a chance to meet your fellow travelers, hosts, and trip leaders and to learn more about what the next days have in store for us. Dinner will be in the resort's restaurant, which specializes in farm-to-table meals featuring a fusion of Costa Rican and international dishes, prepared with fresh ingredients including produce grown on the property using completely natural methods.

Detailed information about our meeting place and time will be provided in the departure memo sent to you before the start of the trip.

NIGHT: Xandari Resort and Spa, Alajuela

March 13, Day 2: Flight to Golfito and transfer to Las Cruces Research Station

After breakfast in the resort, we will make the 25-minute trip back to the San José airport for our one-hour charter flight to Golfito, departing at 10:00 am.

Golfito is a port town on the southern Pacific coast of Costa Rica, once a major banana-producing area but now more reliant on tourism drawn by its beaches, fishing, and boating. An hour and a half northeast, near the border with Panama, is the Organization for Tropical Studies' Las Cruces Research Station, occupying one of the largest preserved remnants of wet premontane forest in southern Costa Rica. Since its establishment in 1973, the station, run by a nonprofit consortium of universities and other research institutions, has recorded more than 2000 plant species, 100 mammals, 420 birds, 70 reptiles, and 800 butterflies. This almost staggering biodiversity has made Las Cruces an ideal site for innovative research and conservation efforts in the American tropics; scientists here investigate a wide range of topics, including habitat fragmentation, ecosystem services, wildlife corridors, and forest restoration. The station applies the fruits of this research to its work with local communities to promote sustainable livelihoods in ecologically healthy landscapes.

We will arrive at the station in time for a delicious lunch in the dining hall, then strike out to explore the birdlife along the trails through this 800 acres of protected forest. Among the common species here are such tropical marvels as Gartered Trogon, Yellow-throated Toucan, Blue-crowned and Orange-collared Manakins, and Thick-billed and Spot-crowned Euphonias. Among the area's more than 30 species of hummingbird, we will be looking for beauties like the Green Hermit, Purple-crowned Fairy, Violet Sabrewing, and Crowned Woodnymph. Just as colorful and nearly as diverse are the tanagers, among which we are likely to find the amazing

Speckled, Silver-throated, and Bay-headed Tanagers, along with Green Honeycreepers and Scarlet-thighed Dacnis.



Speckled Tanager © Michael Warner/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

We'll catch our breath over conversation and a drink before moving on to dinner at the station, then retire to our rooms, each with a private bathroom and its own deck overlooking the lush, wildlife-filled gardens.

NIGHT: Las Cruces Research Station

March 14–15, Days 3–4: Las Cruces and Finca Cántaros

We have scheduled two full days to deepen our experience of the astounding richness of this area's habitats and wildlife. In addition to our birding forays at the research station, we will also take advantage of a special opportunity to visit the Finca Cántaros Environmental Association, where we will meet the founder, Lilly Briggs, and her talented team of environmental educators, researchers, and artists.

Lilly earned her Ph.D. from Cornell's Department of Natural Resources and the Environment, focusing on environmental education and the human dimensions of conservation, and served her post-doctorate period at the Cornell Lab. Throughout her work for the Masters of Environmental Studies (York University), Ph.D., and post-doctoral position, she collaborated with the Lab in developing BirdSleuth International, or "Detectives de Aves," an environmental education curriculum focused on birds, conservation, and citizen science in Central and South America. San Vito, Costa Rica, was the site of one of the first BirdSleuth workshops she conducted, back in 2012, and she would eventually decide to move there permanently.



Lilly Briggs, founder, Finca Cántaros © Finca Cántaros

Lilly established Finca Cántaros in 2020 to bring environmental education to children and their families throughout tropical America. Remaining true to values of family, respect, and community, the Cántaros team conducts educational programs intended to improve lives by creating sustainable landscapes and livelihoods and fostering an appreciation of the landscape and its wildlife. The program employs many Cornell Lab resources, particularly BirdSleuth, and offers several workshops each year to build local capacity in the use of eBird and Merlin.

These educational goals are served by a focus on three areas essential to creating a strong community for humans to thrive in their ecosystem: landscape restoration, birds, and gender. The audience for these efforts is highly diverse, including, crucially, the children and women of the community. In forest restoration work, for example, schoolchildren are invited to collect the seeds of native trees, while the participants in the Women Committed to the Earth program manage a nursery of native plants. All the members of the community have the chance to take part in hands-on stewardship that helps the forest flourish.

FCEA and its community partners recognize that ecosystem restoration is always an ongoing process, beginning with cultivation of the appropriate tree species and continuing through to

the protection of the forest as it matures: the emphasis is not just on tree planting but on tree growing. In collaboration with partners on the local, national, and international scales, the team makes sure to plant the right trees in the right places, then maintains and protects the young plants with measures ranging from weed-whacking to the careful application of organic inoculate and compost.

Located in southern Costa Rica, on the Pacific slope, Finca Cántaros makes up part of the AmistOsa Biological Corridor, providing connectivity between protected wild areas and human-modified landscapes in Costa Rica and Panama, conserving biodiversity while at the same time acknowledging and addressing the needs of local communities. Beginning with about 10 acres of forest and garden, Lilly Briggs and her colleagues have helped lengthen that biological corridor with the addition of some 300 acres of land in states ranging from pasture to young secondary forest. With the restoration of these areas, the corridor now links the original finca with neighboring restoration and protection projects—including the Las Cruces preserve.

We will learn much more about this land, its restoration, and its significance to the human and wild inhabitants of the area as we tour the corridor with Lilly and her staff. And beyond that, of course, the finca is a fine birding area.

We will return to Las Cruces each day with time for a break before gathering as usual for a social hour and dinner together. As you repack for tomorrow's transfer to our next accommodation, Lapa Rios Lodge, please take careful note of the baggage limits described below.

NIGHTS: Las Cruces Research Station

March 16, Day 5: Transfer to Puerto Jimenez and Lapa Rios Lodge

After breakfast this morning at the research station, we will board our bus for the three-hour drive to Puerto Jimenez, on the shores of Nicoya Bay. Here we will meet representatives from our next destination, Lapa Rios Lodge, who will drive us the rest of the way to the hotel, in 4x4 vehicles and a small minivan; this drive takes about 45 minutes.

On concluding our stay at Lapa Rios on Day 8, we will be taking a domestic flight back to San José. Weight restrictions for that flight mean that as of today, Day 5, we are each limited to no more than 30 pounds of checked baggage, with the sum of length, height, and width not to exceed 45 inches. We can also take one piece of hand luggage weighing no more than 10 pounds and not exceeding 20 inches in total linear dimensions. From Puerto Jimenez, our bus will be returning to San José, taking with it for safekeeping any of our baggage that exceeds those limits.

We will arrive at Lapa Rios in time for lunch, then set out for some afternoon birding. Our luxurious lodge—regarded as the finest eco-lodge resort in Costa Rica—is set inside a private 1000-acre forest preserve, alive with frogs, monkeys, sloths, and more than 300 species of exciting birds. Among our colorful desiderata on this outing are the



Lapa Rios—Where nature meets comfort! © Lapa Rios Lodge

Bananaquit, Red-legged Honeycreeper, and Scarlet-rumped Tanager. Some wintering boreal breeders may still be present, too, possibly including Tennessee and Kentucky warblers, Baltimore Oriole, or Philadelphia Vireo.

After a long and exciting day, we will be ready for a drink and dinner—and a sound night’s sleep to get us ready for the next two days in the field.

NIGHT: Lapa Rios Lodge

March 17–18, Days 6–7: Lapa Rios

We have two full days to bird Lapa Rios and the surrounding area, with meals both days at the lodge. Among the many species we’ll be looking for here is the magnificent Great Curassow,

recorded here every month of the year. We'll also hope to tap local knowledge to find the roost site of a Common Potoo, a bizarre nightjar-like bird that spends its days doing its very best to look exactly like a broken tree stub.



Great Curassow © Keith Bensusan/Cornell Lab of Ornithology

And of course there are the hummingbirds, among them possibly the adorable White-crested Coquette and the genuinely charming Charming Hummingbird. Overhead, we may see King Vultures or White Hawks, while as many as five trogon species whistle and croak from the forests. One of the truly great prizes of birding in this area is the scarce and often elusive Turquoise Cotinga, a chubby, short-tailed bird, the male of which is a stunning electric blue with a heart-shaped purple patch on the breast.

On one of these evenings, before dinner, we will have the opportunity to hear in detail about some of the Cornell Lab's latest projects and plans, in Central America and around the world.

NIGHTS: Lapa Rios Lodge

March 19, Day 8: Flight to San José and departures

We will rise early this morning for the bus transfer to Puerto Jimenez airport; we will enjoy a packed breakfast on the way. Our return flight to San José departs at 8:00 am, arriving a bit less than an hour later.

On arrival in San José, we will be reunited with any baggage we did not take with us to Lapa Rios, then make the transfer from the domestic terminal to the international terminal.



Turquoise Cotinga © Cayce Jehaimi/Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Essential Tour Information

TRIP SIZE: This event will be limited to 24 participants.

TRIP HOSTS AND LEADERS: Hosting this trip will be Ian Owens and another member from the Lab. Leading us in the field will be Barry Lyon and David Ascanio of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, along with an expert local guide.



Dr. Ian Owens is the Louis Agassiz Fuertes Executive Director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Cornell University. A birder since his teens, he has traveled around the world in pursuit of birds and wild places, and has conducted research across Europe, Australasia, Asia, and the Southwest Pacific islands. Before joining the Lab, Ian held directorships at the Smithsonian National

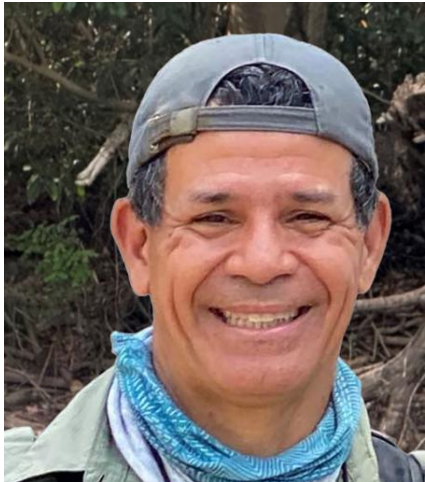
Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC, and the Natural History Museum in London, and was a professor at Imperial College London and the University of Queensland. He has published more than 100 academic papers on birds and a book entitled *Evolutionary Ecology in Birds: Life Histories, Mating Systems, and Extinction Risk*. His main research interests are in large-scale patterns in the biodiversity and evolution of wild populations. Ian has edited a number of international journals, sits on the boards of several conservation organizations, and received the Zoological Medal from the Zoological Society of London for contributions to his field.



Barry Lyon's passion for the outdoors and birding has its roots in his childhood in southern California. During his teenage years, he attended several VENT/ABA youth birding camps, which ultimately led to his future involvement with Victor Emanuel Nature Tours. He holds a B.A. from the University of Arizona at Tucson where he studied history and political science, with an emphasis on environment and development politics. Barry joined the VENT team as a tour leader in 1995 and embarked on a travel-based career that has taken him to an array of

worldwide destinations. He has lived in Austin, Texas since 2004 when he joined our office staff as an administrative assistant. In 2014 he was named Chief Operating Officer (COO), reflecting his increased experience and responsibilities. In 2023 Barry ascended to the role of Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Although Barry still leads two or three trips a year, these days his work is geared almost entirely toward business, customer relations, and the management of the

company. Barry's background and his knowledge of natural history have provided him with a strong interest in conservation. He is a former board member and past president of Travis Audubon Society, which emphasizes conservation through birding and outdoor education for children. Barry resides in South Austin with his wife, Brooke Smith.



David Ascanio, a Venezuelan birder and naturalist, has spent over 39 years guiding birding tours throughout his native country, Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Costa Rica, the Orinoco and Amazon River basins, Trinidad & Tobago, Suriname, the Guianas, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, the Lesser Antilles, Cuba, Chile, and Panama. He is especially interested in bird vocalizations and has a private library containing voices of more than 70% of all the birds of Venezuela. David combines superb birding skills with an astonishing command of bird vocalizations. He has published a book for children about bird songs and coauthored the descriptions of two new species, the Rio Orinoco Spinetail and the Delta Amacuro Softtail. David has also published numerous papers about the birds of the *llanos* (plains), Orinoco River Island species, and the pan-tepui endemic species on which he has become an authority. He is the senior author of the *Field Guide to the Birds of Venezuela* (2017). David is an excellent communicator, has a great sense of humor, and is tireless in helping others find birds and wildlife. These traits have made him one of the most popular naturalists/guides in the Neotropics.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION:

TOUR FEE: The fee for the tour is \$16,100 per person based on double occupancy or \$20,640 for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals and drinks from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 8, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, all ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare to nor from the starting/ending city; however, flights within the tour (if any) are included. The fee also excludes laundry, personal expenses, and other items of a

personal nature. For information about gratuities, please see the “TIPPING” sub-section below. If the minimum group size is not met, each participant will be charged a small-group supplement—shared equally and communicated in advance—to allow the tour to proceed.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: You may register for this tour through the VENT [website](#) or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The initial deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. At 180 days VENT will collect a second deposit that brings the total deposit amount to 40% of the tour price. We accept MasterCard and Visa for both deposits.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days (November 12, 2026) prior to the tour departure date.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: Tour prices are based on the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If rates change drastically, it may be necessary to impose a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges have been passed on to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

FUEL SURCHARGES: Our prices are based on fuel prices at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TIPPING: An important part of the value of a VENT tour is knowing that tips for local service providers at our destinations—restaurant staff, hotel staff, drivers, local guides, and various

other support staff—are included in your tour fee. If you would like to offer any of your local guides an additional tip, \$5 to \$10 a day is a common amount.

Tips for your VENT tour leader(s) are not included, but it is customary to tip one or both if you feel that you have received exceptional service. To assist in your planning, we recommend tipping your VENT tour leader(s) \$15 to \$20 per day, or the equivalent of approximately 2–4% of the tour fee.

If you plan to give tips by cash, they should be given directly to your tour leader at the end of the tour and not sent to the VENT office. Some of our tour leaders use mobile payment applications such as Venmo, PayPal, and Wise. If you would like to use this method, please ask your tour leaders directly whether they can accept tips through such an application.

We emphasize that tipping is optional and that these amounts are only recommendations. The amount you decide to tip is based entirely on your experience and at your discretion.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS

CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT:

- **More than 120 days prior to the tour start date:** A refund of all monies paid will be issued, less 50% of the deposit (including initial and second deposit)
- **120 days or fewer prior to the tour start date:** No refund will be provided.
- **Optional add-ons:** Some tours offer optional add-ons that are designated as non-refundable. Any such add-ons are clearly identified as non-refundable at the time of booking. By selecting and purchasing an optional add-on, the participant acknowledges and accepts its non-refundable status. Fees paid for non-refundable add-ons are not refundable under any circumstances, regardless of when the tour is cancelled.

This cancellation policy applies to all participants and all tours (Pre-Tours and Extensions are considered self-contained tours separate from the main tour). Because unexpected events can occur, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance.

CANCELLATION BY VENT:

If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement. A “**Force Majeure**” event means any act beyond VENT’s control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE/PROTECTION REQUIREMENT: This tour visits remote locations where immediate access to primary medical care may not be available. For this reason, travel insurance/travel protection which covers you for emergency evacuation is required for participation on this tour. This coverage is included in the Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™ program. Alternatively, comparable service can be obtained through Medjet and its MedjetAssist plan. If you choose not to purchase insurance/travel protection through Ripcord or

Medjet, you are required to obtain it through another provider. Please read the remainder of this section for additional information.

SUGGESTED OPTIONS: To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with Redpoint Travel Protection as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend its comprehensive Ripcord plan, which includes a medical evacuation benefit. With this in mind, it is important to note that medical evacuation is not offered by Redpoint as a stand-alone policy or benefit. For travelers not interested in comprehensive travel insurance, VENT recommends Medjet and its MedjetAssist® plan. Medjet is not an insurance company, and Medjet Assist is not an insurance product; rather, Medjet is a membership-based air-medical transport company specializing in moving hospitalized travelers from an admitting hospital to a medical facility of choice. Medjet does not provide medical evacuation service from the point of injury or illness; yet, the MedjetAssist plan offers robust enough travel protection to satisfy the medical evacuation insurance requirement in place for many VENT tours.

About Redpoint Travel's Ripcord Plan

Ripcord is a completely integrated travel insurance program with single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims. Critical benefits include comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice; medical expense coverage, death of pet, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or political or security reasons, waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion, and a "Cancel for Any Reason" benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.*

For a price quote or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: [Ripcord Travel Insurance](#); or click the Ripcord logo on our website (click Help > Preparation and Insurance > Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, second deposit, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip costs in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy. Redpoint maintains a [Coronavirus FAQ page](#) on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

About Medjet’s MedjetAssist Plan

MedjetAssist is a membership program that functions like AAA for motorists. The company’s primary service is air medical transport. Critical benefits of MedjetAssist include a staff on call and ready to provide assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; all-expenses-paid air medical transport in the United States and internationally to medical facility of choice, regardless of medical necessity; repatriation of remains; and no exclusions for pre-existing conditions.

For travelers under 75, MedjetAssist may be purchased as Short-Term Memberships of 8, 15, 21, and 30 days, or Regular Annual Memberships from 1 to 5 years. For travelers 75–84, Medjet offers a Diamond Membership that is the same program but with a few additional conditions.

For a price quote or to purchase MedjetAssist, please visit: [Medjet.com/VentBird](https://www.Medjet.com/VentBird) or call 1-800-527-7478. Pricing is based on type and term of membership.

GETTING THERE & REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

AIR TRAVEL: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international.* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be held responsible for any air ticket penalties.

*An air ticket will be purchased by Victor Emanuel Travel on behalf of the traveler with the traveler's consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveler (i.e. voluntary change of plans), the same fee rates apply for the reissue process, in addition to any fees that may be charged by the airline.

BAGGAGE: Please limit baggage to one piece of luggage and one carry-on. The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. Please consult your pre-departure materials and/or airline to find out specific weight restrictions.

As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag.

Travel note: Beginning on our Day 5 transfer, we are each limited to no more than 30 pounds of checked baggage, with the sum of length, height, and width not to exceed 45 inches. We can also take one piece of hand luggage weighing no more than 10 pounds and not exceeding 20

inches in linear dimension. These limits are necessary because we will be returning to San José on a charter domestic flight with strict limitations on bags, limitations that are sternly enforced.

From Puerto Jimenez, our bus will be returning to San José, taking with it for safekeeping any baggage that exceeds those limits; you will recover your bags on our return to San José. Please bear these restrictions in mind when packing and when repacking for our transfer from Puerto Jimenez.

Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security, we recommend that you check the website of the [Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\)](#) for information pertaining to permissible carry-on items.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:

PASSPORTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Costa Rica is required. You will also want to make sure that you have at least two blank pages in your passport for stamps. If you hold a passport from another country, please check with your consulate or embassy for the most accurate guidance.

If you need a passport, you should get it well in advance of your trip departure date. For additional fees, a passport can be issued on an expedited basis. In the United States this can be done at the nearest passport office, most post offices, or the county clerk's office. You may also visit <https://state.gov/travelers/> for information on how to get or renew a passport.

As a safety measure, photocopy the first two pages of your passport and keep the photocopies in a safe place, so if your passport is lost you will have proof of identification. Your passport should be signed and easily available at all times. You will need it for check-in at the airport on your first day of departure, so do not pack it in your checked luggage.

VISAS: Tourist visas are not required for U.S. citizens traveling to Costa Rica. Because entry requirements can change without notice, we kindly remind all participants to double-check the latest information before traveling. Travelers using non-U.S. passports are responsible for confirming any entry requirements that apply to their home country.

WHAT TO BRING:

CLOTHING: Given the tropical climate of Costa Rica, lightweight field clothing and casual attire are suitable for this trip. The days will be warm with little or no rain expected while the mornings will be cool and damp.

- **Pants:** A couple of pairs of pants are essential. Many people prefer lightweight pants made of cotton or other material, but denim, though not as comfortable, is certainly acceptable.
- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI carry field clothing that many birders find appealing. Pants and long-sleeved shirts made of lightweight, yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular. These provide useful protection from the sun and occasional biting insects.
- **Shirts:** A couple of long-sleeved T-shirts in addition to other comfortable styles suitable for warm weather. We do not recommend short-sleeved shirts as much as they offer no protection from biting insects or the sun.
- **Hat:** A hat, particularly of a wide-brimmed style, for protection from the sun is essential. Please bring a baseball-style cap at the very least.
- **Outerwear:** Warm weather is anticipated on this trip, but a sweater or light coat or jacket will come in handy for the mornings and evenings, especially if we encounter a late cold front (very unlikely). In the event of rain, you'll want to have a water repellent jacket as well.
- **Swimsuit:** The lodge has a very nice swimming pool.

FOOTWEAR: We recommend a good trail-walking shoe or light hiking boot when in the field. Athletic shoes are acceptable but will not keep your feet dry and can become soiled from muddy conditions, which do occur. A lighter shoe, like an athletic shoe, will come in handy when relaxing around the lodges.

EQUIPMENT: Having the right equipment makes the travel experience more enjoyable. Below is a list of items that will ensure you are well-prepared:

- Backpack – For carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment, etc.
- Notebooks and pens
- Travel alarm clock – Battery operated is best (if not using this feature on your mobile phone).
- Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection
- Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions
- Personal toiletries
- Cameras, lenses, memory cards, and extra batteries
- Collapsible walking stick – A highly recommended item for those who have trouble walking
- Small, collapsible umbrella –indispensable should we be caught on the trail in the rain
- Water bottle
- Tissue packs
- Small flashlight or headlamp
- Small folding stool – may be extremely useful when patiently waiting for shy forest birds.

Binoculars: We strongly recommend you bring a pair of good binoculars of 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 magnification. Please do not bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. You will find that 8x32 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Spotting Scopes: Your tour leaders will have scopes available for group use throughout the trip, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

DESTINATION INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS

CLIMATE & WEATHER: Costa Rica enjoys consistently warm temperatures throughout the year. Thus, the seasons are marked less by temperature than by moisture: we will be visiting during Costa Rica’s dry season, which typically lasts through April. This does not mean that rain is impossible, but we are very unlikely on the Pacific slope to experience anything more than the briefest of warm showers; rain is heaviest in September and October.

During our time in San José, we can expect highs in the low 80s F and lows in the high 60s. Temperatures will be similar or perhaps slightly cooler, especially at night, at Las Cruces and Lapa Rios. The humidity will likely be noticeable, but generally tolerable. Skies during the dry season tend to be clear.

CONDITIONS: The physical demands posed by this trip are light to moderate, and you will benefit most from our birding if you are able to walk a mile or so at a normally slow birding pace. For the most part, we will be walking on level roadsides and paths, though we may encounter occasional brief stretches of steeper trails.

Most of our days will begin with breakfast at 7:00 or 7:30, followed by departure at 8:00 or 8:30. Our excursions will visit a variety of locations, with a planned return to our lodging in the afternoon for a break before we reconvene for a relaxed social hour and dinner together.

Accommodation

We will be staying in three excellent accommodations during our time in Costa Rica. We begin with a first night at Xandari Resort and Spa, a scant half hour from the San José airport. Xandari is a complex of 24 villas, each with a different design and floor plan, set among tropical gardens, waterfalls, and a private forest of some 40 acres. One of the two swimming pools offers an outstanding look out over the entire Central Valley; there are also excellent spa facilities with jacuzzis. The restaurant at Xandari, serving three meals a day, is well known for its use of fresh ingredients—many of them grown right on the resort property—in innovative dishes combining Costa Rican and international styles and flavors. Free WiFi is available at the resort.

The rooms at the Las Cruces Research Station are lodge-style, furnished in bamboo and wood. Each has its own private bathroom and a private deck, ideal for watching wildlife in the lush gardens surrounding the lodge. Among the amenities here are free internet service, a natural history library, and a gift shop featuring items handcrafted by local residents. One of the exciting aspects of our stay is the chance to casually meet some of the scientists conducting research here and learn more about how their projects are advancing efforts to preserve both tropical ecosystems and the local communities that live in them.

Lapa Rios Lodge is named for the Scarlet Macaws—lapas—so often seen in the primary and secondary rainforest preserved here. Since its opening more than 30 years ago, the lodge has been committed to a sustainable visitor experience blending luxury, education, and inspiration. Each of the spacious guest suites offers a sweeping view of the surrounding forest; each has its own bathroom and veranda with hammocks. WiFi is available in all public spaces, and each room has a cable internet connection.

Transportation

You will be met on arrival in San José for the transfer by vehicle to our first hotel. On the morning of Day 2, the group will fly from San José to Golfito, Costa Rica; in Golfito, we will board our bus for the drive to Las Cruces. We will continue to use this bus until Day 5. On our arrival in Puerto Jimenez that day, the bus will return to San José and we will board 4x4 vehicles or small vans for the drive to Lapa Rios Lodge.

At the conclusion of our stay at Lapa Rios, vehicles will return us to Puerto Jimenez, where we will catch the flight to San José. We will be reunited with any baggage we did not have with us in Lapa Rios, then transfer from the domestic to the international terminal for homeward flights.

Food

We will take all of our meals in the restaurants at our lodging, with the exception of the final morning, when an early departure makes a to-go breakfast necessary. The restaurants at Xanadi and Lapa Rios are excellent, widely known for their imaginative fusion of Costa Rican and international dishes based on fresh, locally produced ingredients. Meals at Las Cruces may be a bit simpler, but they will still be of high quality and satisfying. Snacks and drinks will always be available when we are in the field; please bring your own water bottle for refilling from larger containers in the van.

CURRENCY & SPENDING: Your trip fee includes all necessary expenses; however, you may want to have some cash to cover any number of personal expenses. Unless you are planning on spending additional time in Costa Rica, there is no need to exchange money or to withdraw Costa Rican Colones; US dollars are widely accepted, as are both Visa and Mastercard.

If you plan to extend your vacation in Costa Rica beyond what is offered in the program, you'll want to consider obtaining local currency.

Major credit cards are widely accepted. Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

The official currency of Costa Rica is the Costa Rican Colone. You can check the latest currency conversion rate by visiting "XE-The World's Favorite Currency Site" at: <http://www.xe.com/>.

ELECTRICITY: Costa Rica uses Type A and Type B power plugs and sockets. The standard voltage is 120 V at a frequency of 60 Hz.

INTERNET ACCESS: Guest Wi-Fi is available at all accommodations.

LANGUAGE: The official language of Costa Rica is Spanish, but English is widely spoken, especially by hotel staff and others who have frequent contact with tourists.

TIME: Costa Rica observes Central Standard Time (CST) all year, which is one hour behind Eastern Standard Time (EST).

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is available at our accommodations at an extra charge, but we recommend packing enough clothing to get you through the entire trip.

HEALTH & SAFETY

HEALTH: No vaccinations are required for entry to Costa Rica. VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which includes vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases. Among these so-called Routine Vaccinations are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers), and Varicella (Chickenpox). You should also be up-to-date with Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations.

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original

containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

COVID-19: We continually emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. Although VENT no longer maintains any of its COVID-era prevention protocols, we strongly recommend best practices for protecting yourself and your fellow travelers against COVID-19 illness. These measures include receiving the primary series vaccinations for those eligible, staying “Up to Date” with COVID-19 booster shots, wearing high filtration N-95 or KN-95 masks when in airports and on airplanes, and avoiding risky social settings in the lead-up to your tour. These recommendations are firmly rooted in CDC guidance for avoiding COVID-19.

SUN EXPOSURE: The sun’s ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes), even in March. Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. A severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors and be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

BITING INSECTS: Biting insects are unlikely to be a problem at this season; however, that does not mean that mosquitos and chiggers are not present. We recommend taking the usual precautions of long pants and long-sleeved shirts, and avoiding walking or standing in areas of tall grass.

Our accommodations are all eco-aware, meaning in part that they avoid the use of pesticides on the property. It is a good idea when leaving your room for dinner to shut the doors and turn out the lights to avoid attracting moths and other nocturnal insects.

INSECT REPELLENTS: There are insect repellents for the skin and an insect repellent used to treat clothing that should not be applied to the skin.

Insect repellents for the skin are commonly available in three forms:

- DEET: (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide): A chemical compound that is marketed under various brand names (OFF!®, Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered in a variety of formulations including sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The formulations will state a percentage of the active ingredient DEET on the packaging. DEET may be applied to exposed skin directly and/or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.
- Picaridin: A synthetic formulation that is derived from piperine, a substance found in plants that produce black pepper.
- Herbal insect repellents: Various mixtures of organic ingredients such as oils from eucalyptus, citronella, cedar, and other herbs. The herbal repellents are more difficult to categorize because of the difference in ingredients from one brand to another. There is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

Insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

- Permanone® (Permethrin): is an odorless spray-on repellent that may be used for pre-treatment of clothing, gear, and tents. It should not be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pre-treatment process requires a number of hours to complete and must be done outdoors, so it is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment must be repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.
- Insect Shield® apparel: Clothing pre-treated with Permethrin is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

The US EPA offers a search tool – [Which Insect Repellent is Right for You](#) – to help choose a repellent that is best for a particular situation. For example, some repellents work for mosquitoes, but not for ticks.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the [United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) in Atlanta Georgia. The CDC

operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). Canadian citizens should check the website of the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#).

SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION

Traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend [Amazon](#) which has a wide selection; [Buteo Books](#) and [NHBS](#) which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and [Abe Books](#) for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

FIELD GUIDES:

Birds

Dyer, Dale, and Steve N. G. Howell. 2023. *Birds of Costa Rica*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. The most recent field guide for Costa Rica, with updated taxonomy and great illustrations. Compact and complete, this is the recommended field guide for this tour.

Garrigues, Richard, and Robert Dean. 2014. *The Birds of Costa Rica: A Field Guide*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Stiles, Gary, and Alexander Skutch. 1990. *A Guide to the Birds of Costa Rica*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. The first field guide devoted specifically to Costa Rica and still very useful, especially the text.

Mammals

Reid, Fiona A. 1997. *A Field Guide to the Mammals of Central America and Southeast Mexico*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wainwright, Mark. 2007. *The Mammals of Costa Rica*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press. An excellent guide.

Butterflies

Glassberg, Jeffrey. 2018. *A Swift Guide to Butterflies of Mexico and Central America*. 2nd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press. The most practical guide to the butterflies of Costa Rica.

Reptiles and Amphibians

Leenders, Twan. 2019. *Reptiles of Costa Rica: A Field Guide*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

BIRDING RESOURCES AND GENERAL NATURE:

Forsyth, Adrian, and Ken Miyata. 1984. *Tropical Nature: Life and Death in the Rain Forests of Central and South America*. New York: Scribners. Does not deal much with birds, but a fantastic introduction to all kinds of topics relating to tropical bugs, frogs, plant strategies, butterflies, and much more. Extraordinarily well written, a classic that ought to be read by anyone contemplating a visit to the American tropics.

Hilty, Steven. 2005. *Birds of Tropical America: A Watcher's Introduction to Behavior, Breeding and Diversity*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press. Highly recommended for understanding how things work in tropical bird communities; topics include the diversity of birds, hummingbird communities, mixed-species flocks, antbirds and army ants, color, song structure, and much more.

Kricher, John C. 2017. *The New Neotropical Companion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. An introduction to the animals, plants, and ecosystems of the New World Tropics.

Skutch, Alexander F. 1971; repr. 1992. *A Naturalist in Costa Rica*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press,. Good background from a very readable author.

CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY APPS & ONLINE RESOURCES:

eBird: Among the largest and most successful citizen science projects in existence, eBird is an essential tool in promoting bird study and conservation. Among a range of benefits, eBird allows users to keep a variety of lists in a single application. When taxonomic splits are incorporated, lists are automatically updated. Additionally, trip leaders can share daily lists, so one only need accept a shared list and it will upload to your files! Highly recommended.

MERLIN BIRD ID: Merlin is an app designed as a birding coach for beginning and intermediate bird watchers. Excellent for use in the field, Merlin asks the observer a series of questions regarding his or her bird sighting, including date and location, and color, size, and behavior of a bird. Merlin then processes the viewer's responses to present a shortlist of possible identifications, from which the user can choose the likely bird. Species profiles include a brief physical description, photographs, and sound samples. The Photo ID feature allows anyone with a camera to snap a photo and obtain a list of suggestions. Merlin's Sound ID feature allows identification of birds through audible recognition. To use Merlin, download the app, followed by the appropriate regional "pack." For this trip, download the pack for Costa Rica.

Birds of the World: Offers comprehensive life histories for all bird species and families. Visit the Birds of the World website, birdsoftheworld.org, where for any bird you can learn about its appearance, distribution, diet, behavior, and more.

TERMS, CONDITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, "VENT") act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on February 4, 2026, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant's Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant's risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the "Airline") is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline's aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

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