

COSTA RICA

Toucans & Tanagers Special

April 4 - 11, 2026

Trip Report



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TOUR SUMMARY

Although the tour celebrates Toucans and Tanagers, it offers far more than its name suggests. Hummingbirds, trogons, parrots, manakins, woodpeckers, motmots, owls, raptors, monkeys, sloths, and countless other wildlife species enrich every day in the field, while comfortable lodges, local cuisine, and expert guiding and transportation ensure a rewarding experience for birders of all levels.

By combining Costa Rica's extraordinary habitat diversity with carefully selected birding locations, the Toucans & Tanagers Tour delivers an unforgettable journey through one of the richest avifaunas on Earth. Whether admiring the vibrant plumage of a Great Green Macaw in the canopy, watching a family of toucans gather at a fruiting fig tree, or photographing Emerald Tanagers just a few feet away, participants leave with lasting memories of the remarkable beauty and biodiversity of Costa Rica.



HIGHLIGHTS

- Black-and-yellow Tanager
- Emerald Tanager
- Rufous-winged Tanager
- Blue-and-gold Tanager
- Scarlet-tighed Dacnis
- Green Honeycreeper
- Red-legged Honeycreeper
- Raptor migration!
- Agami Heron
- Scarlet Macaw
- Great Green Macaw
- Keel-billed Toucan
- Yellow-throated Toucan
- Red-headed Barbet
- Central American Pygmy-owl
- King Vulture
- Gray-bellied Hawk
- José and Ramón.
- Lots of laughs shared by a fantastic group of people!



Day 1

Our fourth Toucans and Tanagers tour began smoothly with everyone safely arrived in the SJO Airport and transferred to the lovely Hotel Robledal. After checking-in and settling up our things in the rooms, we gathered in the afternoon for our first birding walk at the hotel grounds. Ferruginous Pygmy-owl, Lineated Woodpecker, Gray Hawk, White-collared Swift and Spot-breasted Oriole were some of the highlights.

Day 2

Today we enjoyed a memorable full day in the Central Pacific lowland, where the forests of the Carara National Park protect the rich avifauna of transitional habitats between the dry northwest and the humid south.

At the park and surrounding areas we recorded an array of wonderful species of birds like Scarlet Macaw, 5 species of Trogons, including the near-endemic Baird's Trogon, Pale-billed Woodpecker, Black-hooded Antshrike, Chiriqui Foliage-gleaner, Velvety Manakin, White-shouldered Tanager, nesting Rufous Piha, Turquoise-browed Motmot, Double-striped Thick-knee and Chestnut-backed Antbird.

A little more exploring on the Pacific coast yielded amazing species like Mangrove Hummingbird, Mangrove Warbler, Magnificent Frigatebird, Panama Flycatcher and Bat Falcon!

Day 3 - 4

After a delicious Gallo Pinto (typical Costa Rican breakfast) at the lodge, we headed into the Caribbean foothills around San Ramón de Alajuela where feeders, flowering gardens and forest edges at different locations provided an astonishing diversity of birds like hummingbirds and tanagers. Feeders provided intimate views of Silver-throated Tanager, Crimson-collared Tanager, Emerald Tanager, Scarlet-rumped Tanager, Blue-and-gold Tanager, Green Honeycreeper Coppery-headed Emerald, Violet Sabrewing, Purple-throated Mountain-gem, Green-crowned Brilliant, Green Hermit, Crowned Woodnymph and many more!

In the afternoon we arrived at the renowned Arenal Observatory Lodge, overlooking the majestic Arenal Volcano.

A full day birding at the Arenal Observatory Lodge is always a great day. The lodge's extensive trail system, lush gardens, and productive feeders create ideal conditions for observing some of the country's finest rainforest birds.

Some of the highlights of the day include Great Curassow, Black-crested Coquette, Bicolored Hawk, Broad-billed Motmot, nesting Yellow-throated Toucan, Keel-billed Toucan, Brown-hooded Parrot, White-crowned Parrot, White-fronted Amazon, Fawn-throated Foliage-gleaner, displaying White-collared Manakin, Long-tailed Tyrant, Canada Warbler, Hepatic Tanager (Tooth-billed), Golden-hooded Tanager, Rufous-winged Tanager, Bay-headed Tanager, Red-legged Honeycreeper and Black-and-yellow Tanager. In the afternoon we were thrilled by Central American Spider Monkeys swinging and jumping gracefully in the forest canopy!

At night we enjoyed awesome views of Black-and-white Owl in the rain.

Day 5 - 6

Another major highlight of the trip was staying at Pedacito de Cielo, a small family-owned lodge in the heart of the northern Caribbean lowlands in the Boca Tapada region. Birding this region revealed an incredible diversity of rare species and beautiful habitats.

On our way to Boca Tapada, we stopped at Bogaring Trail, where we enjoyed close looks of Bare-throated Tiger Heron and Boat-billed Heron, a mother Three-toed Sloth with a baby, several Strawberry Poison Dart Frogs and a roosting pair of Black-and-white Owls with a juvenile! We were also mesmerized by a pair of Scarlet Macaws feeding, displaying and nesting at the side of the road.

Our day exploring Boca Tapada yielded fantastic species like King Vulture, Great Green Macaw, Collared Aracari, Agami Heron, nesting Central American Pygmy-owl, displaying Red-capped Manakin, Green Ibis, Red-lore Amazon, Mealy Amazon and the mega rare Gray-bellied Hawk flying right over our heads! Many migratory species like Baltimore Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Summer Tanager and Chimney Swift were also present. We even experienced a wonderful kettle of migratory raptors including Turkey Vulture, Broad-winged Hawk and Swainson's Hawk making its way north!

Day 7

On the return journey toward San José, we birded the Caribbean foothills of Cinchona and the cloud forests surrounding the Poás Volcano, providing another great day.

Highlights of the day include Striped Cuckoo, Eastern and Red-breasted Meadowlarks, Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, Black-and-Yellow Tanager, Eye-ringed Flatbill, Blackburnian Warbler, Red-headed Barbet, Costa Rican Warbler, Torrent Tyrannulet, Swallow-tailed Kite, Volcano Hummingbird and a heard-only Resplendent Quetzal!

Day 8

Today, we said goodbye and officially ended our tour.

I sincerely thank all participants for their wonderful energy and trusting Sunrise Birding and me to guide this journey in my beautiful home country. Special thanks to everyone who helped make the tour run smoothly and our fantastic drivers Joaquín and Ramón for their excellent driving and spotting skills.

Pura vida and until next time!

PHOTOS

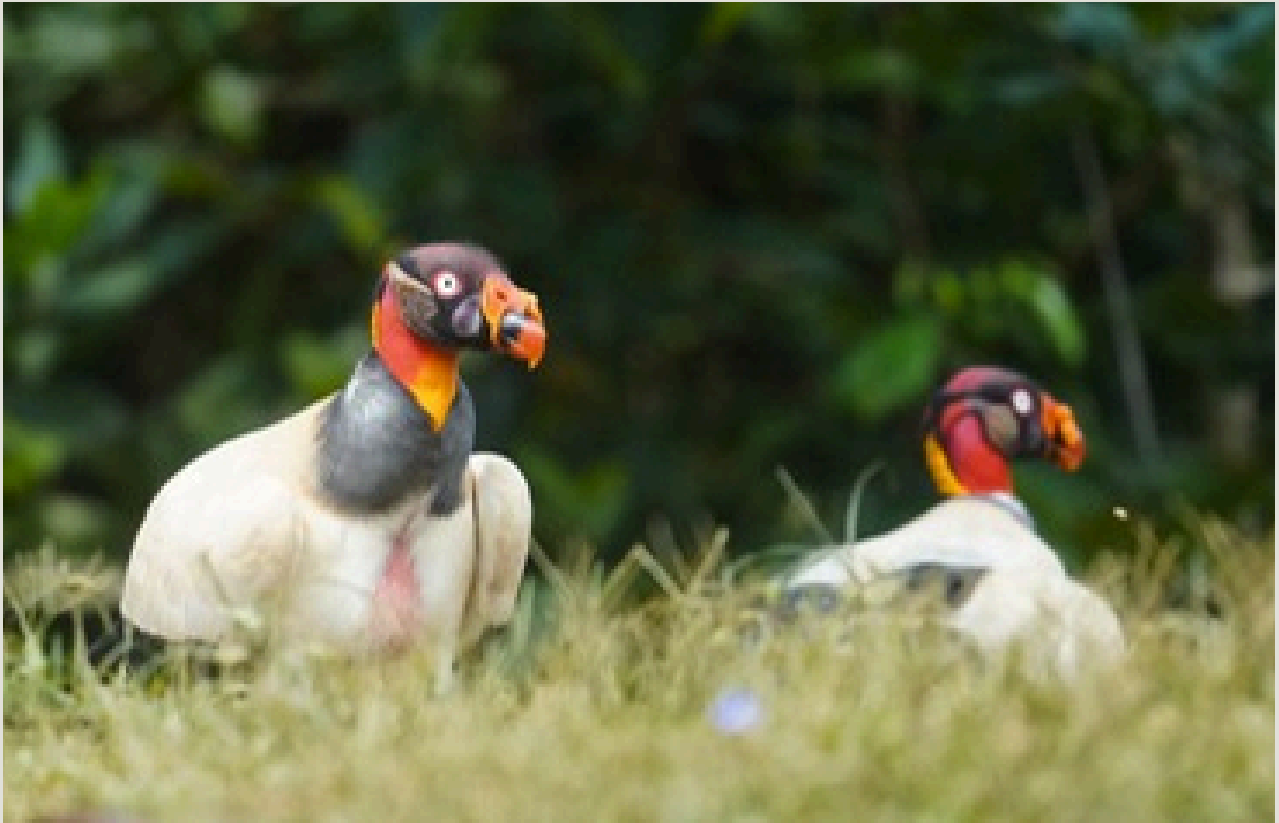


Double-striped Thick-knee



Scarlet Macaws

PHOTOS



King Vultures

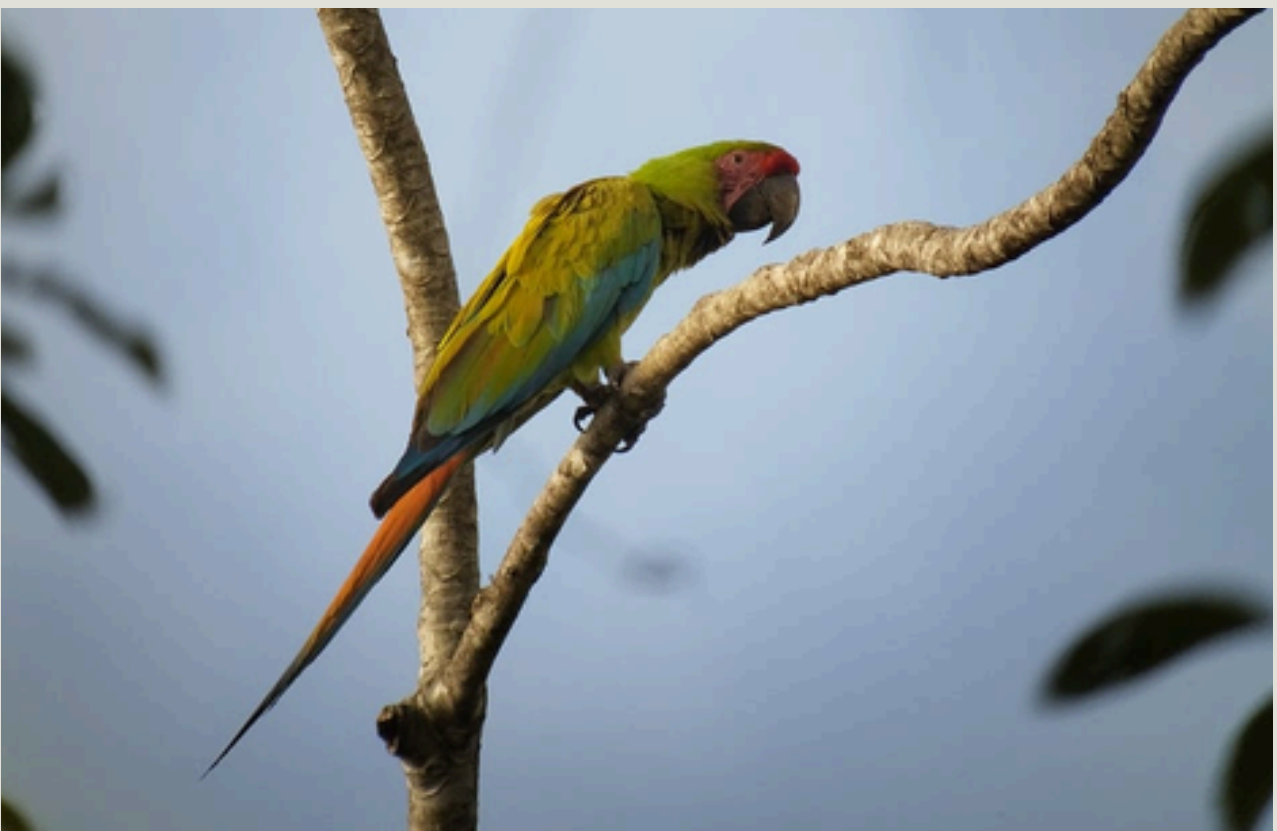


Central American Pygmy-Owl

PHOTOS



Agami Heron

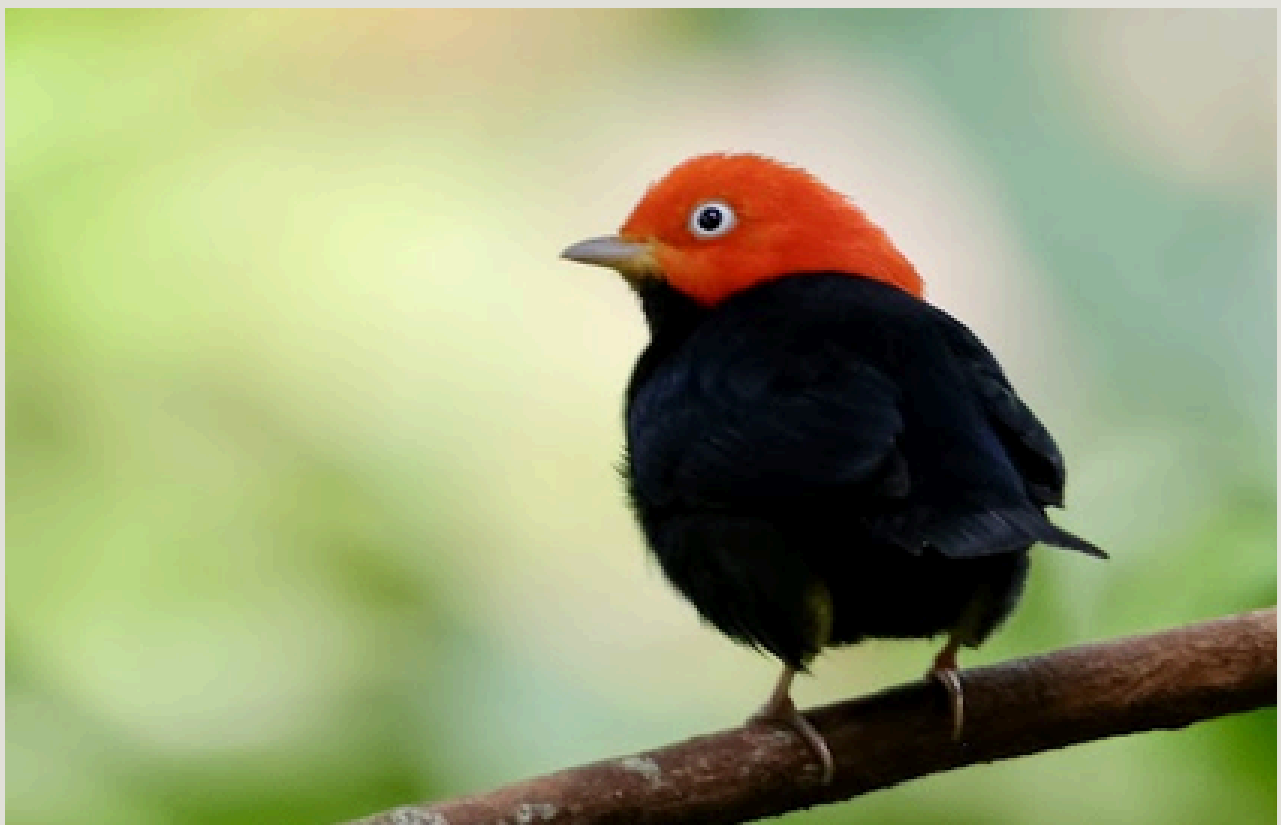


Great Green Macaw

PHOTOS



Golden-hooded Tanager



Red-capped Manakin

PHOTOS



Three toed Sloth under the rain. Photo by Sue Capperino



Rufous Piha nesting!

PHOTOS



Yellow-throated Toucan nesting.



Blue-and-gold Tanager. Photo by Sue Capperino

PHOTOS



Emerald Tanager



Turquoise-browed Motmot. Photo by Sue Caperinno

PHOTOS



Raptor migration.



Arenal Volcano on its best!

PHOTOS



What a fantastic group of people!



Birding in Arenal

246 SPECIES RECORDED

LINK TO EBIRD TRIP REPORT

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/497411>

