



JB
Journeys

2021 Birding Western Colombia

with John Cahill

August 11 - 22

Colombia is the top destination for birding with over 1,900 species of birds recorded! On our birding adventure in western Colombia, super guide John Cahill takes you to a limited area of the country, yet you have the chance to see a number of endemics, including the biggest prize of all, the beautiful Fuertes' Parrot.

Destinations include Otun Quimbaya National Park with good chances to see the Cauca Guan, thought extinct but re-discovered only in 1994. The park serves as a buffer zone between the city of Pereira and Los Nevados National Park, resulting in a biological corridor of great importance in the Central Andes. It is managed by a local community organization called Yarumo Blanco, a good example of sustainable and cultural tourism. Onward to Manizales, the center of the coffee region of Colombia, but also known for antpittas.



Fuertes' Parrot is one of the most endangered birds in the world. It too was thought extinct over 100 years ago and only recently found. Fortunately, land has been put aside for its survival. Part of the proceeds from this tour will contribute to its upkeep.

We've saved the best for last. Montezuma – Tatamá National Park - is one of the best places to bird in Colombia, with an elevation gradient on the track from 3,600 to 9,000 feet, making it one of the most diverse areas in all Colombia with more than 600 species recorded. With four days, we'll have opportunities to see many endemics and near-endemics of the Chocó Region. Many of these places have good night birds, so there are good chances for owls and nightjars.

With a good flight schedule in and out of the city of Pereira, we can take advantage of short drives and be birding immediately.

Day 1 - August 11 – Wednesday (D)

Arrive into Pereira Airport on American 1135 at 1:30 pm (departs Miami at 10:35 am). Our guide, John Cahill will be at the ready to drive you to Otun, about 1.5 hours and to our first hotel in Yarumo Blanco. Settle in and meet for your first dinner together when John will review the upcoming itinerary with you.

Overnight: Yarumo Blanco

Day 2 - August 12 – Thursday (B,L,D)

Early this morning you'll head out in 4x4 vehicles towards El Cedral for some Andean cloud forest birding. Among those you'll look for are Moustached Antpitta, Hooded Antpitta, Wattled Guan, Multicolored Tanager, Red-ruffed Fruitcrow, Three-striped Warbler, Oleaginous Hemispingus, Ashy-headed, and Sooty-headed tyrannulet.

We return to lodge for lunch and a short rest. In the afternoon we will bird Otun Quimbaya, a flora and fauna sanctuary located on the west slope of the Central Cordillera, and is home to the Wax Palm and may endemic bird species.

Overnight: Yarumo Blanco

Day 3 - August 13 – Friday (B,L,D)

The last morning in Otun Quimbaya, you'll bird lower elevations around the lodge and streams, looking for Torrent Duck, Black-billed Thrush, **Cauca Guan**, Bare-faced Ibis, Rusty-margined Flycatcher, Grayish Piculet, Golden, Blue-necked, Bay-headed, Saffron-crowned, and Flame-rumped tanagers.

After an early lunch back at the lodge, pack up and depart for Manizales, about a 3 hour drive. Stops will be made along the route for birding at Cameguadua, a small but productive wetland about mid-way. You'll

be looking for rarities like Grayish Piculet, Blackish Rail, Olive-crowned Yellowthroat, Gray Seedeater, and the beautiful Spectacled Parrotlet. Along the marsh edges it's possible to see Dwarf and Striped cuckoo, Spot-breasted and Lineated woodpecker, Mouse-colored Tyrannulet, Slaty-capped Flycatcher, Thick-billed Seed-Finch, and a number of tanagers like Blue-necked and Bay-headed. Water birds include Least and Pied-billed grebe, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Bare-faced Ibis, and possibly the Ringed, Amazon, and Green kingfisher.

This day will start warm, but will cool as we reach Manizales, so have a jacket or fleece ready

Overnight: Hotel Lindsay or similar

Day 4 – August 14 – Saturday (B,L,D)



Depart very early for the drive to Paramo del Ruiz, 1.5 to 2 hours. Be prepared for very cold temperatures here in the high elfin forest and paramo. Target birds are Black-thighed, Golden-breasted, and Glowing puffleg, Great Sapphirewing, Shinning Sunbeam, Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Lacrimose, and Scarlet-bellied mountain-tanager, **Plushcap**, and Plain-colored Seedeater.

Then mid-afternoon return back to Manizales with birding stops along the way. It will be a long day, but hopefully for good birds.

Overnight: Hotel Lindsay or similar

Day 5 - August 15 – Sunday (B,L,D)

Rise early to visit Rio Blanco Reserve, a BirdLife International IBA (Important Bird Area) and one of the best places in the world to see antpittas. The reserve is in a cloud forest that belongs to the city of Manizales, protected for years to conserve the water resources that supply the city. No less than 450 species of birds have been recorded here, many of them endemic and with ranges of restricted distribution. Working with a



local guide, your target species include Brown-banded, Chestnut-crowned, Slate-crowned, Bicolored and Chestnut-naped antpitta; Streakheaded Antbird, Blackish Tapaculo, Red-hooded Tanager, and Masked Saltator.

Return to Manizales for lunch and pack up for the drive to Santa Rosa de Cabal, approximately 2 hours.
Overnight Termales San Vicente or similar

Day 6/7 - August 16/17 – Monday/Tuesday (B,L,D)

You have two full days here, allowing for some serious birding and some time to relax, maybe a soak in the hot springs.

One day you will start very early, but it should be worth it. The goal this day is the ultra-endemic **Fuertes' or Indigo-winged Parrot**. The drive is about 2 hours by 4X4 to Cortaderal.

***Fuertes' Parrot** was thought extinct back in 1911, when logging and farming destroyed much of its habitat. In 2002, researchers from ProAves Colombia discovered a colony of 60 living in a small fragment of cloud forest. Since that time, a preserve of 368 acres has been put aside for the parrots, a project by Rainforest Trust, Fundación ProAves, Fundación Loro Parque, and American Bird Conservancy. At present, it is estimated there are only around 250 adult birds. The parrot is restricted to mature montane cloud forest, elevations of 2,610-3,600 m, but mostly 3,300-3,500 m, with a high occurrence of mistletoe, berries being a key food source of the species.*



You'll spend the day birding in the elfin forest, also seeking Mountain Velvetbreast, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Purple-backed Thornbill, Crowned Chat-Tyrant, and Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan. Lunch will be in the field to take advantage of the location, returning back to the hotel around 5 pm.

Overnight Termales San Vicente or similar

Day 8 - August 18 – Wednesday (B,L,D)

This morning after breakfast and hotel check-out, you drive from Santa Rosa to Guásimo, about 1.5 hours. This is subtropical lowland forest and will be hot and humid. Targets today are Apical Flycatcher, Guira Tanager, Golden-collared Manakin, Spectacled Parrotlet, White-lined Tanager, Bar-crested Antshrike, Grayish Piculet, Little Tinamou, and Thick-billed Seed-Finch.



With birding stops along the way, you'll drive to Pueblo Rico, birding La Linea de Apía (cool and humid) Andean cloud forest crossing the Western Andes, looking for Golden-naped, Saffron-crowned and **Multicolored tanager**, Golden-breasted Fruiteater, Masked Trogon, Booted Racket-tail, Golden-rumped Euphonia, and Azara's Spinetail.

Next you'll head to Montezuma Lodge, leaving our vans in Pueblo Rico and switching to 4X4 vehicles. The road up to the lodge is cultivated, but the higher up you go, the better it gets!. Finally, you arrive in another stunning birding destination where the lodge is located. There may be birding stops along the way, as time permits. You might see Rufous-throated Tanager, Gray-rumped Swift, Pale-breasted Spinetail, White-tipped Sicklebill, Gray Seedeater, Crested Ant-Tanager, Moustached Puffbird, or Russet-backed Oropendola. You have four nights at the lodge.

Overnight Montezuma Lodge

Day 9 - August 19 – Thursday (B,L,D)

Located in Tatamá National Park in the department (state) of Risaralda, Montezuma is a dream destination for any serious birder visiting Colombia – the bird list of the park is simply astounding. Up to 11 endemics can be spotted in just a few days. Among the best are Gold-ringed Tanager, **Crested Ant-tanager** and Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer.



Using the lodge as base, you will spend the next three days birding by 4X4 and by foot. On this day, a very early departure takes you today to the top of Cerro (hill) Montezuma, about 1 hour drive, up to about 2,560 meters (8,400 feet). Birding on foot and walking down the upper section of Montezuma Road, you will be looking for Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer, Glowing Puffleg, Rufous Spinetail, Brown-bellied Swallow, Smoky Bush-Tyrant, Collared Inca, Purplish-mantled Tanager, Nariño Tapaculo, Grass-green Tanager, Green-and-black Fruiteater. Walking is all downhill and vehicles will be available at any time should you need to rest. Breakfast and lunch will be delivered in the field. Drive back to the lodge in the afternoon by 4X4, about 45 minutes.

Overnight Montezuma Lodge

Day 10 - August 20 – Friday (B,L,D)

Like yesterday, you'll depart early from the lodge, this time heading to Cajones, about 40 minutes away, and 2,300 meters (7,500 feet) in altitude. Birding the Cajones area, you'll look for **Gold-ringed Tanager**, Velvet-purple Coronet, Yellowbreasted, and Ochre-breasted antpitta, Flame-faced Tanager, Black Solitaire, Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, White-chinned Swift, Chestnut-breasted, and Yellow-collared chlorophonia.

Again, you'll walk downhill while birding with vehicles available to take you back to the lodge in the afternoon or if a rest is needed.

Overnight Montezuma Lodge



Day 11 - August 21 – Saturday (B,L,D)



Your last early departure takes you to La Clarita, only about 20 minutes away by 4X4. Birding the Rio Claro area, 1,500 – 1,300 meters (5,000 – 4,300 feet), targets here are White-headed and Sooty-headed wren, Chocó Tapaculo, Black-headed Brushfinch, Chestnut-crowned Gnateater, **Crimson-rumped Toucanet**, Dusky-faced Tanager, Green-fronted Lancebill, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Striolated Manakin, Lanceolated Monklet, Zeledon's, and Parker's antbird, and Rufous-browed Tyrannulet. You'll bird on foot, walking downhill, with vehicles available at all times.

Overnight Montezuma Lodge

Day 12 - August 22 – Sunday (B)

This morning you will pack up and be ready to depart after breakfast to head to the airport, leaving Montezuma 8:00 am. You'll drive back to Pueblo Rico in the 4X4s and pick up the van. The flight AA 1134 departs at 3:15 pm and you should arrive 2.5 hours in advance.

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*Note: The order and sites visited may vary due to weather, road conditions and other factors beyond our control.
Hotels listed are valid as of printing, but may change.*

Accommodations:

- **Yarumo Blanco** – located directly in the Otun Quimbaya National Park, Yarumo Blanco is the community group which manages the lodge, restaurant, lecture hall, and guide services. Although not fancy, all rooms have private bath and hot water.
- **Manizales – Hotel Lindsay** or similar Lindsay is a small but modern hotel in Manizales, rooms have private bath with hot water, mini-fridge, minibar, safe, phone, hairdryer. There is an on-site restaurant, free Wifi in public areas, and laundry service available.
- **Santa Rosa de Cabal - Termales San Vicente** or similar The hotel at Termales San Vicente consists of a number of small cabins and lodge rooms spread around a beautiful lush property. Rooms all have private bath and hot water. This is a nice place for a spa treatment or dunk in the hot springs, at additional price. Wifi in public spaces. Laundry service available.
- **Montezuma Lodge** – easily one of the top birding lodges in Colombia, we are fortunate to stay and bird here. (John has a connection!) The lodge is situated on a private property of almost 1,000 acres, a mix of farmland and forest. Bird feeders, flowers, and fruit trees surround the lodge, attracting a beautiful array of hummingbirds, tanagers, honeycreepers, euphonias, and many others daily. While not a luxury lodge, Montezuma is an unmissable Colombia birding lodge. All rooms have private bathrooms, hot showers, and electricity. The kitchen at the main lodge offers up delicious home-cooked meals based on typical Colombian cuisine, and can accommodate dietary preferences (vegetarian, gluten-free, etc.) with advance notice. Laundry service available. Little or no Wifi.

Your Guides:

Birding since age 5, **John Cahill** is the top birder in Guatemala, completing two national Big Years before graduating high school. Having seen the birds of Guatemala, John took the logical next step and spent a couple years in Colombia broadening his scope across the most biologically diverse country in the world. Today John actively participates in the leadership of Guatemala's birding community and the local Verapaz Birding Club, and continues to add new birds to the country list. He lives on the campus of Community Cloud Forest Conservation in central Guatemala and is attending university. His family has been in the country for more than 20 years, working on reforestation projects and local community education, especially for young Mayan girls. John has guided tours for JB Journeys in conjunction with Travis Audubon Society.



Eric Stager grew up on the Upper Texas Coast where he was bitten by the birding bug in 1981 at the age of 13. Although detrimental to his teenage social life, his obsession with birds was spurred on by kind mentors and nourished by the excitement of growing up in one of North America's top birding locations. While still in high school, Eric was leading field trips for the local bird club, compiling his local Christmas Bird Count, and operating the Texas Coast Rare Bird Alert (in the days of cassette tape answering machines). Eric left the coast to attend the University of Texas and has lived in Austin ever since. He has expanded his sights with birding trips in South America, Africa, Asia and Australia. In Austin, Eric leads field trips and teaches birding classes for Travis Audubon Society, and also serves on the board of directors. He works as a Senior Environmental Scientist for the City of Austin, Texas.



NOTE REGARDING FLIGHTS: The itinerary is based on flights in and out of Pereira, Colombia, with American Airlines offering the best option. We will pick up and drop off for arrivals using the schedule below; others will incur an additional transfer fee.

- 11 Aug – 10:30 am depart Miami 1:00 pm – arrive Pereira AA 1135
- 22 Aug – 3:00 pm depart Pereira 7:55 pm – arrive Miami AA 1134

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COST:

- \$3995 per person in double room with minimum 8. With 6, \$4395 per person in double.
- \$450 single supplement. Limited number of singles available. A single room may be a smaller room for one person or a double at single price.
- 6 to operate, maximum 10 participants.
- To confirm your spot, please complete [this reservation form](#). Deposit is \$500 per person and final payment will be due April 20, 2021.
- Cancellation: After 30 days, deposit is non-refundable. Up to 90 days prior to departure, 50% refundable. Inside 90 days, non-refundable. Name change may be allowed. There is no refund for unused parts of the tour.

INCLUDED:

- Transportation as listed by van or 4X4
- 11 nights lodging with taxes included
- Guide services of John Cahill, plus local guides
- Escorted by Eric Stager of JB Journeys
- Entry fees to parks, etc
- Meals as listed
- Basic gratuities for meals and drivers

NOT INCLUDED:

- International airfare to/from Pereira (PIE)
- Private transfers if not on group flight
- Drinks during meals
- Travel Insurance (highly recommended)
- Personal expenses
- Spa or hot springs visits
- Gratuities to local guides-suggestions:
\$10-15 per person per day
 - i. John Cahill will be with you throughout
 - ii. Local guides will be with you each day in Yarumo Blanco, Rio Blanco, Montezuma, and while searching for the Fuertes' Parrot

NOTE TO PHOTOGRAPHERS: *The purpose of this tour is to see Colombia's birds, especially the endemics and other rare species. We love having good photos of the birds and the trip and we welcome you to bring your camera.*

This is not a trip for learning bird photography. If that is your goal, we are happy to connect you with companies who specialize in bird and wildlife photo tours.