

2024 Birding Western Colombia

with John Cahill

July 25-August 5



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

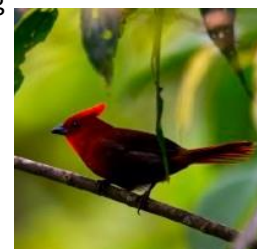
Your adventures begin in Montezuma – Tatamá National Park - one of the best places to bird in Colombia, with an elevation gradient on the track from 3,600 to 9,000 feet, making it one of the most diverse areas in all Colombia with more than 600 species recorded. With three full days, we'll have opportunities to see many endemics and near-endemics of the Chocó Region.

Then continue your exploration in 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. Onward to Manizales, famous for growing Colombia's famous, but also known for antpittas!

Your last few days will be spent in the area of the Fuertes' Parrot, 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, and part of the proceeds from this tour will contribute to its upkeep. Your final hotel features hot springs, a great way to end your trip to Colombia.

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Day 1 – Jul 25 – Thursday – arrive to Pereira on AA 1135 at 1:00 pm local time. John Cahill, your main guide, will meet the group at the airport, load up bags, and head for the hills! You drive to the town of Pueblo Rico and switch to 4X4 vehicles to reach the Montezuma Lodge. The road is cultivated, but the higher up you go, the wilder it gets! Finally, you arrive in a stunning birding destination, where Montezuma Lodge is located. There may be birding stops along the way, as time permits when 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 and three full days of birding at the lodge. (D)

Overnight Montezuma Lodge (4 nights)

Days 2, 3, 4 – Jul 26, 27, 28 – Friday, Saturday, Sunday – 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 the first full 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. You'll return back to the lodge in the afternoon by 4X4, about 45 minutes.

Subsequent days will follow the same pattern, each with a different elevation and habitat to bird. Drive up and walk downhill while birding, with vehicles available to take you back to the lodge in the afternoon or if a rest is needed. Meals will be delivered to you in the field.

Other expected sites:

- 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, Yellow-breasted, and Ochre-breasted Antpitta, Flame-faced Tanager, Black Solitaire, Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, White-chinned Swift, Chestnut-breasted, and Yellow-collared chlorophonia.
- 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.

The destination each day will be decided by your leaders to determine what you may have missed or if any great birds have been reported in the area.

Overnights Montezuma Lodge (B, L, D)



Day 5 – Jul 29 - Monday

This morning you will pack up and be ready to depart after breakfast, leaving Montezuma early. You'll drive back to Pueblo Rico in the 4X4s and pick up the van. If any in our group must depart, they will be driven to Periera airport for the American Airlines flight which departs early afternoon.

From here you will drive to Otun, about 1.5 hours and to our hotel in La Florida, near Otun Quimbaya. Settle in and meet for your first dinner together when John will review the rest of the itinerary with you.

Overnight: Hotel Kumanday (B, L, D)

Day 6 – Jul 30 – Tuesday

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.

Return to lodge for lunch and a short rest. In the afternoon you 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 many endemic bird species.

Overnight: Hotel Kumanday (B, L, D)

Day 7 – Jul 31 – Wednesday

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 Santa Rosa, about a 1.5 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 you reach Santa Rosa, so have a jacket or fleece ready

Overnight: Hacienda Santa Clara or similar (B, L, D)

Day 8 – Aug 1 – Thursday

Depart very early for the drive to Cortaderal. 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 2,610-3,600m,



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 for dinner.

Overnight: Hacienda Santa Clara or similar (B, L, D)

Day 9 – Aug 2 – Friday

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 a chance to see the city center before continuing to Termals del Ruiz for the night, 1.5 hours.

Overnight Termals del Ruiz or similar (B, L, D)

Days 10/11 – Aug 3/4 – Saturday/Sunday

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. Birding Paramo del Ruiz, 1 to 1.5 hours drive. 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 Termals del Ruiz with birding stops along the way. It will be a long day, but hopefully for good birds.

Overnight Termals del Ruiz or similar (B, L, D)

Day 12 – Aug 5 – Monday (B)

After breakfast, you'll drive back to Pereira for the afternoon flight on American Airlines which leaves early afternoon. Drive time is about 1.5 hours.



This tour is escorted by a TOS officer.

*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.*

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Accommodations:

- **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. 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 at a fee. Wifi available at the main lodge only.
- **Hotel Kumanday** – All rooms have private bath with hot water and in-room safe. Limited wifi.
- **Hacienda Santa Clara** or similar a small hotel in Santa Rosa de Cabal, about 45 minutes from the airport of Pereira, rooms have private bath with hot water. There is an on-site restaurant, free Wifi in public areas, and laundry service available.
- **Termals del Ruiz** - Located about 11,000 feet above sea level, expect a cold climate here. We recommend

a fleece jacket, gloves, and hat. All rooms have private bath with hot water, room safe, and free wifi. Hair dryer on request. There will be some down time to try out the thermal pools, so bring a swimsuit if interested. Laundry service available at a charge.

Note: Hotels in Colombia do have hot water showers but may not have hot water in the sink. Also, they may not have washcloths, so if you are used to using one, we suggest you bring one along with a Ziplock bag to carry it. These hotels are available at the time of printing, but others may be substituted due to reasons beyond our control.

Your Guide:



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 is married to Michelle Tapesco, whose family operates the Montezuma Lodge in Colombia. John has guided tours for JB Journeys in Guatemala and Colombia for several years. John will be assisted by local guides.

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.

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|----------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------|
| • 25 Jul | 10:05 am – depart Miami (MIA) | 1:00 pm – arrive Pereira (PEI) | AA 1135 |
| • 05 Aug | 2:30 pm – depart Pereira | 7:35 pm – arrive Miami | AA 1134 |

COST:

- \$4,500 per person in double room with 8, for TOS members. With 6, \$5,800 per person.
- \$500 single supplement. Limited singles available. *A single may be a smaller room (with private bath) for one person or a double room at single price.*
- Minimum 6 to operate, maximum 10 participants.
- To confirm your spot, please [complete this reservation form](#). Deposit is \$1,000 per person and final payment due May 24, 2024.
- **Cancellation:** After 30 days, deposit is non-refundable. Once paid in full, from 90-60 days prior to departure, 50% penalty. Inside 60 days – non-refundable. Name changes may be allowed. There is no refund for unused parts of the tour.

TRAVEL INSURANCE is highly recommended. Please start here at [TravelGuard](#) but feel free to look elsewhere, like [Squaremouth](#), a comparison tool. We recommend trip cancellation coverage as well as comprehensive medical coverage that includes medical evacuation. MedEvac can be purchased separately as you'll see in TravelGuard's offerings.

Also, if you are paying for your trip by credit card, check with the card company to see if they cover any insurance for travelers.

INCLUDED:

- Transportation as listed by van or 4X4
- 11 nights lodging with taxes
- Guide services of John Cahill, plus local guides
- 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** (required)
- Personal expenses
- Spa or hot springs visits
- Gratuities to local guides-suggestions:
\$15-20 per person per day to John, your main guide, and \$10 to second guide.