



2025 Birding Colombia

CENTRAL & WESTERN ANDES SPECIALTIES

August 11-24

with John Cahill of Xikanel Birding Adventures

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 four full days, we'll have opportunities to see many endemics and near- endemics of the

Chocó Region. Montezuma also has good night birds, so there are chances for owls and nightjars.

Then continue to destinations including 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 Manzales, famous for growing Colombia's famous, but also known for antpittas!

Our 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.



We will utilize flights into and out of Pereira, which is close to the birding destinations.

####

Day 1 – Aug 11 – Monday – arrive to Pereira International Airport (PEI) and overnight. Meet with John Cahill for dinner and make plans for the days ahead.

Overnight TBA

Days 2, 3, 4, 5 –Aug 12/13/14/15 – Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday – Montezuma

After breakfast you'll check out and load up bags, then 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.



Using the lodge as base, you will spend the next four days birding by 4X4 and by foot.

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.

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 Gnatcatcher, **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 (4 nights)



Days 6, 7 – Aug 16/17 – Saturday, Sunday - Otun Quimbaya

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. 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.

The next 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.

Overnights: Hotel Kumanday

Day 8, 9, 10 – Aug 18/19/20 – Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday – Manizales

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.

One morning you'll 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.

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.

Overnights TBA

Day 11, 12, 13 – Aug 21/22/23 – Thursday, Friday - Santa Rosa de Cabal

Travel to Santa Rosa Stops will be made along the route for birding at Camaguadua, 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 Santa Rosa, so have a jacket or fleece ready. Depart very early one morning 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 2,610-3,600 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, and a last dinner together.

Overnights: Hacienda Santa Clara or similar

Day 14 – Aug 24 – Sunday Airport departures.

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:

- **Pereira - tba**
- **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. Little or no Wifi.
- **Hotel Kumanday** – All rooms have private bath with hot water and in-room safe. No 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.
- **Manizales - tba.**

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 has guided tours for JB Journeys in conjunction with Travis Audubon Society.

John will be assisted by local guides.

2025 Birding Western Colombia

August 11-24

COST:

- \$4,900 per person in double room with minimum 8.
- \$500 single supplement. Limited number of singles available. A single room may be a smaller room for one person or a double at single price.
- Minimum 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 June 10, 2025.
- Cancellation: After 15 days, deposit is non-refundable. Once final payment has been made, 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
- 13 nights lodging with taxes included
- 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)
- Drinks during meals
- Travel Insurance (highly recommended)
- Personal expenses
- Gratuities to local guides-suggestions:
 - \$15-20 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.

