



COLOMBIA  
PHOTO EXPEDITIONS

# COLOMBIA IS MAGICAL REALISM

BIRDING FOR PEACE



PANCE RIVER - PURACE NP - LA COCHA - BORDON-  
CILLO - TRAMPOLINE OF DIVERSITY - RUMIYACO  
- SAN JOAQUIN -- KM 18 - ANCHICAYA - SAN  
CIPRIANO



2020

DAYS

November 9 - 21

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**PROCOLOMBIA**  
EXPORTACIONES TURISMO INVERSIÓN



## The Trampoline of Diversity

Carlos Herney Castro

Colombia is the birdiest country on earth, with more than 1,950 species (almost 20% of the world's total in less than 1 percent of the world's landmass). It is easy to see why. Colombia is tropical, yet it also has ample elevation changes due to the Andes, furthermore it has both the Pacific and Caribbean coasts. Lots of different habitats ensure an abundance of bird species.

Colombia has been undergoing a very positive transformation in the past decade, and with the recent signing of a historic peace treaty with the FARC insurgent group, the country is now regarded as one of the safest countries for tourists in Latin America. For many years Colombia has remained a mystery for travelers and Nature enthusiasts from around the globe, but Colombians are now welcoming visitors from around the planet with open arms.

This tour celebrates the signing of the peace agreement with an itinerary that focuses on sites that were once FARC strongholds and have since become eco-tourism destinations for birders from all over the world. This is important, as the locals that once lived in a war zone are now benefiting from tourism and in turn are becoming stewards of the natural ecosystem that attract birders to the country.

The tour starts by heading to the Cauca and Nariño departments, a region that promises to become the next must-bird region of Colombia. We start with a drive to Popayan, one of Colombia's oldest cities and known for its traditional cuisine and colonial architecture. From there we continue to view Condors in Purace National Park, before beginning our ascent of the Colombian Massif, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and one of the principal fresh water producing regions in the country.

Several nights at the La Cocha Lagoon will give us time to explore nearby wetlands, the high altitude Paramo de Bordoncillo and the lagoon itself. Then a descent down the "Trampoline of Diversity", where we will spend 2 days birding a 6,000 foot altitudinal gradient. The road lends its name to the many switchbacks one has to navigate along the steep descent. A few days birding the Amazonian Piedmont in the department of Putumayo will surely yield some surprises, as this is an area that has not been explored extensively by birders.

We then fly to Cali to visit the exquisite Araucana Lodge for five nights. We start at the KM 18 and San Antonio Cloud Forest, which provides an excellent history of ornithology in the Colombian Andes. More than 100 years ago, Frank Chapman, of the American Museum of Natural History, spent some time researching the bird diversity of this forest, which concluded in the first detailed bird survey for Colombia. The birding in the area is amazing, with mixed-species flocks of Multicolored, Purplish-mantled, Scrub and Golden-naped Tanagers.

Another area of equal importance in Colombia's ornithological history is found along the The Old Buenaventura Road, which descends from the western Andes to the Pacific Ocean along the Anchicaya River watershed and is one of Colombia's newest destinations to open up to birding. The birding along this gradient of insurmountable diversity is such that it inspired Steve Hilty to start work on Field Guide to the Birds of Colombia, the first ornithological field guide for South America. This tour also descends to the Pacific lowlands to the San Cipriano Reserve, where the main mode of transportation is a railroad contraption called the "brujita".

## CARL SAFINA - ECOLOGY AND CONSERVATION EXPERT

Carl Safina is best known for lyrical non-fiction writing about nature and conservation. His work explores how humans are changing the living world, and what the changes mean for non-human beings and for us all. His work fuses scientific understanding, emotional connection, and a moral call to action. His writing has won a MacArthur “genius” prize; Pew and Guggenheim Fellowships; book awards from Lannan, Orion, and the National Academies; and the John Burroughs, James Beard, and George Rabb medals. He earned a PhD in ecology from Rutgers studying seabirds, then spent a decade working to ban high-seas drift nets and to overhaul U.S. fishing policy. He has written extensively about terns and albatrosses, held a master falconry license, and worked for The Peregrine Fund. Safina is now the first Endowed Professor for Nature and Humanity at Stony Brook University and is founding president of the not-for-profit Safina Center. He hosted the PBS series Saving the Ocean. His writing appears in The New York Times, TIME, Audubon, Yale e360, and on the Web at National Geographic, Huffington Post, CNN.com, and elsewhere. His books include the classic, Song for the Blue Ocean. Carl’s most recent book—his seventh—is Beyond Words; What Animals Think and Feel. He lives on Long Island, New York with his wife Patricia and their dogs and feathered friends.



## KIKE CALVO - PHOTOGRAPHY EXPERT

Kike (pronounced key-keh) is an award-winning National Geographic photographer, bilingual journalist and author with many years of experience as a Photography Expert for National Geographic Expeditions and Lindblad Expeditions, with Latin America as his main focus. Kike has spent years exploring Colombia extensively, acquiring ground experience that has eventually led to the creation of the boutique travel agency Colombia Photo Expeditions. His work has been published in National Geographic, New York Times, Time, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, New York Magazine, Rolling Stone, and Vanity Fair, among others. Kike teaches photography workshops and



has been a guest lecturer at leading institutions like the School of Visual Arts and Yale University. He is a regular contributor to National Geographic blog Voices. Kike has made a strong emphasis in imprinting his conservation efforts within his work in Colombia, and is excited to show you around a country he has learned to love through the years.

## DIEGO CALDERON - GUEST SPEAKER AND BIRD GUIDE

Diego Calderon is a biologist from the Universidad de Antioquia in Colombia, has been leading bird tours in the country for more than a decade. As well as bird-watching extensively throughout Colombia, he has been part of expeditions exploring poorly known remote areas in Colombia finding many additional species for the Colombian bird list. Diego will be our local bird guide during three days of the tour in the western Andes, and will present his “Birding with the FARC” lecture during two evenings with ample time for Q and A.



Diego was kidnapped by the FARC in 2004 while conducting bird research in the remote Perija mountains, and spent 88 days in captivity before he was freed. His captors had mistaken him for a spy or intelligence officer due to his binoculars, camera, and note-taking material. Fifteen years later, Diego was part of an expedition with ex-FARC combatants to conduct biological surveys in ex-FARC strongholds, yielding 14 new species for science (10 plants, 1 mammal, 1 reptile and 2 beetles). Diego’s presentations are teachings in reconciliation and forgiving, and are a testament to the many benefits of the peace agreement in Colombia, including benefits to many scientific fields and conservation.

Ex-FARC combatants and Colombian biologists performing field-work

Carlos Herney Castro





Blue-headed Sapphire  
Juan Jose Arango

Deep-blue Flowerpiercer  
Juan Jose Arango



## LOCAL BIRD GUIDE



### JOSE LUNA

Jose Luna was born and raised in the western Andes of Colombia, and has been birding since he was 16. He is the lead local guide for Colombia Birdwatch, and has shined amongst his colleagues for his proficiency in English and his ability to find birds. He enjoys birding and studying birds on his free time, is an avid e-birder, and has worked as a field biologist in numerous thesis projects and expeditions in the Colombia Andes and Choco Bioregion.

### COST

\$5800 USD per person, double occupancy, not including international airfare. Single Supplement \$650.

### AIRFARE

Approximately \$900 from the USA, or \$1400 from London, depending on origin (quoted August 2019).

### GROUP SIZE

Maximum 12 participants, not including leaders. Minimum group size is 5 participants.

### NUMBER OF DAYS

13 days total, including estimated travel time.

### ACCOMMODATIONS

Lodging will consist of 3 -4 -star hotels in Cali and Popayan, a lovely boutique hotel in near KM 18 that is owned and operated by Colombia Birdwatch, and a Swiss-built lodge at La Cocha Lagoon and a basic 3-star hotel with air conditioning in Mocoa. We expect relative comfort, hot showers and excellent local food and provide a nice variety of snacks and purified or bottled drinking water available throughout the trip.

Orange-eared Tanager  
Brayan Coral



## DAY 1

### Arrive in Cali

A representative will meet you at the airport for your transfer to the hotel (40 minutes)

Lodging: Hotel Casa del Alferéz

## DAY 2

### Cali to Popayan via Pance River Watershed

We start the tour birding the Pance River Watershed en route to Popayan, which is a three hour drive from Cali.

Lodging: Hotel Dann Monasterio

## DAY 3

### Purace National Park

Purace National Park is home to one of Colombia's most active volcanoes, and it is here the group has the chance to have a very intimate moment with the largest flying bird on the planet. The local indigenous community has set up a feeding stations for two magnificent specimens, and if the birds cooperate it can be a one in a lifetime experience to be able to photograph a Condor at such close range. A visit to San Juan Hot Springs (unfortunately swimming in them is pro-

hibited) to enjoy the scenery and for some landscape photography is a must. Surrounded by elfin forest, the hot springs are home to a large variety of mosses and lichens with a fascinating color palette.

An excellent chance to explore the surreal paramo, the ecosystem is referred to as Colombia's water factory, as it is the birthplace of the county's two largest rivers: Cauca and Magdalena. Birding in patches of elfin forest can produce many high elevation specialists, including Scarlet-bellied Mountain-tanager, Golden-breasted Puffleg, Rufous-vented Whitetip, Black-chested Mountain Tanager, and Black-backed Brush-finch. We will also seek out marshy habitat for Noble Snipe, and eventually make it back to the hotel in Popayan.

Lodging at Hotel Dann Monasterio

## DAY 4

### Popayan to La Cocha via Patia Valley and Old Besuco Road.

We will break up the long drive (7 hours) by making several birding stops. Our first stop is the Upper Patia Valley, a deep, arid valley where we will seek out species such as the near endemic Bar-crested Antshrike and the adorable Spectacled Parrotlet amongst the xerophytic vegetation.







Yellow-throated Tanager  
Brayan Coral

©Brayan Coral

Red-bellied Grackle  
Juan Jose Arango



After lunch we will begin ascending towards the Old Besuaco road for species such as Carunculated Caracara, Barred Anthrush, White-crested Elaenia, Red-hooded Tanager, Tufted Tit-tyrant, and White-banded Tyrannulet. We will arrive at the La Cocha Lagoon in time to settle in to our hotel, a cozy, Swiss-built hotel with fireplaces and spectacular views of the lagoon.

Lodging at Chalet Guamez.

## DAY 5

### Paramo de Bordoncillo

We will spend the morning at the Paramo de Bordoncillo, not far from the hotel. A hike along the first portion of the trail will likely yield species such as Masked Mountain-tanager, Black Flowerpiercer, Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Barred Fruiteater, Agile Tit-Tyrant, and Grass-green and Golden-crowned Tanagers. The trail may be muddy and require rubber boots, but a chance to see both Rufous and Tawny Antpittas definitely makes it worth while.

After a morning of birding the first portion of the trail, those who wish to have a picnic lunch and brave the rest of the trail to try for the rare and uncommon Chestnut-bellied Cotinga can do so, but this will require a strenuous hike. Those who wish to have lunch at the hotel and visit some of the local communities can do so as well.

Lodging: Chalet Guamez

## DAY 6

We will leave the hotel very early in order to be birding at sunrise after a 1 hour drive, thus beginning our ascent down the trampoline of diversity. A day of birding along the road may bring many surprises, as few birders have explored this pristine area.

Birding a busy road that is only 1 lane along various stretches comes with its challenges, so please be prepared to deal with traffic. We will do our best to avoid certain areas that may be dangerous, but be assured that we will encounter many goodies, including the handsome and near endemic Golden-fronted Whitestart and the very local Deep-blue Flowerpiercer. One of our main targets is the photogenic and cooperative White-rimmed Brush-finch, a species that is only found in Colombia and Ecuador.

Other species to keep on the radar include Red-headed Barbet, Rufous-breasted Flycatcher, Green-



and-black Fruiteater, Saffron-crowned Tanager, and Flame-faced Tanager and Short-billed Bush-tanager. We will bird our way to El Mirador and then descend down to Mocoa to settle into our downtown hotel for the next three nights.

Lodging: Hotel Suma Wasi

## DAY 7

### Lower Trampoline of Diversity

We will ascend from the busy town of Mocoa to El Mirador for amazing views of the Amazonian Piedmont at Sunrise. Today we will again bird a busy road, so extreme care must be taken to be alert and stay together. The day will take us along a 1,400 meter (4,600 feet) altitudinal gradient with chances to see Yellow-throated Bush-tanager and three species of Tapaculo: Long-tailed, Spillman's and Ocellated Tapaculo.

A sack lunch will allow us to bird all day in search of specialties such as Hooded Mountain-Tanager, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Green-fronted Lancebill, White-tailed Hillstar, Chestnut-bellied Thrush, and Handsome Flycatcher among many others!

Lodging: Suma Wasi

## DAY 8

### Rumiyaco

The Rumiyaco sector lies at about 600 meters (2,000 feet) above sea level and offers great birding opportunities very close to Mocoa. We will spend the morning birding the area in search of species such as the very common Violaceous Jay and Silver-beaked Tanager. We will also devote time to one of our main targets: Plum-throated Cotinga.

Lunch in town and some time for a short siesta will have us returning to the area to seek out the rest of our targets in the area, including Glittering-throated Emerald, Lettered and Chestnut-eared Aracari, Golden-bellied Euphonia, Cream-colored Woodpecker, Chestnut Woodpecker, and Orange-fronted Plush-crown.

Lodging: Hotel Suma Wasi

## DAY 9

### Mocoa - Cali Flight

Some time for birding in the morning will give way to a direct flight to Cali, with a 90 minute drive up to the hotel in time for some afternoon birding.

Lodging: Araucana Lodge

Subtropical Doradito



Chestnut Woodpecker  
Brayan Coral







Crested Quetzal  
Christopher Calonje



Multicolored Tanager  
Juan Jose Arango

## DAY 10

### The Infamous Km 18 and Cock-of-the-rock Lek

Today we meet Diego Calderon for three days of birding in the western Andes near Cali, in the vicinity of the Farallones National Park. The park was completely closed for more than a decade during the height of the civil war, littered with FARC camps. Kidnapings were commonplace in the area, but today it is common to see birdwatchers enjoying the area. Today is dedicated to the famous KM18, located on the 1800-meter (5,900-foot) pass 18 kilometers (11 miles) northwest of Cali along the road that connects Cali with the port city of Buenaventura. Birding can be very productive here, and we will look for four endemics – Chestnut Wood-Quail, Colombian Chachalaca, Grayish Piculet and the spectacular Multicolored Tanager. This area is a tanager paradise, where we have a good chance to see Purplish-mantled, Summer, Beryl-spangles, Flame-rumped, Golden, Metallic-green, Saffron-crowned, and Golden-naped tanagers as well as Ashy-throated Bush-Tanager and Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager.

We hope to be dazzled by an impressive show of hummingbirds at a private house along the same road, including the beautifully ornate Long-tailed Sylph, Booted Rackettail, Blue-headed Sapphire, Green Violetear, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Speckled Hummingbird, White-necked Jacobin. Brown Violetear and Tawny-bellied Hermit. Birding the forest can also produce many near-endemics such as Scrub Tanager, Purple-throated Woodstar, Nariño Tapaculo, Purplish-mantled Tanager and Yellow-headed Manakin.

Here we will may see striking birds such as Green-and-black Fruiteater, Chestnut-breasted and Blue-naped Chlorophonia, the inconspicuous Golden-headed Quetzal, Scarlet-fronted Parakeet, Red-faced Spinetail, Spotted and Rusty-winged Barbtails, Streaked Xenops, and the noisy, inquisitive Crimson-rumped Toucanet. We will also listen and search for species with interesting calls and songs, like the hawk-like whistle of the Scaled Fruiteater, warbling song of Black-billed Peppershrike, and beautiful flute-like song of Andean Solitaire. Other species we may find are Chestnut-breasted Wren, Greenish Puffleg, Montane Woodcreeper, Scale-crested Pygmy-tyrant, and the hyperactive Cinnamon Flycatcher. After birding we head to an afternoon visit to the Andean Cock-of-the-rock lek, which requires a 35 minute hike.

Lodging: Araucana Lodge





Slaty-capped Shrike-vireo  
Juan Jose Arango

Saffron-crowned Tanager  
Juan Jose Arango





## DAY 11

### El Descanso Feeders and Anchicaya Watershed

Perhaps Colombia's most famous birding location, the Anchicaya watershed is located along the edge of the Farallones National Park, one of the most diverse parks on the planet. The birding begins just 40 minutes from the hotel via a paved road that can offer many of the Choco endemics that this mega diverse locality has to offer. Our day on the Anchicaya road will allow time to enjoy the upper portion of the road and some very well-maintained feeders at our breakfast spot where Rufous-throated, Glistening-green and Silver-throated Tanagers are known to occur. The road will surely yield many highly prized species Golden-collared Honeycreeper, White-whiskered Puffbird, Uniform Treehunter, Sooty-headed Wren, Green Thorntail and White-tailed Hillstar.

One of the main targets main targets is Toucan Barbet, sporting 5 different colors elegantly while still having a tough demeanor. We will search the skies for Barred Hawk, Ornate Hawk-eagle and Swallow-tailed Kites, whilst keeping an eye out for the attractive Ornate Flycatcher feeding on low branches. Another mega target is the recently described Pisones Tapaculo. The road can be extremely productive as it rarely disappoints.

Lodging: Araucana Lodge



Green and Black Fruiteater  
Christopher Calonje

Blue-naped Chlorophonia  
Christopher Calonje



Crimson-rumped Toucanet  
Christopher Calonje



Toucan Barbet  
Juan Jose Arango



Glistening-green Tanager  
Juan Jose Arango



Black-chinned Mountain-tanager  
Juan Jose Arango

Depending on how low along the road we can make it, the lower stretches can yield species such as Choco Trogon, Lita Woddpecker and Baudo Guan. The tanagers can be quite a treat, with chances for Scarlet-and-white, Golden-chested, Gray-and-gold, and Scarlet-browed Tanagers among many others.

In the evening we will enjoy Diego's talk "Birding with the FARC", as he tells his story and the evolution of Colombia's conflict since he was kidnapped in 2004 while conducting field work, until this year when he spend a month in the Colombian jungle with ex-FARC combatants conducting biological research that yielded 12 new species to science. This will also be a unique opportunity to learn how bird tourism in Colombia is helping to promote conservation and economic sustainability in areas that were once war zones.

Lodging: Araucana Lodge

## DAY 12

San Cipriano

After a two drive to Zaragosa and a pleasant 20 minute ride on "brujitas" (motorcycle-powered wooden carts on rails), one arrives in the town of San Cipriano. The area is a protected reserve and is the source of drinking water for the nearby port city of Buenaventura. Located in the Choco Bioregion, it is known for being one of the wettest places on the planet. Some of the birds that are possible include Choco Toucan, Stripe-billed Aracari, Black-tipped





Brujitas in San Cipriano  
Christopher Calonje

Cotinga (NE), Rose-faced (NE) and Blue-headed Parrots, Spot-crowned and Five-colored Barbet (NE), Broad-billed Motmot, Black-chested Puffbird and Purple-throated Fruitcrow. The area is teeming with Antbirds, with chances to see Ocellated, Jet, Stub-tailed and Bicolored Antbirds. We will leave after lunch and drive 2 hours back to the hotel.

Lodging: Araucana Lodge

### DAY 13

Depart Cali

Guests will be taken by private transport to the airport to catch flights home.





Paradise Tanager  
Brayan Coral

#### About the Trip and Physical Requirements & Pace

Colombia has an incredible amount of diversity in a small space. In this compact itinerary we will visit two different mountain ranges, a low-lying valley, the amazon Piedmont and two the high altitude paramo ecosystem.

We will mostly be birding on dirt roads or wide trails with the vehicle nearby in case participants want to take a rest. Please note that roads may be steep and slippery and we may occasionally venture off into small trails that spur off the roads. We suggest that you generally practice carrying your equipment for the amount of time and distances that you may encounter during this trip so you are well prepared!

We will have purified or bottled drinking water available throughout the trip. One should be prepared for early morning birding, as it is important to be out before it becomes too hot. Whenever possible we shall have an early afternoon break, before continuing out in the late afternoon. Also for those interested in mammals and night birds there will be some opportunities for owling and maybe spotlighting for a mammal or two. Most of our meals will be sit-down meals, although field lunches or even a field dinner is likely somewhere along the trip. If you have specific food allergies, please communicate these to us on signing up. Note that the tour starts in Cali and ends in Cali, and requires one internal flight (included in price).

Pacific  
Ocean



#### TRIP INCLUDES

- All Lodging (Double Occupancy)
- Internal Flight (Mocoa - Cali)
- Bottled Water Throughout the Trip
- All Meals From Breakfast on Day 2 to Breakfast on Day 13
- Snacks Throughout the Trip
- Entrances to Parks and Reserves
- Local Guides
- Internal Terrestrial Transport From Airport Pickup to Airport Drop-off



#### DOES NOT INCLUDE

- Tips
- Alcoholic Beverages
- Insurance
- Airfare to Colombia
- Laundry
- Items of Personal Nature



Red-headed Barbet  
Juan Jose Arango

Apical Flycatcher  
Juan Jose Arango





Tooth-billed Hummingbird  
Juan Jose Arango



Juan Jose Arango  
Orange-breasted Fruiteater



Scarlet-and-white Tanager  
Juan Jose Arango

Gray-and-gold Tanager  
Juan Jose Arango



Slaty-capped Shrike-vireo  
Juan Jose Arango



Purplish-mantled Tanager  
Juan Jose Arango



Lita Woodpecker  
Juan Jose Arango



Golden-chested Tanager  
Juan Jose Arango



Scaled Fruiteater  
Juan Jose Arango