

Costa Rica's Rainforest

Photographic tour with tour leaders Ellie Rothnie & Stan Tekiela

27th November - 8th December 2027

Trip Overview



Group size:

The trip accommodates a maximum of 8 guests.

Due to the nature of the trip we will have to take an interim payment of £1000 on the 30th March 2027 and the amount will be deducted from your final balance.

Cost includes:

Airport transfers, all accommodation, meals and transport throughout the trip, all hide and park access fees.

Cost excludes:

International flights, sundry items, alcohol and personal travel insurance.

Accommodation:

We will be staying in clean comfortable lodges and hotels throughout, all to a standard typical of what you might expect in the US which is the principal customer base for tourism in Costa Rica. Accommodation is on a twin room basis and single supplements are unlikely to be available everywhere as we are in peak season and rooms are at a premium in terms of availability but do ask and we will provide what we can where it is possible to do so.

Level of fitness:

There is very little walking involved in the trip – walks to the hides at Laguna del Lagarto Lodge are only a few hundred metres in length. The humidity and general climate can be quite tiring and there are some long drives involved.

LEVEL 2 – 3

Trip Overview



When it comes to the sheer vibrancy of colour, the birdlife to be found in the rainforests is almost untouchable. With a well-developed tourist infrastructure, Costa Rica represents one of the best places in Central America to photograph it too and this trip will take us to some of the very best places to do so. Our three lodges based in the central part of the country are situated in the prime rainforest as well as elevated cloud forest and their array of feeders attract a huge variety of hummingbirds, and we will concentrate on achieving both natural lighting and high-speed flash images of these delicate beauties as well as searching for the iconic Resplendent Quetzal.

Further north we will have several days working from bespoke hides and open balcony areas for amazing viewing and photography of toucans, parrots, tanagers and an array of other striking bird species in their amazing rainforest settings; the highly colourful King Vulture is another real possibility here too and we will also look to turn our high-speed flash photography experiences to bats during the hours of darkness! Costa Rica has become one of the most popular destinations in the world for bird photography and we have been running trips to this wonderful country for many years and as a result have fine turned our trip to maximise the best potential that this special place has to offer.

Itinerary

Day 1: Today will be a long day of travelling to San Jose, the capital of Costa Rica. We will be arriving in the afternoon, so we will transfer to a local hotel to get some well-earned rest.

Day 2: After breakfast in the morning, we will head south-east for approximately a 4-hour drive to one of the country's premier birding lodges set in the Turrialba region of the country. With over 400 different species having been recorded here its excellent reputation is well deserved. The balcony areas around the lodge are home to an array of hummingbird feeders which attract many different species, and this is where we will be focussing our photography on the first afternoon after we arrive and settle in – we are based here for 2 nights.

Day 3: Among the many hummingbird species, we aim to work with here are Violet-crowned Woodnymph, White-necked Jacobin and Green-crowned Brilliant – and these are birds that really live up to their dramatic names: this is also one of the best places in the country to find the striking and diminutive Snowcap. Although the hummingbirds will be our main focus for these two very full days of photography here, the paths around the lodge and surrounding rainforest also offers the potential for frog, butterfly, insect and floral photography too as we look to build up a rainforest portfolio.

Day 4: After a final breakfast we will return to our vehicles and drive north to our base for the next three nights close to the Nicaraguan border where an array of hides and open-air photography opportunities await. It will be a full day's drive to get there, but we should arrive in time for some photography on arrival: there are often toucans to greet us on arrival so the cameras will almost certainly get an immediate airing too.



Itinerary



Days 5 and 6: Over the course of our further 2 full days here we will have the opportunity to work in several different settings created specifically for photography. A large balcony area at the lodge allows superb opportunities for an array of colourful species including Keel-billed Toucan, Brown-hooded Parrot, and Baltimore Oriole, oropendola and aracari amongst others. There is a Vulture focussed hide we will spend a full session at that attracts not just Black and Turkey Vultures but also the stunning King Vulture. Mammals, reptiles and amphibians await in the surrounding rainforest if you can find a spare moment too, and our nights will be spent using high-speed flash for bat photography as well. It's a photographer's paradise here and we will be very busy throughout.

Day 7: After breakfast we will head for a 2 -3 hour drive south and our very comfortable eco-lodge base for the next 3 nights in the high-altitude cloud forest mountains of Parc Nacional Juan Castro Blanco. The grounds here offer some of the best hummingbird photography opportunities of the trip with coati-mundi and agouti also regular visitors and we will arrive in time for lunch and a full afternoon of photography.

Day 8: Situated in a stunning montane rainforest location this Eco-Lodge offers the chance to further explore the rainforest on foot for an array of subjects, with orchids high on the agenda. It's the birds though, and especially the hummingbirds such as the Violet sabre Wing and Magnificent Hummingbird that are the main attraction for us. Many feeders are present providing the focus for our photography as we work on building our portfolios in terms of both species and image styles.

Itinerary



Day 9: It's a morning drive to our final cloud forest base in the Parc Nacional Los Quetzales which again has an array of feeders in the surrounding areas for us to work at. We will arrive in time to spend the afternoon with some different hummingbird photography and there are some nice sunset opportunities here as well.

Day 10: The resplendent quetzal will be our main focus while we are here, and we plan to look for them on both mornings. This will consist of our own guided walk into the cloud forest to look for them: these incredibly rare birds are among Costa Rica's avian jewels and the researchers in this small region are the best at finding them for us. During the afternoons we will concentrate on a bespoke photography area, which offers excellent hummingbird photography opportunities.

Day 11: We will have a final early morning walk for a last photography session with the resplendent quetzal before a late breakfast after which we'll begin the 3-hour drive back to San Jose in time for our early evening flights back to the UK/Europe.

Day 12: Arrive back in Europe.

Things to bring

Our accommodation is clean and comfortable akin to a typical US style standard blended with a Central American rustic feel at times. Being a rainforest environment, it will be warm and reasonably humid with a high chance of rainfall on most days. Light clothing will be the order of the day (although a fleece for covering up in the early mornings and evenings is very useful and a good shower/rain-proof jacket. In the cloud forest location for the resplendent quetzal, it can be very cold so you would need a down jacket to go over your fleece along with a hat and gloves. In terms of footwear, you will need some sensible outdoor walking boots but not the heavy-duty variety: just something practical. Malaria is not an issue in Costa Rica and bottled water is widely available. As might be expected insects are around so some mozzie spray would be a good idea. A fuller list of recommended items will be provided in a separate checklist too.



Things to bring

In terms of camera gear the longest lens you have will be needed (300mm with converter as a minimum really or ideally a 500mm + 1.4) along with a tripod. A 70-200mm or 100-400mm lens is essential for the hummingbirds. A 24-70mm is great for any landscape opportunities and a macro lens (the longest you have in terms of focal length) is ideal for flowers, frogs and insects. Flash guns and triggers will be available for the high-speed setups at the two hummingbird ranch locations and for the night-time bat photography, but you may want to bring your own for independent work. In the evenings we will have a chance to critique and look at individuals work if you so wish so, please feel free to bring anything, you'd like to share on either a laptop or iPad.



Useful Contact Information

Our contact numbers for the build up to and for the duration of the trip are:

Ellie: +44 (0)7879 480143

Stan: 612 669 6220



Please don't hesitate to contact us even if you think it is a minor question, we're here to help.



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