

Orchids of Colombia

The Bizarre, the Bold & the Beautiful!

A Greentours Itinerary

Colombia's fauna and flora are renowned. Simply, Colombia has the greatest biodiversity in a single country on the planet. More birds, more butterflies, and, more Orchids. At least 4270 species of them. And counting. Your guide for this trip has added 65 new species in the last four years alone. There's half a chance that you might find an undescribed species on this tour!

The engine that drives this incredible richness are the three cordilleras, for here the Colombian Andes split into three geologically and climatically distinct arms. The incredibly varied topography, with western and eastern slopes and inter-andean valleys has provided the arena for an explosion of evolution.

Days 1 & 2

To Bogota then Medellin and transfer to Jardin

Depending when the international arrival is into El Dorado Airport in Bogota we'll either overnight at a hotel just three minutes from the terminal or go straight on to our morning flight to Medellin. From there we'll travel to Jardin and will have a chance in the afternoon to explore this picturesque town.

Day 3

the Western Andes: Las Orquideas Reserve

After breakfast, we will use 4x4 vehicles to embark on an exploration at Las Orquideas Reserve where we will spend the whole day exploring patches of the cloud forest of the Western Andes.

Amongst the beauties we'll find will be pretty-in-pink *Epidendrum fimbriatum*, maroon *Epidendrum rhodovandoides*, whip-petalled *Masdevallia hortensis*, yellow and chocolate *Oncidium mirandum*, and *Cyrtorchilum ramosissimum*, whose blooms are so wavy they might make you dizzy! *Dracula gorgona* would be a special find. There's local *Lepanthes jardinensis*, unusual *Platystelea orectoglossa*, and *Miltoniopsis vexillaria* with cute pink and yellow blooms. We'll enjoy the impressive *Prosthechea sima* as well as orange and yellow *Oncidium mirandum*, and *Comparettia macroplectron* whose spotty pink blooms are held on elegant wands.

Day 4

the Western Andes: Cerro Ventanas and the Yellow-Eared Parrot Reserve

Today we will explore the upper section of Cerro Ventanas area and the Yellow-Eared Parrot Reserve. Whilst we'll hope to see that avian rarity, the Yellow-Eared Parrot, we'll be concentrating on delicate bonnet orchids such as *Pleurothallis canaligera* whose flowers emerge from a leaf like a tight-knit shoal of yellow and

maroon fish, and *Pleurothallis forceps-cancri* whose bizarrely-shaped flowers are noted in the specific name! We'll also see the Paprika Orchid, *Restrepia elegans*, blousy *Telipogon pulcher* and the amazing *Teagueia phasmida* whose flowers look like a bunch of exceptionally willowy ballerinas at the bar.

Day 5

To Montezuma Lodge in Tatamá National Natural Park

Early in the morning, we will start with a full-day journey towards Montezuma Lodge at Tatamá National Natural Park, where we will stay for the next three nights. We will stop occasionally en route in good habitat and we also expect to arrive before sunset and have time to explore the surroundings of the lodge which nestle amidst some species-rich cloud forest vegetation.

Days 6 & 7

Montezuma

The diversity of orchid species in Tatama National Natural Park is such that during our stay there we are likely to see upwards of a hundred species! Among them the elegant *Lepanthes felis*, hairy red *Porroglossum eduardi*, citrus *Pleurothallis silverstonei*, and *Brachionidium imperialis* whose petals are drawn into amazingly long tassels.

On our first day here we'll explore the upper part of the Montezuma Road where there are very many different genera of orchids whilst our second day sees us taking a good look at the middle area of the Montezuma Road in search of *Dracula carcinopsis* and other orchids typical of this altitude. Trees are festooned with bromeliads, some of them quite spectacular such as the yellow and red flowered *Guzmania pearcei*. They vie for our attention with orchids such as *Masdevallia hortensis*, *Ophidion pleurothallopsis* and fabulous *Maxillaria speciosa*. *Elleanthus* is an important genus here and we'll see pink *Elleanthus robustus*, lovely *Elleanthus smithii*, and *Elleanthus ampliflorus* with gorgeous stacked orange flowers. We'll look for chocolate and cream *Lepanthes carunculigera*, delicate *Lepanthes acutissima*, weird *Gravendeelia chamaelepanthes*, long-tasselled *Scaphosepalum grande*, aptly-named *Stelis superbiens*, spotty *Masdevallia mutica* and blousy *Cyrtorchilum halteratum*. *Gesnerids* are diverse and almost as amazing as the orchids – here are beautiful red *Kohleria inaequalis* and various *Drymonias* including lovely white fimbriate *Drymonia lanceolata*. And we hope we may come across little *Utricularia jamesoniana*, not an orchid, but an epiphytic carnivorous plant with beautiful glandular lilac and white blooms. Back to the orchids - There's salmon *Maxillaria erecta*, weird *Trevoria zahlbruckneriana*, shapely yet unpronounceable *Polycycnis pfisteri*, elegant *Platystele caudatisepala*, and amazing *Platystele posadarum*.

Day 8

Montezuma to Cali

Between Montezuma and Cali are several species of remarkably weird *Dracula* Orchids. In a family of amazing flowers, *Dracula* really stand out as something special. Here we'll see *Dracula iricolor*, *Dracula chimaera*, and the truly spectacular *Dracula platycrater*.

Day 9

Cali: Farallones de Cali National Natural Park, El Queremal and El Descanso Doña Dora.

We've a busy day today – all sorts of beautiful and sometimes rare species. We'll start in the Farallones de Cali National Natural Park, where in the El Queremal area at El Descanso Doña Dora, we'll search for *Phragmipedium andreettae*. This beautiful orchid was first discovered only twenty years ago and is very much endangered. We'll search for the unbelievably ghostly *Dracula ophioceps* in the San Antonio Cloud Forests. Here are an abundance of *Maxillaria*, *Lepanthes* (Sebastian's favourite genus!) and *Sobralia* species. The latter include huge white and yellow *Sobralia virginalis* and orange *Sobralia crocea*. *Epidendrum lacustre* has green and white flowers of such clarity yet it is the overall effect of the elegantly arranged flowering plant that transfixes us. There's also the bright pure colours of *Epidendrum catillus*, bearded yellow *Chondroscaphe amabilis*, and vinous hairy *Neooreophilus pseudocaulescens*. Minute *Lepanthopsis acuminata* has flowers that look like an animated centipede! Amongst all those *Maxillarias* are *embreei*, *meridensis*, and *brevifolia*, and among other *Pleurothallids* we'll see are *Acianthera casapensis*, *Pleurothallis giraldoi* and *Pleurothallis cordata*. There's also *Lepanthes manabina* (green form), *Lepanthes smaragdina*, *Lepanthes acarina*, *Masdevallia nidifica*, *Masdevallia picturata*, *Masdevallia amanda*, *Otoglossum globuliferum*, *Elleanthus aureus*, *Cyrtorchilum divaricatum* and *Pleurothallopsis microptera*.

Days 10 & 11

Sibundoy

During the morning of Day 10 we'll catch a flight from Cali to Pasto and transfer to the Sibundoy area. The Upper Sibundoy Valley in the South Colombian Massif has one of Colombia's richest orchid floras. Time here will allow us to find the gaping *Myoxanthus ortizianus* and the tiny but dazzling *Hofmeisterella eumicroscopica*. We'll see architectural *Hirtzia benzingii* and lovely *Pleurothallis geographica*, while *Lepanthes cucullata* is just one amongst a host of *Lepanthes* species.

Amongst some gaudy passion flowers and strange fuschias are frilly purple and white *Cyrtorchilum sodiroi*, porcelain *Rodriguezia granadensis* and little *Pleurothallis microcardia*. There's some fine *Bomareas* and lots of *Ericaceae* including *Vacciniums*, *Bejarias* and *Macleantias* and amongst these yet more orchids such as *Pleurothallis habenula*, *Masdevallia uncifera*, and the fabulous endemic *Lepanthes pastoensis*.

Day 12

Cocha Lagoon

This morning we'll transfer to the Cocha Lagoon which has some fine habitat surrounding it. Here is a veritable *Lepanthes* festival with at least a dozen species on show. *Lepanthes* are not large orchids, indeed many are rather tiny, but it is the amazing variety of structure and colour that sets them apart. Here are fabulous *Lepanthes elephantina* with its red 'tusks', pretty-in-pink *Lepanthes biloba*, the rather magnificent *Lepanthes hirtzii*, and *Lepanthes jostii* whose translucent tepals enfold a flower half dragonfly head, half bison head! We'll also find *Lepanthes transparens*, *Lepanthes rhynchion*, *Lepanthes andrenoglossa*, *Lepanthes decurva*, and *Lepanthes gargantua*, the latter with flowers the usual *Lepanthes* small but whose leaves earn if the specific epithet.

Days 13 & 14

Cocha and Bordoncillo Paramo

We will further explore the La Cocha area and also visit the higher altitude Bordoncillo Paramo. Amongst a plentiful supply of new orchids are *Lepanthes caudata* and the glandular-hairy purple *Lepanthes tetrachaeta*. During the afternoon of Day 14 we'll take a flight from Pasto Airport to Bogota.

Day 15

el Encenillo Reserve and evening departure

Our departing flight isn't until the evening so we'll have a full day in the Encenillo Natural Reserve in the Eastern Andes. Encenillo's orchids offer full-on variety laced with choice species such as *Elleanthus aurantiacus* with clusters of bright orange blooms and the extraordinary *Specklinia latilabris*. Wands of *Epidendrum cylindraceum* stand tall of the Paramo vegetation. This is a truly spectacular orchid whose overall jizz is that of a foxtail lily! As usual there are a number of *Pleurothallis* including *Pleurothallis bivalvis*, *Pleurothallis killipii*, lovely *Pleurothallis coricardia* whose leathery-flesh flowered sit upon heart-shaped leaves, and *Pleurothallis phalangifera* whose blooms look like rows of little purple birds sitting on a twig. Buttercup-yellow *Cyrtochilum revolutum* has wildly undulate tepals, *Barbosella cucullata* has immensely elongate tepals, gorgeous *Masdevallia strumifera* has delicate long white 'horns, and *Fernandezia lanceolata* and *Fernandezia sanguinea* both have clusters of bright orange-red blooms. The variety goes on and on - *Epidendrum excisum*, *Epidendrum karstenii*, *Epidendrum malmoense*, *Epidendrum moritzii*, *Epidendrum oxysepalum*, *Epidendrum sigsaense*, *Epidendrum bogotense*, *Lepanthopsis peniculus*, *Pleurothallis talpinaria*, *Pachyphyllums*, *Lepanthes renzii*, *Fernandezia hispidula*, *Stelis* species, and the shocking purple-pink *Elleanthus maculatus*.

Day 16

Arrive UK

If you would like to ask about any other aspect of this holiday, please call 01298 83563 or email us at enquiries@greentours.co.uk.

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