

Colombia

El Dorado

A Greentours Itinerary

Days 1 & 2 to Bogota & visit to Chingaza National Natural Park

We take off from Europe in the evening arriving into Bogota in the early hours and will head to our hotel for a few hours sleep before a busy day in the wilds of Chingaza National Park.

Botanical diversity is high and the scenery outstanding with views of the snow-capped 5400m volcano Nevado del Ruiz. The lovely orchid *Telipogon berthae* is rather common, and we'll see the red epiphyte *Fernandezia lanceolata*, dark-flowered *Telipogon falcatus*, *Telipogon yolandae* and the floriferous *Epidendrum cylindraceum*. Amongst impressive *Espeletia* species, related to the silverswords of Hawaii, are other botanical highlights such as *Lupinus bogotensis*, *Passiflora cuatrecasii*, *Cestrum buxifolium* and the pretty irid *Orthrosanthus chimboracensis*. The beautiful Andean Silverspot, its metallic silver spots glittering in the sunlight and the Brazilian Painted Lady flutter amongst the botanical mayhem! The tiny endemic Green-bearded Helmetcrest attends the flowers of the asteraceous shrub *Pentacalia ledifolia*. In the afternoon we'll visit a nearby private garden with many hummingbird feeders. Here is constant and very impressive hummingbird activity, with wonderful photographic opportunities (there are a range of flowery shrubs which they perch in near the feeders), of glorious species such as Sparkling Violetear, Black-tailed Trainbearer, Glowing Puffleg, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Great Sapphirewing, Tyrian Metaltail, White-bellied Woodstar, Amethyst-throated Sunangel, and Blue-throated Starfrontlet.

Days 3 – 5 Rio Claro

By the river we'll find Fasciated Tiger Heron with Rufous-tailed Jacamar perching in the trees nearby. Looking under the thick covering of greenery we'll find White-bearded Manakin Checker-throated Antwren, and a selection of ithomiine butterflies such as *Aeria eurimedia*, *Hypoleria lavinia*, *Ithomia celemia*, *Mechanitis polymnia*, and *Tithorea harmonia*.

The forests of Rio Claro are full of wildlife wonders. We'll visit a Golden-headed Manakin lek and watch these gorgeous birds give a fabulous performance. We'll look for the Red-billed Scythebill, a bird whose bill is certainly its most striking feature, and the Southern Bentbill and Olivaceous Flatbill, whose names tell you all you need to know about what's different about themselves. Among the butterflies are several

Heliconius species as well the orange *Euselasia candaria*. Citron-throated Toucans fly into the treetops around and as we search for them we'll come across others perched lower down; White-shouldered Tanager, Long-tailed Tyrant, Orange-billed Sparrow, White-tailed Trogon, Magdalena Antbird, a recently described endemic, and the lovely Band-tailed Barbthroat.

Sunlit clearings are alive with butterflies such as the swallowtails *Parides eurimedes* and *Parides sesotris tarquinios*, striking *Callicore lyca* and *Callicore tolima*, and lovely *Heliconius sapho* and *Heliconius hecale*. Morphos fly along tracks that cross little streams where we can see the metalmarks *Leucochimona lagora* and *Leucochimona icare* and other butterflies such as pretty *Chlosyne narva*, *Saliana longirostris*, *Historis odius*, *Pythonides grandis assecla*, the confusingly named skipper *Viola egra* and the lovely intricately patterned *Colobura dirce*.

We'll walk through the forest at dusk to a cave entrance to witness the spectacle of Oilbirds emerging, squabbling noisily before they take to the air. Here we'll also see Sand-coloured Nighthawks flying low over the river.

Day 6

Middle Magdalena Valleys to Hacienda Extremadura

After a morning enjoying more of Rio Claro's wildlife we'll have breakfast and then head off through the Middle Magdalena region into the Central Andean foothill region. We'll see roadside mud-puddling congregations of Pieridae and Papilionidae as we go and always great scenery and abundant birds.

Day 7

La Romera Reserve & Transfer to Jardín

After a night in a hotel on the edge of the vast sprawling city of Medellin head uphill to the forested reserve of La Romera. At the top of the reserve are several walls often covered in moths, including perhaps fifteen species of hawk-moths, among them beautiful green *Xylophanes chiron*, as well as *Pseudosphinx tetrio*, *Erinnyis oenotrus*, and *Enyo lugubris*. *Altinote neleus* and *Leucochimona icare* are among the butterflies we'll see here. Passing through a gate we were soon in fine habitat., Slate-throated Whitestarts flit about the oaks as we enjoy Emerald Toucanets and Andean Motmots, Gray-breasted Wood-Wren and Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager, and Red-bellied Grackles, an endemic for which this reserve is famous.

Day 8

Ventanas & Mirador El Roble

Above Jardín lies the Ventanas Pass and en route to the high ground is the Mirador El Roble. This has become globally famous among birdwatchers for feeding stations featuring antpittas, toucanets, hummingbirds, and mixed-species tanager flocks. The

lush cloud forest environment is also home to numerous high-altitude butterflies, a host of unusual moths, and an abundance of orchids. El Roble is now also famous amongst mammal watchers as it has been for the past three years or so one of the very few places with a better than even chance of seeing Northern Oncilla. We'll just be visiting for a few hours, so chances are we won't see it, but you never know, it does appear in daylight hours as well as at night. There will be so many birds to keep us occupied including White-sided Flowerpiercer, Mountain Velevetbreast, Beryl-spangled Tanager, Great Thrush and Collared Inca. Needless to say there's a number of simply glorious hummingbirds such as Buff-tailed Coronet, Lesser Violetear, Tourmaline Sunangel, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Long-tailed Sylph and Sparkling Violetear.

On the way back down we'll scan for the globally endangered Yellow-eared Parrot. There's many rather lovely butterflies in this zone too among them *Catasticta seitzii*, *Adelpha olynthia*, *Adelpha corcyra*, *Achylodes pallida*, *Castilia castilla*, *Actinote ozomene*, and the interestingly named *Hypanartia cinderella*.

Back near the hotel we'll go to a local garden has fruit feeders that attracts wonderful range of Tanagers including Flame-rumped, Crimson-backed, Blue-necked, Bay-headed, and White-lined. We'll also visit an Andean Cock-of the Rock lek actually in the town of Jardin. Lots of the locals come to see what a stunning bird (the subspecies *sanguinolentus* is a particularly striking red) they have on their door step and here they, and we, can watch watched their characteristic lekking display at close quarters.

Days 9 - 11(am)

Rio Blanco

In the morning we'll depart Jardin and follow the Cauca River Valley to the Rio Blanco Reserve. We'll make some stops en route where we'll see open country butterflies such as Thoas Swallowtail, *Catasticta notha caucana*, Julia, Zebra Heliconian, Great Southern White, *Marpesia zerynthia*, *Xenophanes tryxus*, *Eresia polina*, *Hypanartia lethe*, *Lucida lucia*, *Dismorphia medora*, *Vettius coryna*, and the lovely ithomiine *Elzunia humboldti*. Bay-headed Tanager and Squirrel Cuckoo are in the roadside trees and we'll hope for the endemic Grayish Piculet.

There are views of the snow-capped peaks of the Western Cordillera as we head south. After we've settled into our beautiful accommodation at the lovely Rio Blanco Reserve we'll start exploring, perhaps first at the lodge's hummingbird feeders which are alive with these little jewels. There's an amazing diversity - Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Lesser Violetear, Long-tailed Sylph, Bronzy Inca, Buff-tailed Coronet, and White-bellied Woodstar. Banana feeders attract Blue-winged Mountain Tanagers, Masked Flowerpiercer and White-sided Flowerpiercer, and the distinctive Bicoloured Antpitta often puts in an appearance as Dwarf Squirrel and Red-tailed Squirrels scamper around the largesse.

The birdlife at Rio Blanco is incredibly diverse. Some of the highlights will be Black-capped Hemispingus, Blue and Black Tanager, Capped Conebill, Golden-fronted Whitestart, Grey-browed Brushfinch, Black-billed Peppershrike, Rufous-crowned Tody Flycatcher, Yellow-billed Cacique, Montane Woodcreeper, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Mountain Wren, White-tailed Tyrannulet and Golden-plumed Parakeets. Mixed parties in the undergrowth are comprised of Azara's Spinetails, Streaked Tuftedcheeks, Flammulated Treehunter, Blackish Tapaculo, Pearled Treerunner, Ash-coloured Tapaculo, Oleaginous Hemispingus, Black-eared Hemispingus, and Superciliaried Hemispingus. Higher in the trees we'll spot Andean Guan, Black-billed Mountain Toucans, Green-and-Black Fruiteater, Yellow-vented Woodpecker, and the superb Rusty-faced Parrot. Slaty-crowned Antpitta is a beautiful little bird and we'll have excellent photographic opportunities of some of these lovely antpittas as the feed them regularly, notably endemic Brown-banded Antpitta and Chestnut-crowned Antpitta.

Beautiful *Morpho sulkowskyi*, such a delicate pale blue, flies regally through the forest, and other butterflies include the oddly shaped *Daedelma dinias*, and characteristic higher altitude species such as *Pedaliodes baccara*, *Paryapedaliodes drymaea atropulla*, and *Lasiophila prosymna*.

Days 11(pm) – 14(am) **Tatamá National Park & the Montezuma Lodge**

Yellow-headed Caracaras and Fork-tailed Flycatchers mark our progress as we head to the lovely Montezuma Lodge and the Tatama National Park. Here Pacific slope Choco species mix with west Andean species giving an amazing diversity.

Before we even get to the lodge you'll get a taster of the impressive butterflies to be found here. At a small streamlet are mud-puddling groups of lovely *Eurytides colombus*, the Colombian Kite Swallowtail, and another swallowtail, *Mimoides euryleon*. Others include the lovely *Siproeta epaphus*, *Adelpha Cytherea*, *Marpesia merops*, *Diaethria clymena*, *Diaethria euclides*, *Hypanartia lethe*, *Eresia datis*, *Pyrrhopyge edocla*, and the actinotes *Altinote stratonice*, *Altinote ozomene*, and *Altinote neleus*.

Within minutes of arriving at Montezuma's lodge we'll be enthralled by the amazing hummingbirds buzzing around the feeders - White-necked Jacobin, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, Empress Brilliant, Purple-throated Woodstar, Andean Emerald, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, Steely-vented Hummingbird, White-whiskered Hermit, and Green Thorntail. *Morpho helenor* flies around the lodge's grounds and we'll see *Heliconius cydno* too. Tayras can be seen in the grounds too as well as beautiful Crimson-backed Tanagers whilst Yellow-backed Orioles sing at their reflections in the windows of the rooms. Ornate Flycatcher and Golden-headed Quetzal are in the trees. In the evening the hawkmoths *Euryglottis aper* and *Pachylia darceta* visit the lodge lights.

There are so many beautiful butterflies here - *Catonephele chromis* *Fountainea nessus*, *Fountainea nobilis* and *Memphis pseudephis*, and a variety of *Adelpha* and *Heliconius*. A highlight is sure to be the *Anteros cruentatus* and *Anteros kupris*, small butterflies indeed, but with amazingly intricate patterns and amazing furry legs. We'll also attractive *Dion carmenta* was attractive and the lovely transparent satyrid *Pierella helvina* flies daintily at the forest edge, and there are some impressively large skippers such as *Astraptes anaphus* and *Euriphellus euribates*.

The lodge is situated at 1300m but the road from it allows us to reach 2300m. At the top one is in paramo with stunning views all around. Feeders placed here attract stunning Collared Incas, Tourmaline Sunangels, Buff-tailed Coronet and Velvet-purple Coronet. The rare endemic Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer is here. Away from the feeders are yet more hummingbirds with Greenish Puffleg and Rufous-gaped Hillstar.

There are many orchids with beautiful delicate flowers such as *Oncidium serpens*, *Ornithydium montezuma*, and *Maxillaria speciosa*, the latter especially impressive and common. Indeed we can expect to see around fifty species of orchid today including impressive *Epidendrum macrostachyum*, lovely *Cyrtorchilums*, whitish flowered terrestrial *Epidendrum fimbriatum*, red-flowered *Porroglossum eduardii*., reddish flowered terrestrial *Pterichis galeata*, and robust yellow flowered *Corymborchis flava*.

Bluish Flowerpiercer and White-sided Flowerpiercer thief from the flowers, and we'll see Golden-fronted Whitestart, Spillman's Tapaculo, Blue-capped Tanager, the lovely Purplish-mantled Tanager, and the recently described Munchique Wood Wren. Truly beautiful birds continue with Lacrimose Mountain Tanager, the scarce and lovely Black-throated Tody Tyrant, stunning Grass Green Tanager, and beautiful Beryl-spangled Tanager. There are birds then there are BIRDS. A number of species found up here would factor highly in any birdwatchers list of World highlights, notably the strange Toucan Barbet but especially the Ocellated Tapaculo, a strikingly beautiful bird that when it comes out of hiding really does set the shutters clicking.

The list of beautiful birds we are likely to see here is more or less endless - Tawny-bellied Hermit, Chestnut-capped Brushfinch, Brown Inca, Golden-collared Honeycreeper, Black-chinned Mountain Tanager, Handsome Flycatcher, endemic Gold-ringed Tanager and Silver-throated Tanager. At mid-levels we'll find Broad-billed Motmot, Choco Toucans, Scaly-naped Parrot and the lovely Booted Racket-tail

Between the lodge and the top of the road well over seven hundred species of butterfly have been recorded! Many species of that characteristic neotropical genus *Adelpha* will be seen during our visit. Some truly gorgeous nymphalids include *Callicore atacama*, *Callicore lyca*, *Mesotaenia vaninka*, *Agrias amydon*, *Archaeoprepona licomedes pacifica*, *Consul panariste*, *Catonephele chromis* and *Catonephele numilia*. The genus *Eresia* is well-represented with *Eresia carne*, *Eresia datis*, *Eresia ithomioides*, *Eresia polina*. We'll see Spotted *Catonephele*, *Marpesia*

merops, the hairstreak *Ocaria ocrisia*, pierids such as *Catasticta prioneris*, *Dismorphia hyposticta*, *Dismorphia lewyi*, *Dismorphia zaela*, *Leptophobia caesia* and *Leptophobia philoma*, and Metalmarks including the lovely *Rhetus dysonii*, *Mesosemia pacifica*, and several species of *Euselasia*. More attractive metalmarks are *Necyria bellona* and *Necyria duellona* were here, and there were *Fountainea nessus*, *Hypanartia trimaculata*, *Diaethria clymena*, and the 'eyed skipper' *Cyclosemia anastomosis*.

Day 14 (pm)

Fly Pereira to Villavicencio and to the Llanos at Restrepo

Villavicencio sits at the base of the eastern Andes foothills. We've a short journey to the hotel from the airport. We'll then, flight times allowing, spend some time in nearby wetlands where the abundant birdlife will ensure we enjoy our visit. Here, amongst many others, we can see Large-billed Tern, Black Skimmer, Wood Stork, Whistling Heron, Roseate Spoonbill, Amazonian Motmot, Russet-throated Puffbird, Red-bellied Macaw, Scarlet Ibis, White Ibis, Limpkin, and the extraordinary Hoatzin too. We'll find ourselves amongst the transition to the savannah- so there open areas of savannah but these interrupted by low hills and are often covered in fragmented areas of forest. Typical birds of this mosaic are Burrowing Owl, Yellow-browed Tody-Flycatcher, White-vented Plumeleteer, Scaly-naped Parrot, Golden-headed Manakin, Black-tailed Tityra and Speckled Tanager.

Days 15 – 18

The Llanos at Restrepo

Our days here will be spent exploring sections of the forest in Bosque Bavaria Natural Reserve. Bosque Bavaria is probably the most important forest in the area, protecting forest-mosaic in the foothills in the vicinity of Villavicencio to the upper part of the Chingaza National Natural Park - we'll concentrate in areas from low-elevation up to the humid tropical forests found at around 1100m, these known as the Orinoquia transition Zone. Amongst the special birds here are White-chested Puffbird, White-chinned Jacamar, Grey-chinned Hermit, White-browed Antbird, Black-faced Antbird, Yellow-billed Nunbird, Striolated Manakin and the assault on the eyeballs that is the Paradise Tanager- what a brilliantly coloured bird! There is an extraordinary variety of butterfly species found in this transect. We'll hardly know where to look and will rack up a long list of species many we will not have encountered on the tour previously. Here the 'tiger' mimic swallowtails *Pterourus menatius* and *Pterourus zagreus* fly. Mud-puddling spots might reveal the lovely kite-swallowtails *Neographium agesilaus* and the superbly elegant *Protesilaus protesilaus*. *Battus crassus* with its shimmering blue hindwing visits roadside flowers where other swallowtails include *Mimoides ariarathes*, *Parides lysander* and the striking *Eurytides dolicaon*. *Dismorphia amphione* flutters in the undergrowth along with an abundance of *Olerias*, *Dircenna* and *Godyris* species. Heliconids include some truly stunning butterflies such as *Heliconius xanthocles*,

Heliconius ethilla and *Heliconius melpomene*, but even these can hardly hold a torch to the brilliant eight-eights! There's shimmering blue and orange *Callicore lyca bella*, luminous red *Callicore astarte*, and simply mesmerizing *Callicore hesperis* and *Callicore pitheas*.

In the lowest areas we will look for the boldly-marked Gilded Barbet as well as Barred Antshrike, Little Cuckoo, Chestnut-eared Aracari, Pectoral Sparrow, Rufous-and-white Wren, and the stunningly colourful Turquoise Tanager. There are too some special birds in the humid tropical forests we'll reach at around 1000m. Dusky Spinetail, Bright-rumped Attila, Golden-tailed Sapphire, White-vented Plumeleteer, Blue-naped Chlorophonia, Orange-breasted Falcon, White-browed Antbird and Yellow-browed Tody-Flycatcher will be the highlights. Back down around our accommodation we'll likely encounter some of the shyer denizens such as Plain Thornbird, both Straight-billed and Plain-brown Woodcreepers, and at night we'll look for Black-banded Owl.

During the afternoon of Day 18 we'll fly back to Bogota.

Day 19

La Florida Marsh and Departure

La Florida is a protected remnant of the once great wetland that now hosts the city of Bogota and is a great little birding spot. Numerous waterbirds including at this season plenty of northern migrants can be seen. We'll also see Bald-faced Ibis, Southern Lapwing and Spot-flanked Gallinule. The endemic subspecies of Yellow-hooded Blackbird is common and noticeable and in the trees we can look for Black Flowerpiercer, Smokey-brown Woodpecker and the near endemic Rufous-browed Conebill. We'll spend much of the day there before going for dinner and then off to the airport for our evening departure.

Day 20

Arrive UK/Europe

Call 01298 83563 or visit www.greentours.co.uk for the report from our previous visits to Colombia. 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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