

Costa Rica – Wildlife Highlights

Accommodation: Hotels and lodges – comfortable but basic.

Photo guide: Paul McDougall

Trip Duration: 13 nights and 14 days

Trip Dates: 16th October 2028 – 29th October 2028

Trip Cost: £8,250pp (No Single Supplement)

Group Size: 5

Private Trip Cost: Available on Request

Please Note: A 15% non-refundable deposit is required at booking to secure a place on this trip.

ITINERARY AT GLANCE

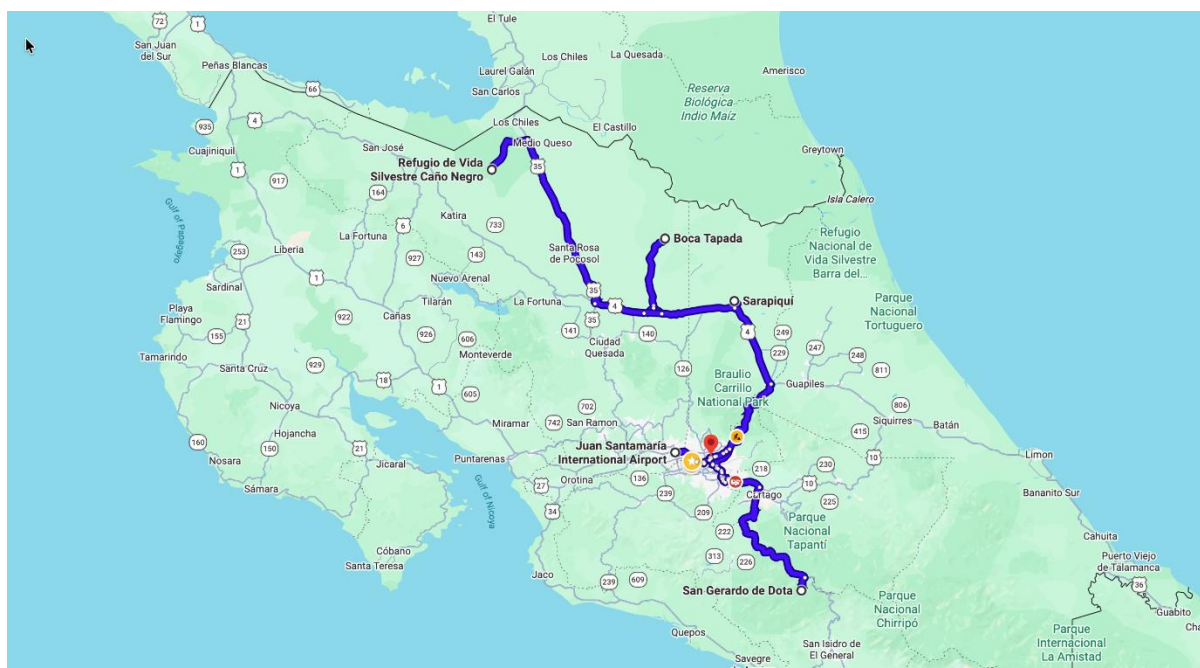
Date	Location	Accommodation	Meal Plan	Activity
Day 1	Pick up from Juan Santamaria International Airport and transfer to San Jose.	TBC	D	TRSF
Day 2	San José to San Gerardo de Dota Highland birds, hummingbirds, cloud forest atmosphere and environmental images.	TBC	B L D	HDP
Day 3	San Gerardo de Dota. Resplendent Quetzal, highland specialties, hummingbirds	TBC	B L D	FDP
Day 4	San Gerardo de Dota. Resplendent Quetzal, highland specialties, hummingbirds	TBC	B L D	FDP
Day 5	San Gerardo de Dota to Sarapiquí Toucans, aracarís, tanagers, rainforest birds	TBC	B L D	FDP
Day 6	Rainforest Bird Photography in Sarapiquí Toucans, aracarís, honeycreepers, tanagers, kingfishers	TBC	B L D	FDP
Day 7	Sarapiquí	TBC	B L D	FDP

	Macro and Nocturnal Photography Frogs, reptiles, insects, rainforest details			
Day 8	Sarapiquí to Boca Tapada Rainforest birds, arrival portraits and first opportunities for Great Green Macaw	TBC	B L D	FDP
Day 9	Boca Tapada Great Green Macaw (seasonal opportunity) Photography	TBC	B L D	FDP
Day 10	Boca Tapada Rainforest Specialties Macaws, toucans, jacamars, puffbirds, trogons, raptors and rainforest mammals.	TBC	B L D	FDP
Day 11	Boca Tapada to Caño Negro Wetland Birds	TBC	B L D	HDP
Day 12	Caño Negro Boat Photography. Jabirus, herons, storks, kingfishers, anhingas, caimans, turtles, monkeys	TBC	B L D	FDP
Day 13	Caño Negro to San José	TBC	B	HDP
Day 14	Transfer to the Airport for Flight Home		B	TRSF

B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner, TRSF –Transfer, FDP – Full Day Photography Activities, HDP – Half Day Photography Activities.

As this is a 2028 tour we cannot give exact details of the accommodation but If you want details of chosen lodges and hotels then please let me know.

Please note accommodation may be altered to an equivalent option dependent on availability.



The Core Promise

This expedition is designed around photography rather than conventional sightseeing. The route, pacing, lodge selection, transport and daily activities are planned to maximize time in the field during the most productive light and wildlife activity.

Why Costa Rica?

Costa Rica offers an exceptional concentration of habitats and species within a relatively compact country. During one journey, photographers can move from high-elevation cloud forest to Caribbean lowland rainforest and northern wetlands, creating remarkable variety without the long internal flights or extreme travel distances required in many other destinations.

The country combines extraordinary biodiversity with good tourism infrastructure, comfortable specialist lodges, experienced local guides and a strong conservation culture. For photographers, this means access to an impressive range of subjects in safe, organized and highly productive settings.

- More than 900 recorded bird species, including spectacular regional specialties.
- Outstanding opportunities for hummingbirds, toucans, macaws, trogons, tanagers, raptors and wetland birds.
- Excellent macro subjects, including frogs, reptiles, insects, fungi and rainforest details.
- Cloud forest, lowland rainforest, rivers and wetlands within one carefully planned route.
- **Private** photography sessions and specialized locations selected for image-making potential.
- A destination suitable for serious photographers while remaining comfortable and accessible.



On the ground

As always on my overseas trips I will be working with local photographers and companies that specialize in photographic opportunities. The team are not occasional visitors to the destinations: The team lives and works here year-round, maintains direct relationships with lodges, drivers, local naturalist guides, conservation projects and specialist photography locations, and continuously monitors conditions across the country.

The below detailed itinerary has been carefully put together to showcase the wildlife highlights of Costa Rica whilst maintaining a more private and exclusive atmosphere away from large crowds.

When comparing the itinerary to other itineraries please consider the following:

- Current local knowledge of wildlife activity, access, weather patterns and seasonal opportunities.
- On-tour operational management, daily coordination and flexible decision-making.
- Photography-focused pacing, with sufficient time for subjects rather than rushed sightseeing.
- Contingency planning and local problem-solving when weather, wildlife or road conditions change.



Destinations Selected for Their Photographic Value

San Gerardo de Dota — Cloud Forest and Resplendent Quetzals

Located in the Talamanca Mountains, San Gerardo de Dota is one of Costa Rica's most celebrated highland bird photography destinations. Cool temperatures, moss-covered forest, mountain light and the chance to photograph the Resplendent Quetzal create a very different visual atmosphere from the tropical lowlands.

The area also offers hummingbirds, mountain tanagers, woodpeckers, silky-flycatchers and other high-elevation species. It provides an excellent opening chapter to the expedition and introduces the group to Costa Rica through one of its most beautiful ecosystems.

Sarapiquí — Lowland Rainforest, Birds and Macro

Sarapiquí is one of Costa Rica's classic Caribbean rainforest regions and an ideal location for combining bird, wildlife and macro photography. Toucans, aracaris, tanagers, kingfishers and other colorful birds can be photographed alongside frogs, reptiles, insects, butterflies and rainforest details.

This destination adds extraordinary variety to the program. It also offers opportunities to work creatively with both natural and controlled lighting during specialized macro sessions.

Boca Tapada — Great Green Macaw (seasonal opportunity)s and Remote Rainforest

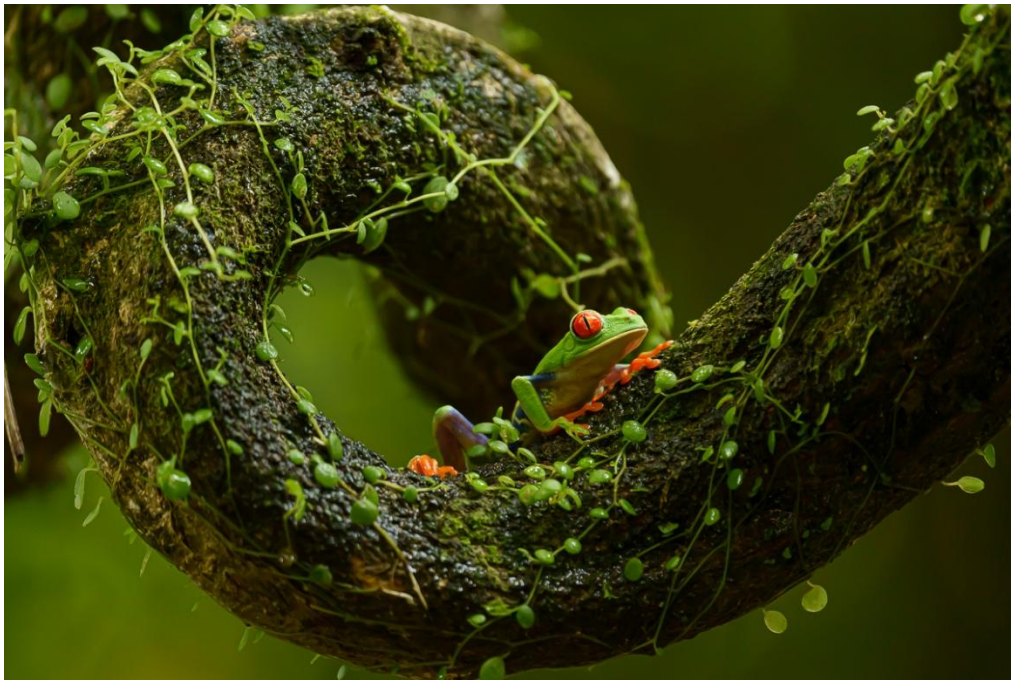
Boca Tapada is a remote and highly rewarding photography destination in northern Costa Rica. It is especially important for the endangered Great Green Macaw (seasonal opportunity), one of the signature subjects of this expedition.

The region also provides opportunities for toucans, trogons, jacamars, puffbirds, parrots, raptors and rainforest mammals. Its quieter character and specialist photography locations allow the group to spend meaningful time with subjects rather than simply passing through.

Caño Negro — Wetlands and Boat-Based Wildlife Photography

Caño Negro offers a complete change of habitat and photographic style. Boat-based sessions provide low and flexible shooting angles for waterbirds, caimans, turtles, monkeys and river wildlife.

Depending on water levels and seasonal conditions, possible subjects include jabirus, wood storks, herons, anhingas, kingfishers and other wetland specialists. Reflections, atmospheric light and open views make this one of the most visually distinctive parts of the journey.



Signature Photography Experiences

The program will be built around a collection of carefully selected signature experiences. These are not generic excursions; they are photography-focused sessions chosen for access, subject potential, background quality, light and the time available to create strong images.

- Resplendent Quetzal photography in the Talamanca cloud forest.
- Highland hummingbird and specialty bird photography.
- Lowland rainforest bird photography in Sarapiquí.
- Dedicated rainforest macro session with frogs, reptiles, insects and small subjects.
- Optional nocturnal photography session for amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates.
- Rainforest bird photography in Boca Tapada, with seasonal opportunities for iconic species.
- Specialized tropical bird photography sessions for toucans, trogons, jacamars and other rainforest species.
- Boat-based wildlife and bird photography in Caño Negro.
- Environmental and habitat photography in cloud forest, rainforest and wetland ecosystems.
- Daily field decisions based on light, weather and current wildlife activity.



Detailed Itinerary

Day 1 — Arrival in San José

Arrival at Juan Santamaría International Airport and private transfer to the group hotel in the San José area. Time to rest after the international journey and prepare equipment. Depending on arrival times.

Photography focus: Arrival, orientation and equipment preparation.

Day 2 — San José to San Gerardo de Dota

After breakfast, the group travels privately into the Talamanca Mountains. The route climbs from Costa Rica's Central Valley toward the high-elevation cloud forest of San Gerardo de Dota. After check-in and lunch, the first afternoon photography session will focus on highland birds around the lodge and nearby specialist areas.

Photography focus: Highland birds, hummingbirds, cloud forest atmosphere and environmental images.



Day 3 — Resplendent Quetzal Photography

An early start is planned to search for and photograph the Resplendent Quetzal during one of the most productive periods of the day. The group will work with local knowledge and current activity rather than follow a rigid schedule. After a midday break, the afternoon session will target hummingbirds, tanagers and other mountain species.

Photography focus: Resplendent Quetzal, highland specialties, hummingbirds and behavior.



Day 4 — Cloud Forest Photography

A second full day in San Gerardo de Dota provides another opportunity for quetzals and allows the group to explore different settings, backgrounds and subjects. Depending on conditions, the day may include feeder photography, forest edges, streams, landscapes or a focused session with selected highland species.

Photography focus: Quetzals, mountain birds, portraits, environmental compositions and cloud forest landscapes.



Day 5 — San Gerardo de Dota to Sarapiquí

Following breakfast, the group departs the mountains and travels toward the Caribbean lowlands. This transfer reveals Costa Rica's dramatic ecological diversity as the scenery changes from cool cloud forest to humid tropical rainforest. After arrival and check-in, an afternoon session will introduce the group to Sarapiquí's colorful birdlife.

Photography focus: Toucans, aracaris, tanagers, rainforest birds and lodge surroundings.

Day 6 — Rainforest Bird Photography in Sarapiquí

A full day dedicated to bird photography at productive locations selected according to current activity. The morning will focus on the best light and peak bird movement. After a midday break, the afternoon session may include feeders, forest edges, perches or river-related subjects.

Photography focus: Toucans, aracaris, honeycreepers, tanagers, kingfishers and tropical bird behavior.



Day 7 — Macro and Nocturnal Photography

The day combines bird and macro-opportunities. One session will focus on rainforest subjects such as frogs, reptiles, insects, fungi and small details, with guidance on composition, flash and creative lighting. An optional night session may be arranged when conditions are suitable, providing access to nocturnal species.

Photography focus: Frogs, reptiles, insects, rainforest details, controlled lighting and nocturnal wildlife.





Day 8 — Sarapiquí to Boca Tapada

After a final morning opportunity in Sarapiquí, the expedition continues north to Boca Tapada. This quieter rainforest region is one of the country's most important areas for the Great Green Macaw (seasonal opportunity). The afternoon session will begin exploring the lodge grounds or a nearby specialist photography location.

Photography focus: Rainforest birds, arrival portraits and first opportunities for Great Green Macaw (seasonal opportunity)s.



Day 9 — Great Green Macaw (seasonal opportunity) Photography

The day is centered on the Great Green Macaw (seasonal opportunity), using local expertise and current activity to maximize opportunities. The group will also photograph other species visiting the area, which may include parrots, toucans, trogons, woodpeckers and raptors.

Photography focus: Great Green Macaw (seasonal opportunity)s in flight, perched portraits, behavior and environmental images.



Day 10 — Boca Tapada Rainforest Specialties

A second full day allows the group to deepen its work in this rich region. Sessions may include specialist bird photography, forest-edge activity, feeders or other productive areas. The additional

time is important because it allows photographers to improve backgrounds, experiment with settings and revisit subjects under different light.

Photography focus: Macaws, toucans, jacamars, puffbirds, trogons, raptors and rainforest mammals.

Day 11 — Boca Tapada to Caño Negro

After breakfast and a final photography opportunity, the group travels west toward Caño Negro. The landscape changes again as rainforest gives way to open countryside and wetland habitats. Depending on arrival time and water conditions, the group may enjoy an introductory afternoon session near the refuge.

Photography focus: Transition landscapes, wetland birds and first river or lagoon subjects.



Day 12 — Caño Negro Boat Photography

A private boat session will explore the waterways of Caño Negro during productive morning light. The low shooting position and slow pace are ideal for photographing birds, reptiles, mammals and reflections. After a midday rest, a second session may visit another wetland area or repeat the boat experience under different light.

Photography focus: Jabirus, herons, storks, kingfishers, anhingas, caimans, turtles, monkeys and reflections.



Day 13 — Caño Negro to San José

A final morning photography session may be scheduled according to departure timing and local conditions. The group then travels privately back to the San José area. The evening provides an opportunity to relax, review the journey and enjoy a farewell dinner.

Photography focus: Final wetland subjects, travel photography and expedition closure.

Day 14 — Departure

Breakfast at the hotel, followed by private transfers to Juan Santamaría International Airport according to each participant's flight schedule

Photography focus: Departure and airport assistance.

Photography Philosophy

Wildlife photography is inherently unpredictable. Every image depends on weather, light, seasonal conditions, habitat quality and natural animal behaviour. Rather than promising specific sightings, every day of this expedition is designed around the best photographic opportunities available. Our local knowledge allows us to adapt the daily plan to changing conditions and maximize photographic success while always respecting wildlife.

Updated Signature Photography Experiences

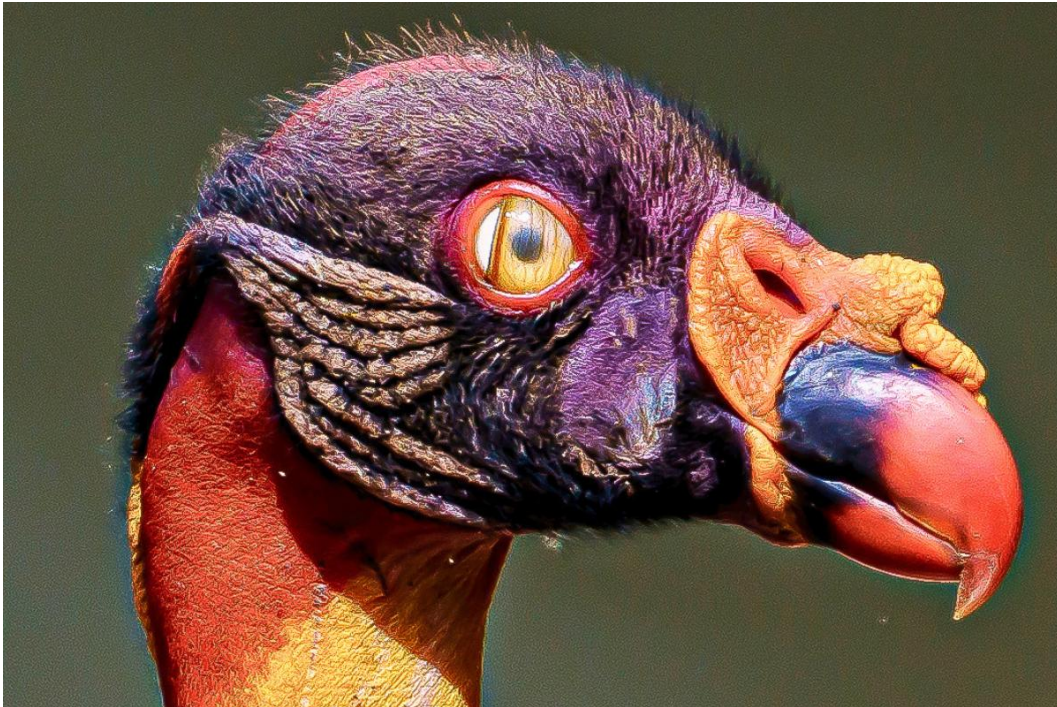
- Professional multi-flash hummingbird photography.
- Creative multi-flash bat photography at night.
- Rainforest bird photography in carefully selected locations.
- King Vulture photographic opportunities, depending on wildlife activity.
- Tropical rainforest macro photography.

- Boat-based wildlife photography in Caño Negro.
- Optional nocturnal rainforest photography.
- Two dedicated photography sessions each day planned around the best available photographic opportunities.

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Wildlife Disclaimer

Wildlife sightings, behaviours and photographic opportunities depend on weather, seasonal conditions, habitat quality and natural animal behaviour. While every effort is made to maximize photographic opportunities through careful planning and local expertise, no specific species, sighting or behaviour can be guaranteed.



What Is Included

- 14 days / 13 nights according to the proposed itinerary.
- Accommodation in carefully selected hotels and specialist wildlife lodges.
- All accommodation
- All transportation - Private modern transportation throughout the program.
- All Meals
- Private airport transfer on arrival and departure.
- Entrance fees and scheduled photography activities described in the itinerary.
- Up to two dedicated photography sessions per day, subject to travel and operational requirements.

- Local naturalist guides or specialist hosts where required.
- Applicable Costa Rican taxes and local operational insurance.
- Photography guiding throughout
- All park fees and entrance fees (where applicable)

Not Included

- International air tickets.
- Alcoholic beverages, personal purchases, laundry and other personal expenses.
- International travel or medical insurance for participants. (Compulsory for this trip)
- Camera equipment, baggage fees and airline-related charges.
- Tips and gratuities.
- Optional activities or additional private services not described in the final itinerary.
- Any services caused by flight changes, delays, weather disruption or circumstances outside the reasonable control of the organizers.

Who This Expedition Is Designed For

- Wildlife and bird photographers who value quality field time over rushed sightseeing.
- Participants comfortable with early starts, changing weather and flexible wildlife schedules.
- Photographers using Bridge, DSLR or mirrorless systems, from enthusiastic beginners to experienced image-makers.
- Guests interested in birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, macro subjects and natural habitats.
- A small private group seeking personal attention, comfortable logistics and specialist local support.

Practical Photography Notes

- A telephoto lens in the 400–600 mm range is ideal for many bird and wildlife sessions.
- A shorter telephoto zoom can be useful from boats and at close-range photography locations.
- A macro lens and compatible flash or diffuser are recommended for specialized macro sessions.
- A tripod or monopod may be useful in selected locations, although some sessions require mobility.
- Rain protection for camera equipment is strongly recommended.
- Participants should bring sufficient batteries, memory cards and a reliable backup system.
- Neutral clothing in subdued colors is preferable for wildlife sessions.
- A detailed pre-departure information pack will be provided after confirmation.