

Birding trip report Costa Rica

19th July - 7th August 2019

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Introduction

When we were planning our holiday last winter we looked for a destination with a lot of good birds, beautiful nature but also options for other activities. We never visited North or South America, so one of these continents was a serious option. While preparing some destinations, Costa Rica emerged as a very interesting opportunity. I thought this was not a possibility in (European) summer because of the rainy season, but it turned out in a very good choice! Although we did experience quite some rain, Costa Rica really proved to be a fantastic destination. Biggest advantage of going here in July and August is that it is low-season for tourism, so it's pretty quiet at most places.

We recorded a total of **374** birds, which I did not expect in advance for a semi-birding trip! We also enjoyed the mammals, reptiles and amphibians, the landscapes, the very friendly people, and sometimes even the rain!

Itinerary

	Area	Accommodation	Distance (+-)	Duration (+-)
19-jul	Arrival San Jose	Hotel Your House, San Jose	4km	10min
20-jul	San Jose - La Selva	La Selva Biological Station	85km	2h
21-jul	La Selva			
22-jul	La Selva			
23-jul	La Selva – Arenal	Arenal Observatory Lodge	100km	1:45h
24-jul	Arenal			
25-jul	Arenal			
26-jul	Arenal - Monteverde	Belcruz B&B	100km	2:45h
27-jul	Monteverde			
28-jul	Monteverde			
29-jul	Monteverde - Carara	Villa Lapas	100km	2h
30-jul	Carara			
31-jul	Carara			
1-aug	Villa Lapas - Hacienda	Hacienda Baru	125km	1:40h
2-aug	Hacienda - San Gerardo de Dota	Hotel Savegre	105km	2:30h
3-aug	San Gerardo de Dota			
4-aug	San Gerardo de Dota			
5-aug	San Gerardo de Dota - Poas	Poas Paradise	130km	3:30h
6-aug	Poas			
7-aug	Poas - Airport San Jose		25km	0:45h

General information

Tickets

Booked a flight with KLM/AirFrance. First flight from Amsterdam to Paris, and then from Paris to San José. The way back first to Paris, and further to Amsterdam. No problems with the flights, everything on time etc.

Transport

We rented a Daihatsu Terios 4x4 by Alamo via Sunny Cars. Perfect service without any problems. Well-arranged pick-up service from and to the airport, because the depot of cars is several km away from the airport. We paid € 643,- for 19 days and no extra cost for insurance.

4x4 was not really necessary most of the times but useful at some roads, especially near Monteverde and San Gerardo de Dota. However a high clearance car is recommended because of the rocky conditions of the roads.

We used Maps.me (also very helpful to prepare good birding spots etc.) and Google Maps (download the map of Costa Rica to use it offline) for navigation. We had no problems with the navigation, neither in San José and Alajuela.

Money

It's possible to pay with both colones and dollars at most places, although we paid almost everything in colones (which is cheaper in most cases). ATM's are found in every large village, not in San Gerardo and surroundings though).

Food

Most of the time simple but good food. Local food, found in sodas, consists of rice with beans, baked banana and fish/chicken/meat. At most more touristic places there are both sodas and more western food restaurants.

Weather

We visited Costa Rica in the green season / rainy season. Benefit is that it is very quiet at most places, but the disadvantage is that you can expect a lot of rain (which is also possible in the 'dry season'). I read a goof numnrt of trip reports and many of them talked about less rain in July/August, but that's not how we experienced it. We had rain almost every day, and not only in the afternoon/night. At every place we visited at least one part of the day (whole morning or afternoon) was too rainy for birding.

The temperature changed from very hot, 30-35C in the low parts to 15-20C in the higher parts. The atmosphere is very humid everywhere, but especially in the hotter parts.

Equipment

I used a Swarovski EL 10x32, very useful in dark forests. Merel used a Vogelbescherming Stern 8x30 which had a hard time in the hot and wet conditions. As photography equipment I used the Canon 7D Mark II in combination with the Canon 100-400 II. Especially the image

stabilizer is very handy in the forest, although a lot of pictures are made with a very high ISO. We always had 2 umbrellas with us when we went out, and they saved us many times of becoming soaking wet! We also brought rubber boots, and we used it very often during and after the rain on muddy trails. For searching birds, mammals and frogs in the dark we used 2 torches. A Ledlenser 7.1 and we borrowed a Fenix TK35 which was a really good torch!

As insect repellent we used a Deet 50% roller. Because of very sweaty conditions we used it more often than required, but at some places (especially La Selva, Carara and Hacienda) it was really necessary.

Sources

Books:

- Birds of Costa Rica (Garriques & Dean, 2007)

Off course the most used book during the trip. Useful, and quite good book. Sometimes I missed multiple plumages of birds, so sometimes it was hard to identify them.

- Where to Watch Birds, Costa Rica (Barrett Lawson, 2009)

Especially useful to get an idea of an area, but most trip reports were more accurate.

The Mammals of Costa Rica (Mark Wainwright)

Nice book to identify the mammals we've seen during our trip. Information is very expanded, with a lot of interesting background information.

Most used trip reports:

Tjeerd Burger, Jaap Hennevanger, Willem Wind. July and August 2015

- https://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/BURGER CostaRica 0708 2015.pdf

Oscar Campbell. July 2015

- https://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/CAMPBELL CostaRica 0708 2015.pdf

 Dick Meijer. July and August 2018
- https://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/MEIJER Costa Rica 07 2018.pdf
 Remco Hofland. December 2015
 - https://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/HOFLAND CostaRica 12 2015.pdf

We've also received a lot of recent information of friends who visited Costa Rica a month earlier. Thanks to Rob and Romy Jansen we've found several birds more easily than expected!

Accommodations

All accommodations were booked in advance, most of them via booking.com.

1. Hotel Your House

Due to our late arrival in the evening we booked an accommodation nearby the airport. Good accommodation when you want to stay near the airport. Easy to find and not too busy with traffic to reach the accommodation. Only a lot of noise because of arriving and leaving planes. Because of our very early departure next morning we got a package with breakfast, good service!

2. La Selva Biological Station

3 nights

1 night

Fantastic accommodation to stay for a birder. The cabins for the guests are about 1km north of the restaurant and reception, and both accessible by foot and car. Quite expensive for what you get (in comparison with other accommodations), but the environment is really fantastic. In 3 days we did not leave the area. The biological station has a very good trail system and is only freely accessible when you stay at the Biological Station. The area around the restaurant is full with fruiting trees and flowers that attract a lot of birds.

One free morning walk with a guide is included. We did not see a lot of birds (because of the heavy rain), but the walk was very informative and with a small group of people.

3. Arenal Observatory Lodge

3 nights

Pretty luxurious and not cheap (for our standards), but the area is definitely worth it. The best accommodation where we stayed during our holiday. The garden and trails around the lodge are totally worth to staying here. It is a fairly long drive from La Fortuna (+- 40min), so most of the times we stayed around the lodge. Breakfast is very good, and so is dinner. The Frog Pond is worth to visit several times after dinner. We found several species of frogs (including Red-eyed Tree Frogs) and snakes here. We skipped the included guided morning walk, because it was with a group of more than 30 people and just one guide.

4. Belcruz B&B 3 nights

Good B&B run by friendly owners. The cabins are more uphill then the restaurant and have a beautiful view over the valley. A few km from the village but a perfect place to reach both the Monteverde Reserve and Santa Elena.

5. Villa Lapas Hotel

3 nights

Nice resort but very deserted when we stayed here. Only accommodation with airco during our visit in Costa Rica, which was very useful in Carara because of the high temperatures. Environment of the hotel is very nice, quiet in the middle of the forest and along the river, although I didn't see a lot of birds during early morning and afternoon walks. The hotel is very well situated for visiting Tarcoles and NP Carara. However, I would opt for the Cerro Lodge (well-known for birders), which was closed during our visit.

6. Hacienda Baru Lodge

1 night

Only stayed here for one night to make a stopover between Carara and San Gerardo de Dota. Very hot temperatures and a very heavy rain shower in the afternoon/evening prevented us to see much of the area, but the lodge is beautiful. Nice swimming pool, good trail system and a great garden.

7. Savegre Hotel

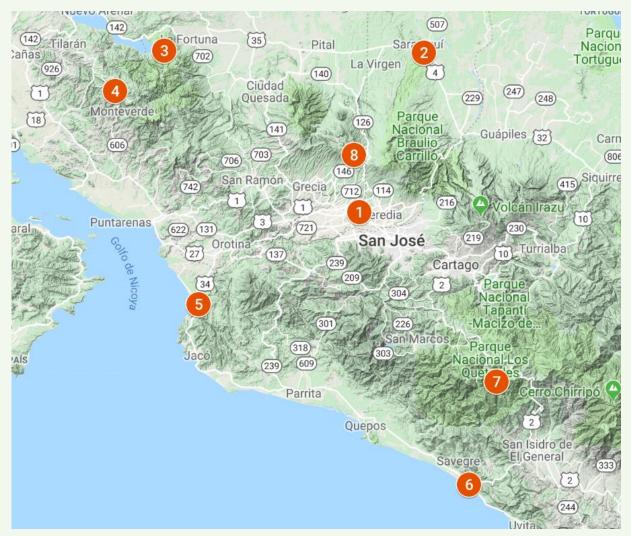
3 nights

Well known for birders because of the good location for birding. The hotel has some excellent trails uphill. Rooms are nice, although we had the worst bed of the holiday. Nice garden, with lots of birds. Only disadvantage is that the accommodation is at the end of valley along a dead-end road. So when you want to visit the areas more uphill you always have to drive the (rather bumpy) road up.

8. Poas Paradise

2 nights

Good accommodation with very friendly owners. Room was very big and luxury. Area nearby the house is not very interesting, but a nice place to stay near San Jose before leaving to the airport.



Map with accommodations



Our holiday in a nutshell. Birding in both rain and sun! (Curi Cancha)

Visited areas

On the road San Jose – La Selva Biological Station

El Tapir Hummingbird Garden

10.174670, -83.930510

Entrance: Free

Visited on our first morning in Costa Rica, on the route to La Selva. This should be one of the most reliable places to find Snowcap. Place could be difficult to find without the right coordinates, because it is not an existing hummingbird garden anymore. Fence was closed when we arrived, but you can go easily around the fence. Place is still full with hummingbirds, and one of the first birds seen was the #1 goal species of the trip: **Snowcap!** What a fantastic bird! At least one male and one female present.

Most interesting birds: Snowcap, Violet-headed Hummingbird, Crowned Woodnymph, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer



Snowcap



Violet-headed Hummingbird



Entrance of the garden (right the flowers where Snowcap was seen)

Entrance: \$10,-

After visiting the Snowcap we decided to walk the Las Palmas trail, near the Quebrada Gonzalez Ranger Station, a few km south of El Tapir. Maybe because our first experience in the forest and the dark weather we didn't see many birds. We did see our first Manakin, an immature male **White-ruffed**. A nice surprise. Most birds were seen around the parking lot, and so was our first **Three-toed Sloth** (hanging above the parking). Several species of tanagers were also present here. We wanted to walk the trail on the other side of the road, but because of our first (and not last) heavy rain shower we decided to move on.

Most interesting birds: Black and Yellow Tanager, Silver-throated Tanager, Emerald Tanager, Buff-rumped Warbler, White-ruffed Manakin.



Black and Yellow Tanager & White-ruffed Manakin



Three-toed Sloth

Donde Cope

10.21334, -83.87304

It is not a long drive from Braulio to La Selva, so we had some spare time to visit Donde Cope. We met the owner here and had no other appointments. He was not busy at that moment, so had some time for us to show the garden and take us to a beautiful piece of rainforest nearby. First we spent some time in his garden. Here we had the best feeders of the trip, with a lot of new species for us and another **Three-toed Sloth.**

Most interesting birds in the garden: Purple-crowned Fairy and White-necked Jacobin (both the only one of the trip), Bronzy Hermit, Band-tailed Barbthroat, Stripe-throated Hermit, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, Crowned Woodnymph, Palm Tanager, Montezuma Oropendola, Shining, Red-legged and Green Honeycreeper and a lot of other 'common' birds.

After visiting the garden he took us to the rainforest. We didn't know what to expect, but it was a nice excursion! He showed us our first Strawberry Poison Dart-frogs and the very cute Honduran White Bats. He does also know a nest for **Spectacled Owl** here and showed us a juvenile and 2 adult birds.

Other interesting birds seen: Streak-crowned Antvireo, Great Tinamou, Long-billed Hermit (nest).

He could also show us a roosting **Great Potoo** nearby, but we already found it by ourselves with information of friends who visited Costa Rica a month earlier. Not difficult to find when you know the exact spot (10.214, -83.862). There are 3 big trees along the road, it was roosting in the middle one.

Although the owner (Jose Perez) doesn't speak English very well, this was a very nice place to visit! We paid him \$10,- for the time in his garden and the trip to the rainforest. If you want to be sure he has time for you, contact him before (most easy by whatsapp). copeartecr.com







From top to bottom: Green Honeycreeper, Spectacled Owl & Great Potoo



Honduran White Bats

La Selva Biological Station

We stayed here for 3 nights and did not leave the area of the station. There is so much to see, you will definitely not be bored for couple of days. Morning walk with guide is included when you stay here and is very recommended. The guide was very good, although we didn't see many birds because of heavy rain all the morning.

Restaurant and Reception

10.431065, -84.003497

Around the restaurant and reception is a nice open area with a lot of flowers and fruiting trees. We have seen many birds here also while we were hiding in the restaurant for the heavy rain showers. Several species of tanagers (Golden-hooded, Dusky-faced, Blue-Grey etc.) are common in this area and we had our only Plain-coloured Tanager here. We also found White-collared Manakins around the restaurant (first time during breakfast). The trees around this place hold several species of Parakeets and Parrots and often Toucans. This is also the best spot for Snowy Cotinga, but despite a lot of efforts we couldn't find it. Look out for flying over Great Green Macaws in the early morning and late afternoon. You can't miss them, what a noise... Crested Guan was easy to find when they came down to the ground in the evening, feeding around the parking lot.

Most interesting birds: Dusky-faced Tanager, Plain-coloured Tanager, White-collared Manakin, Band-backed Wren, White-ringed Flycatcher Crested Guan, Yellow-throated and Keel-billed Toucan, Great Green Macaw, Olive-throated Parakeet, White-crowned Parrot.



White-collared Manakin



Crested Guan



White-ringed Flycatcher

Entrance Road

La Selva Biological station is normally closed when you are not a guest, except when you book an excursion. The entrance road is open for everyone, and also very interesting for birding. You can come as far as the main gate (see GPS coordinates above) when you stay elsewhere. We birded several times along this road at the middle of the day and there were always bird activity. Long-tailed Tyrant was easy to see and a Northern Barred Woodcreeper was nesting near the entrance. Around the entrance a lot of Thick-billed Seed-finches fed in the grass and we encountered many of the same species which you can expect around the restaurant. We explored this road two times after sunset, what was very productive for mammals. The electricity wires were used by several opossums and the highlight, a Mexican Dwarf Porcupine. Halfway the road, near a green fence that leads into the forest we had calling Vermiculated Screech Owls both evenings. On the wires on the road to the cabins we saw a Black-and-White Owl.

Most interesting birds: Black-and-White Owl, Vermiculated Screech Owl, Long-tailed Tyrant, Crimson-collared Tanager, White-breasted Wood-Wren



Mexican hairy dwarf porcupine

Trail to accommodation and area around the cabins 10.438502, -84.007572

The accommodation where we stayed is almost 1km north of the reception area. To reach this area you can take the car (via the entrance road) or go by foot along the trail through the forest. This trail starts behind the reception and the football field.

Along this trail **White-collared Manakin** was easily found. There were several leks (especially in the northern part of the trail), and when they are lekking you can't miss the sound. **Collared Aracari** and **Slaty-tailed Trogon** were seen several times as well as **Pale-billed** and **Cinnamon Woodpecker**. **Gray-chested Dove** and **Orange-billed Ground Sparrow** were

common on this trail in the early morning. White-necked Puffbird was seen once.

Near the cabins are a lot of flowering plants, which attracts loads of fantastic butterflies. **Violet-headed Hummingbird** and **Rufous-tailed Hummingbird** were both common here. One morning there was a young male **Black-crested Coquette** between them, quite a surprise! Don't forget to check the only big tree in front of the cabins (near the gate) when it's dark. It's full of sleeping tanagers, awesome!

Most interesting birds: White-collared Manakin, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Gartered Trogon, White-necked Puffbird, Black-crested Coquette, Chestnut-coloured Woodpecker.





Black-crested Coquette





White-necked Puffbird



88 Butterfly

Trail to the river

10.439017, -84.010516

From the cabins a road (4x4) leads to the river. This is only a few 100 meters but was productive. One time we visited this place there was a big flock of birds with **Blue-black Grosbeak**, **Red-throated Ant-tanager** and **Black-cowled Oriole** as new species. **Slaty-tailed Trogon** was also easy, and there was a nice lek of **White-collared Manakin** very close to the road. In the evening groups of **Chestnut-headed Oropendola** flew over.

Most interesting birds: White-collared Manakin, Red-throated Ant-tanager, Blue-black Grosbeak.

At this side of the river are several trails, they all start around the cabins where the researchers stay. This open area with cabins has similar species as the area around the reception. The trails are beautiful but sometimes very difficult for birding (especially during mid-day) because of the thick forest. Around the cabins and at the start of the trails several **Great Curassows** were present. Also **Green Ibis** was seen here on the ground. On the trail to the north we had our only **Tiny Hawk** (during morning walk with guide, in heavy rain) and a calling **Rufous Motmot**. During the walk we saw Honduran White Bats again. The trail to the north should be good for Purple-throated Fruitcrow. We tried it several times but without luck. Early in the morning a pair of **Rufous-naped Wood-rail** crossed over the trail, nice! From the bridge we often saw a large group of Mantled Howler Monkeys (sometimes on the bridge), **Semiplumbeous Hawk**, **White-whiskered Puffbird** and several species of flycatchers. At the end of the bridge (westside, left side of the bridge) a nice roost of Greater Sac-winged Bats is present in a big tree.

The loop-trail to the south is very beautiful and you pass several small rivers and more open areas in the forest. Because it rained a lot in the previous days the trail was inaccessible somewhere halfway and we had to return the same way. In the more open areas birding was good, with our first **Tropical Gnatcatcher**, **Wedge-billed Woodcreeper** and **Masked Tityra**.

Most interesting birds: Green Ibis, Great Curassow, Rufous Motmot, Masked Tyrant, Tiny Hawk, Semiplumbeous Hawk several parakeets and parrots.





Mantled Howler Monkey

Green Ibis



Great Curassow

Arenal

Road La Selva - Arenal

Not a very interesting road and we didn't stop anywhere, except for a big accident. From here we had the only White-tailed Kite of the trip and lots of Red-winged Blackbirds (not seen anywhere else).

Sendero Bogarin, La Fortuna

10.470339, -84.650696

Entrance: \$10,-

We went to this place on the way to Arenal, because it's well-known for the good feeders and nice trails. It's also a place where it's impossible to miss sloths I guess. When we were there the feeders were not well visited by birds, probably because they were building a new reception next to the place with feeders. A lot of noise, so not many birds around and no chance for Uniform and White-throated Crake that are often seen in the pool near the feeders. Some common birds came to the feeders, like **Palm Tanagers**, **Honeycreepers**, **Tropical Mockingbirds** and **Yellow-throated Euphonia's**.

We walked the trails, searching for birds and sloths, without a guide. We got information at the reception about a roosting **Spectacled Owl**, just after the bridge with the 'Blue-jeans Frog' sign, when you walk the trails clockwise. (I guess the number of the bridge was #8, but not sure anymore. You'll find it anyway because of the Blue-jeans Frog sign). It was indeed easily found here. We had our first **Rufous-tailed Jacamars**, **Barred Antshrikes** and our only **Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher** and **Grey-headed Chachalacas** along the trail. **White-collared Manakin** was easy, especially in the area around the entrance.

Most interesting birds: Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, White-collared Manakin.







Three-toed Sloth

Because the lodge is in the middle of the forest and has some nice trails, we spent a lot of time here. The trails are easily accessible, and especially the more open areas hold lot of birds. At the restaurant deck is a feeder, that often attracts Montezuma Oropendola's, Great Curassows, Bananaquits and Honeycreepers. In the garden lots of hummers are present, mainly Violet-headed, Rufous-tailed and Scaly-breasted. Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer and Stripe-throated Hermit were also seen here. Other birds seen in and around the garden: Yellow-throated Toucan, Collared Aracari, Blue Dacnis, Emerald Tanager, Tawny-capped Euphonia, Golden-hooded Tanager, Stripe-breasted Wren, Smoky-brown Woodpecker, Tropical Pewee, Grey-capped Flycatcher, Streak-crowned Antvireo etc. Also Coati's were seen here regularly.

There is also a good spot to see **Thicket Antpitta** around the garden. It's in the far corner of the garden where the swimming pool is. Walk from the restaurant in the direction of the swimming pool. After you passed the swimming pool there are some cabins on your left side. You reach a crossing where a car road leads to the Waterfall Trail. At this crossing (signed with Green Gate on the map of the lodge) is small green hut. We tried to see/hear it near this hut and immediately a **Thicket Antpitta** was calling. In a few minutes it was coming closer, and I hid in the bushes behind the hut. After some waiting it came very close and we had fantastic views of the beautiful bird. (10.436, -84.708)

We walked the river trail once. It's very steep and slippery, but we had some fantastic **Spotted Antbirds** on the trail. **Nightingale Wren** was singing everywhere, but very difficult to see. We also walked the Danta Waterfall Trail, in combination with the red Trail. This trail leads trough a more open are, were we **saw Yellow-faced Grassquits**, **White-collared Seedeaters** and a **Grey Hawk**. Along the Danta trail we had our only **Purplish-backed Quail-Dove** and heard a **Thicket Antpitta** again.

In the evening (after 7 pm) the Frog Pond is worth a visit more than once! We enjoyed finding Red-eyed Treefrogs here, with a max of 7 individuals. There were also some other species of frogs and toads present and a nice Cat-eyed Snake.

Most interesting birds: Thicket Antpitta, Nightingale Wren, Streak-crowned Antvireo, Blue Dacnis, Emerald Tanager, Tawny-capped Euphonia, Montezuma Oropendola, Scaly-breasted Hummingbird.







Red-eyed Treefrog

Entrance: \$27,50

Quite expensive for a 'walk with some bridges', but bird wise the trail is really worth it and we enjoyed our time here. We spent all morning and early afternoon at this place. Overall we did not see many birds most of the walk, also because of heavy rain (again) the first part of the morning, but we did see some very good ones and one very big flock with hundreds of birds. So quality instead of quantity. The first bird seen was a Rufous Motmot, low in a small bush along the trail. In heavy rain we reached bridge 1 and the only birds here were Black and Yellow Tanagers and a Black-throated Trogon. Bridge 2 is a reliable spot for Tody Motmot, but despite we spent quite some time here we did not hear/see anything. Look for tarantula in the metal tubes of the construction of the first mirador you'll pass, nice to see! Between bridge 3 and 4 we had an enormous flock of birds and despite the fact that we could follow it for a long time, I'm sure we missed species in it. However, we did find some very good birds. The flock mainly contained Wedge-billed Woodcreepers, Spotted Antbirds, Tawny-capped Euphonia's, Carmiol's Tanagers, Golden-hooded Warblers and a few Rufoustailed Jacamars and Bay-headed Tanagers. We also found some good ones, only seen here: Russet Antshrike, Slaty-capped Flycatcher, White-throated Ant-shrike, and star bird of the flock, a Blue and Gold Tanager! This is one of the best places to find this species, and luckily we found it! Back at the entrance we heard a **Thicket Antpitta**.

Most interesting birds here: Rufous Motmot, Black and Yellow Tanager, Tawny-capped Euphonia, Russet Antshrike, Slaty-capped Flycatcher, White-throated Ant-shrike, **Blue and Gold Tanager**, Thicket Antpitta.



Blue and Gold Tanager



White-throated Shrike-tanager



Hanging Bridges

Arenal Peninsula <u>10.466, -84.755</u>

Visited this place (on the middle of the day) because it is a good site for Keel-billed Motmot. We had an exact spot from an observation one month earlier, and first tried here. After a few minutes 3 motmots were calling close to the car. It turned out to be 1 **Broad-billed Motmot**, and 2 **Keel-billed Motmots**! We did not see many other birds but heard some **White-collared Manakins** along the road. We tried to reach the lake, on the other side of the dam. Also not many birds here, except for an **Osprey** and a **Hoffman's Woodpecker**. Highlight was however an Eyelash Pit-viper, what a nice snake!





Broad-billed Motmot & Eyelash Pit-viper



Keel-billed Motmot



View over Arenal Lake from Observatory Lodge

Monteverde

Road from Arenal to Monteverde

Because of the rainy season it was not possible to drive the shortcut from Arenal to Monteverde, so we drove around the lake. The road near the lake is perfect, but the roads around Monteverde are really in a bad condition. It's not possible to drive faster than 25/30km here. We didn't see many birds, although our first **Brown Jays** were seen along the road.

Reserva Monteverde

10.302552, -84.795717

Entrance: \$25,-

Visited this reserva on the first afternoon in Monteverde. Very expensive in comparison with other parks in Monteverde and in our opinion not really worth the high price. I would recommend to visit Santa Elena when you are limited in time/money. Although luck was not with us because of the terrible weather the whole afternoon, which started 10 minutes after we entered the park. We walked here for several hours and did not see many birds. However, we did see our first **Three-striped Warblers**, **Slaty Antwren** and **Prong-billed Barbets** here.

Café Colibri on the other hand, is definitely worth a visit! Entrance is free, and it hold many species of hummingbirds. Most common are the **Coppery-headed Hummingbird** and **Violet Sabrewing**, but also **Stripe-tailed Hummingbird**, **Lesser** and **Brown Violetear**, **Green Hermit**, **Purple-throated Mountain-gem** and **Green-crowned Brilliant** were present.

Curi Cancha Reserve

10.306292, -84.807437

Entrance: \$15,-

This time of the year definitely the best place to visit when you are in Monteverde (at least when we were here). Not too busy with people, nice trails and a good variety between forest and some more open areas. We visited this place two mornings, both with a lot of birds. The hummingbird garden at the rest area held at least 8 species (mostly the same as Café Colibri), but **Steely-vented Hummingbird** was only seen here. Conditions for photographing hummers were the best of the trip. This time of the year Curi Cancha is the place to search for Three-wattled Bellbird and Resplendent Quetzal.

Three-wattled Bellbird was heard easily, directly at the parking lot. Seeing them is a bit more difficult, but with some perseverance we found several in the treetops, especially in the open area near the entrance (southwest side of the reserve). Our best sighting was however in the forest, just east of the hummingbird garden along the Leo Trail. We had fantastic views of a singing male. It was here for several hours and apparantly this spot is often used by the Bellbirds.

Resplendent Quetzal was surprisingly easy. When we visited Curi Cancha they were feeding in 2 big avocado trees in the area west of the rest area. Especially along the Alondra Trail, just before Viewpoint Vista was very good (10.309, -84.805). We found several **Quetzals**, both male and females, most easy early in the morning.

We spent a lot of time around the hummingbird garden. High in the trees we had views of Elegant Euphonia and Golden-browed Chloroponia's. Slate-throated Redstart and Scarlet-thighed Dacnis were both common here. A big surprise was a Lovely Cotinga, present in one of the high trees, unfortunately just for very short time. However, the biggest surprise was an Ornate Hawk Eagle flying by! On the trails we had nice views of Black-headed Nightingale Thrush, White-throated Spadebill, Lesson's Motmot, Spotted Barbtail, Spangle-cheecked Tanager, Black-faced Solitaire, Olive-striped Flycatcher, Squirrel Cuckoo etc.



Three-wattled Bellbird



Resplendent Quetzal & Lesson's Motmot

Green-crowned Brilliant & Purple-throated Mountain-gem

Nightwalk Refugio de Monteverde

10.328778, -84.828003

Entrance: \$20,-

We booked this night walk at <u>Refugio de Monteverde</u> in the afternoon. The tour started at 8 pm. The guide was very knowledgeable and friendly, and they keep contact with other guides to share their best sightings. Because of the very strong wind we didn't found mammals (except for 1 Sloth), but the walk was still very nice! We found several sleeping birds, like **Emerald Toucanet, Lesson's Motmot** and some Hummingbirds. Also 2 Side-striped Palm Pit-vipers were found and I discovered a nice Tarantula.

Reserva de Santa Elena

10.343623, -84.796109

Entrance: \$ 16,-

Visited twice, in the afternoon and early in the morning. In the afternoon I walked the Youth Challenge trail, and in the morning we walked the Del Bajo trail in combination with the Youth Challenge trail. Most birds were seen during the afternoon visit because of the excellent weather. The morning visit was very rainy with stormy conditions. Along the trail we found some nice birds, not seen elsewhere. Slaty-backed and Ruddy-capped Nightingale Thrush were both common on the trails, so was Collared Whitestart. We also had Spangle-cheeked Tanagers, Black-thighed Grosbeaks, Black Guan, Prong-billed Barbet, Ruddy Treerunners (common), Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner and our only Barred Becard of the trip. Silvery-fronted Tapaculo was found on several spots along the Del Bajo trail. See one is very difficult, but with some patience they came very close!

The view from the observation tower along the Youth Challenge trail is excellent, with fantastic views on the Arenal Vulcano. We also got nice information at the reception of roosting **Bare-shanked Screech-owls** near the observation tower. When you walk the Youth Challenge trail clockwise, just after you passed the observation tower there's a very small trail to the left. Immediately you'll see a S-curve in the trail. Place yourself in the middle of this curve, and look to the right. They were quite high in the tree and can be difficult to find (10.342, -84.795). Ask at the reception for recent information.

Just before the entrance of Santa Elena you'll pass Selvatura Park. You can book several activities here (Merel went ziplining here) and there is a nice hummingbird garden. Mostly the same species as in Curi Cancha and Café Colibri. (entrance: \$5,-)



View on Arenal Volcano from tower



Bare-shanked Screech-Owl & Black Guan

Barred Becard & Prong-billed Barbet

Belcruz B&B

10.329400, -84.844900

We spent not much time around the accommodation, but had some nice species. During breakfast we had our only **White-eared Ground Sparrow** and **White-throated Thrush** just next to the restaurant. **Swallow-tailed Kites** were flying by frequently above the hills, sometimes accompanied with a **Barred Hawk**. Lots of parakeets and parrots were flying around here.



View from our accommodation

Carara

Tarcoles Crocodile Bridge

9.800718, -84.606049

Visited twice, on the road to Villa Lapas and on a rainy afternoon. Many tourists because of the very big American Crocodiles, but also interesting for birds. Traffic is quite dangerous and busy here, so birding isn't easy. Highlight was definitely a **Yellow-billed Cotinga**, flying over the river, seen both times we were there. We had our first **Scarlet Macaws**, **Bare-throated Tiger-heron** and **Wood Stork** here. **Bat Falcons** were present in the electricity tower on the north side of the bridge.

Most interesting birds: Yellow-billed Cotinga, Bat Falcon, Wood Stork

Main entrance Carara

9.780954, -84.606314

Entrance: \$10,-

Walked these trails once in the afternoon. Not many birds, but again some good ones. **Black-hooded Antshrike** was very easy, and also several **Bairds Trogons** were heard (difficult to see). **Black-throated Trogons** were much easier to see. At the first part of the concrete trail we had a female **Blue-crowned Manakin**. Look on the green wires along the trail for stick insects, there were a few enormous ones! This trail was also the only place where we've seen the Green and Black Poison Dart Frogs.

We also walked the dirtier loop of the trail, with as absolute highlight 2 calling **Streak-chested Antpittas**. (not the well-known tame bird along the concrete trail, we did not search for this one). They gave really a show, calling to each other for a long time. Some other species seen were some **Grey-headed Tanagers**, **Long-billed Gnatwrens**, **Plain Xenops**, **Rosy-throated Becard**, **Black-hooded Antshrike** etc.

Most interesting birds: Streaky-chested Antpitta, Blue-crowned Manakin, Grey-headed Tanager, Black-hooded Antshrike, Bairds Trogon, King Vulture.







Black-hooded Antshrike

We walked this trail twice, in the morning and in the afternoon. Officially this trail opens at 8am, and you need an entry ticket which you can buy at the main entrance a few km north (also opens at 8 am). Because of many warnings in trip reports about safety about parking your car here, we decided to wait until 8 am, and wait until a guard was watching the (small) parking lot. But it's still a shame you can't walk here (officially) with sunrise. This trail is often described as the best in Costa Rica. That's not how we experienced is, but with a lot of patience we've seen many good birds here. The trail was very muddy, so boots are recommended (and so is Deet...).

The first part we didn't see many birds, except for a **Grey-headed Tanager** and a large group of White-faced Capuchin Monkeys that acted quite aggressive to us! The best part of the trail was where the loop starts (we walked it counter clockwise). This part should be good for several Manakins, so we spent a lot of time here. We sat and wait and played some tape of Orange-collared Manakin. After a while a **Red-capped Manakin** appeared right above us, soon followed by an **Orange-collared Manakin**. To make the Manakin-party complete 3 **Long-tailed Manakins** gave fantastic views! During the afternoon walk we missed Red-capped Manakin, but the other two were easy again. Other species seen this part of the trail: **Rosy-throated Becard, White-winged Becard, Plain Xenops, White-whiskered Puffbird** etc.

At the second part of the trail (more open area, with lower trees) was not very productive, but gave us fantastic views of a singing **Black-faced Antthrush** close to the trail, as well as a **Ruddy Quail-Dove**.

Most interesting birds: Red-capped, Long-tailed and Orange-collared Manakin, White-winged Becard, Grey-headed Tanager, Black-faced Antthrush



Long-tailed Manakin

Orange-collared Manakin

Red-capped Manakin







Grey-headed Tanager

Mangrove Boat Tour

Costs: \$ 100.- for 2,5h (for 2 persons)

Booked a day before at Jungle Crocodile Safari in Tarcoles. It is not cheap, but it was definitely worth the money. We had all the target species and more. We left at 6 am before high temperatures were reached again.

On the way to the mangrove we had several waders like Spotted Sandpipers, Baird's Sandpipers, Lesser Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Plover etc. Also several species of herons (Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned Night-herons, Great Blue Heron, Little Blue Heron, Tricoloured Heron, Snowy Egret) and some Roseate Spoonbills. In the mangrove we quickly found the first Mangrove Warblers, also some nice males with a red head. Rufous-browed Peppershrike were heard frequently, and we found one very close to the boat. Main focus was on Boat-billed Heron, Mangrove Hummingbird and Panama Flycatcher. All were found quite easy. Boat-billed Heron was roosting at several places along the river, we saw at least 7 of them. What a fantastic bird! We found 2 Mangrove Hummingbirds by checking the white Mangrove Flowers above the river. Panama Flycatcher was also easily found and as a bonus we found the difficult Northern Scrub Flycatcher. Other species included Cinnamon Becard, Mangrove Vireo, Blue Ground-Dove, Lineated Woodpecker, Plumbeous Kite, Mangrove Black Hawk, Amazon and Green Kingfisher, Turquoise-browed Motmot etc. Very productive morning! Other highlights were off course the crocodiles and 2 Crab-eating Racoons foraging on crabs along the shore.



Boat-billed Heron



Mangrove Hummingbird



Panama Flycatcher



Crab-eating Racoon

We walked along the beach once which produced several waders, mostly the same as we had seen on the boat trip, but we also had American Oystercatcher, Whimbrel and Willet here, and both Wilson's and Collared Plover. A nice surprise were tens of Lesser Nighthawks, roosting between the garbage on the beach. Magnificent Frigatebirds were flying over frequently and at sea al lot of Brown Pelicans and terns were present. Both Caracara's, Northern Crested and Yellow-headed, were common here.





Lesser Nighthawk

Tricoloured Heron, White Ibis & Snowy Egret

Villa Lapas

9.756561, -84.611436

Did some early morning and afternoon birding around Villa Lapas. There is a nice trail along the river. **Chestnut-backed Antbird** was very easy here and there were many **Long-billed Hermits** singing in the forest. **Slaty-tailed Trogon** was seen at the end of the trail, near the river. **Dusky Antshrike** and **Rufous-backed Wren** were also both easy here. Also the only place where we had **Fiery-billed Aracaris**.



View on Carara rainforest

Hacienda Baru Lodge

Hacienda Baru Trails

9.271454, -83.881055

Stayed here only for one night. Because of very hot weather and heavy rain in the afternoon we didn't have much time left for some good birding. We decided to walk the Lookout Trail via the Pizote Trail. Along the Lookout Trail Red-capped Manakins were seen lekking, and although we already saw them nice in Carara, Manakins never get boring! The trail was very steep and muddy, but the Red-capped Manakins were found easily. We saw them lekking the moonwalk, what a fantastic birds! (9.264, -83.870). At the same place a Little Tinamou was calling frequently. Along the Pizote Trail we found several Orange-collared Manakins, a Black-hooded Antshrikes, Chestnut-backed Antbirds and Olivaceous Piculet, Riverside Wren and another Streak-chested Antpitta calling. We couldn't locate it, because it's started raining cats and dogs for the whole afternoon. Early morning I walked Chirincoco Trail, with Black-crowned Tityra, Red-crowned Woodpecker and Black-bellied Wren as new species. Finsch's Parakeet was common in the whole area. In the garden we had our only Charming Hummingbird. When it started to be very hot again, there were many of Black and Turkey Vultures in the air. With some search we found at least 3 King Vultures between them.

Road Hacienda – San Gerardo de Dota

San Isidro 9.351, -83.685

Thanks to last-minute information of my twin brother, who found a good spot for Turquoise Cotinga on Ebird, we paid a short visit to San Isidro. It is just a small detour on the road to San Gerardo. The location was found quickly, and so was the cotinga! Only a few seconds after our arrival, a **Turquoise Cotinga** flew by, and gave fantastic views in the treetops along the road. At least 3 birds were present here.



Turquoise Cotinga



Turquoise Cotinga Spot (in trees on both sides of the road)

Nice place to have a stop for coffee, with some nice feeders and a beautiful garden. All species seen here were also seen at other places, but because this was our first stop at high altitude, almost everything was new for us. Several hummingbirds were present like Talamanca, Fiery-throated and Volcano Hummingbirds. Also the first Yellow-thighed and Large-footed Finch, Hairy Woodpecker, Sooty Thrush, Slaty Flowerpiercer and Long-tailed Silky-flycatchers were present in the garden.

Most interesting birds here: Talamanca, Fiery-throated and Volcano Hummingbirds, Longtailed Silky-flycatcher, Large-footed Finch







Fiery-throated Hummingbird

Savegre Hotel

Nice garden and forest patches around the accommodations, with many birds! Silver-throated and Flame-coloured Tanager were both common in the garden, and at the flowers a Slaty Flowerpiercer was often present. The feeders did not attract many birds, but White-throated Mountain-gem, Talamanca and Volcano Hummingbirds were frequently seen, and one time I found a Scintillant Hummingbird between them. Long-tailed Silky-flycatchers were present sometimes, especially early in the morning. In the forest patches several flocks were present with mainly Sooty-capped Bush-tanager, but every flock had also Flame-throated Warblers, Black-cheecked Warblers and Yellow-winged Vireos. Near the apple orchard more uphill Yellow-bellied Siskins were common. At one of our visits a fantastic male Resplendent Quetzal was present here. In the evening large groups of Barred Parakeets were seen flying over.

Most interesting birds here: Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher, Resplendent Quetzal, Scintillant Hummingbird, Yellow-bellied Siskins



Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher



Silver-throated Tanager

Trails Savegre

We focussed mainly on the La Quebrada and the short Los Pioneros Trail. You can reach the start of the trail by car (4x4) which saves you a steep climb of 1,5km. Along this trail we had several large flocks, with a good variety of species. Sooty-capped Bush-tanagers, Collared Whitestarts, Flame-throated Warblers, Black-cheecked Warblers, Spot-crowned Woodcreepers and Ruddy Treerunners were present in every flock. One time we had a Buffy Tuftedcheek in a flock. Once we found a pair of Spotted Wood-Quails along the trail, with very good close views! We searched especially for Wrentrush along the La Quebrada Trail and heard them quite easily in the part of the trail where you walk along the small river. It was very hard to localise them because of the sound of the river, so we walked 50/100m along the Los Robles Trail to localise the birds. From here we had fantastic views, but with a lot of patience. What a difficult birds to see in the dense undergrowth! Some other birds seen along the trail: Brown-capped Vireo, Chestnut-capped Brush-finch, Black Guan, Black-billed and Ruddy-capped Nightingale-thrush, Ochraceous Wren, Black-faced Solitaire, Collared Trogon and Black-capped Flycatcher.

Most interesting birds here: Spotted Wood-Quail, Wrenthrush, Buffy Tuftedcheeck, Chestnut-capped Brush-finch.







Wrenthrush



Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush



Buffy Tuftedcheek

Very nice restaurant, with excellent feeders. All species seen here were also seen elsewhere, but had fantastic views of them here, and good photo opportunities! Worth a visit for an hour or so on your way to Savegre (or back to the main road). Highlight was definitely a young male Resplendent Quetzal, present for a minute with fantastic views!

List of other good species seen here: Hairy and Acorn Woodpeckers, Emerald Toucanet,

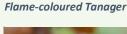
Large-footed and Yellow-thighed Finch, Fiery, Talamanca and Volcano Hummingbird,

White-throated Mountain-gem, Flame-coloured Tanager, Slaty Flowerpiercer, etc.





Resplendent Quetzal







Volcano Hummingbird

White-throated Mountain-gem





Yellow-thighed Finch

Acorn Woodpecker

Providencia Road and Paraiso Quetzal Lodge

9.614180, -83.817912

Drove and walked along this road two times. The road is very nice, with fantastic cloud forest, although birding was very difficult when we were here. Sometimes a flock flew over the road, and never seen back. With a lot of patience we found some good birds. A noisy **Timberline Wren**, an **Ochraceous Pewee** and the most wanted **Black-and-Yellow Silky Flycatcher**.

Paraiso Quetzal Lodge should have some very nice hummingbird feeders, and good photography options, according trip reports and friends of us who were here a month earlier. When we were here is it was big deception. There was only one feeder (nearly empty) and not in a good position for pictures. When I asked whether they could maybe fill some feeders, or they could hang the feeder at a better spot, I was completely ignored. So we left this place and decided to walk the trail downhill. Another deception, because it was closed halfway and we had to walk the same way back. Only highlight was a nice **Collared Trogon** here.

Radio Tower Cerro de la Muerte

9.554384, -83.755351

Visited this road twice to search for Volcano Junco, Timberline Wren and Peg-billed Finch. First time in very bad weather conditions (rain, wind, misty) and we could only find some **Volcano Juncos**, close to the car. Second visit the weather conditions were better. From time to time misty and rainy, but dry most of the time. **Volcano Junco** is easy everywhere along the road, especially at the top. **Timberline Wren** was found along a small walking trail, near the start of the road to the top (9.565, -83.752). **Peg-billed Finch** was found at the top, but in heavy rain again. Not a lot of other birds here, although **Sooty Thrush** and **Volcano Hummingbird** were both common here.

Most interesting birds here: Volcano Junco, Timberline Wren and Peg-billed Finch.





Volcano Junco Timberline Wren

Poas Region

The last day of the trip we stayed in the area of Poas, not too far from the airport. From here we visited the Poas Volcano and La Paz Waterfall gardens. We stayed in Poas Paradise, which was not very interesting for birds. 'Highlight' at the lodge was our first earthquake ever (5.1) but luckily without any damage in the area.

La Paz Waterfall Gardens

10.204413, -84.161417

Entrance: \$45,-

Very expensive, so we were in doubt for a long time we should really visit the park. We didn't know what to do else for a whole day in the region, and the good hummingbird garden sounds very attractive. And that was not a disappointment! With 11 species of hummers the best hummingbird garden of the trip. Green Thorntail and Black-bellied Hummingbird were only seen here, and both the most common of this feeders. White-bellied Mountain-gem was only seen here and near Chincona. Other species: Lesser and Brown Violetear, Violet Sabrewing, Green Hermit, Purple-throated Mountain-gem, Green-crowned Brilliant, Coppery-headed Emerald, Talamanca and Rufous-tailed Hummingbird. La Paz is also a zoo, with only resident species from Costa Rica. We shortly visited the mammals, snakes, birds, frogs etc. but I prefer the wild animals.

The park is situated nicely in the rainforest, and there are some nice trails. We had **Smoky-brown Woodpecker** and **Olive-striped Flycatcher** and our only **Sooty-faced Finch** as most interesting species along the trails. When you walk the trail along the waterfalls a bus will bring you back to the main entrance.

We spent almost 7 hours in the park, so it was worth the money (but still expensive).

Most interesting birds here: Black-bellied Hummingbird, Green Thorntail, White-bellied Mountain-gem, Sooty-faced Finch









Black-bellied Hummingbird & Brown Violetear

Green Thorntail & Smoky-brown Woodpecker

Entrance: \$15,-

Because of a big eruption of the volcano it's not possible anymore to go here on your own. You have to book in advance and buy a time slot. We decided on the very last. Most of the time, the crater is covered with clouds. However, when we booked there were no clouds. We were very lucky, because 10min after we reached the crater clouds were closing in again, and the view was misty. Birding is difficult, because you've only 45min to walk to the crater, enjoy the view and walk back. Best bird here was a female **Peg-billed Finch**, close to the crater. View is fantastic by the way!



View on Poas Crater



10min later...

Visited twice, hoping for Red-headed Barbet (but failed). Good restaurant, with nice feeders. Not a lot of birds in this time of the year, but some good species. **Prong-billed Barbet**, **Emerald Toucanets** and **Blue-grey** and **Silver-throated Tanagers** were regular visitors of the feeders. Several hummingbirds were feeding here, like **White-bellied Mountain-gems** and **Brown Violetears**. A **White-naped Brushfinch** was our last new species of the trip. We also visited a nice patch of rainforest north of Chincona (10.261, -84.173) with species as **Bay-headed** and **Crimson-collared Tanager**, **Black Phoebe**, **Tufted** and **Yellowish Flycatcher** etc. Near a look-out along the road we had our only **White Hawk** of the trip.



White-bellied Mountain-gem



Bay-headed Tanager



White Hawk



Emerald Toucanet

Maps of trails

Map 1: Trails La Selva Biological Station



- Red: Accomodation

- Blue: Restaurant / reception

- Orange: Entrance road

- **Green:** Area west of the bridge

Map 2a: Trails Arenal Observatory Lodge

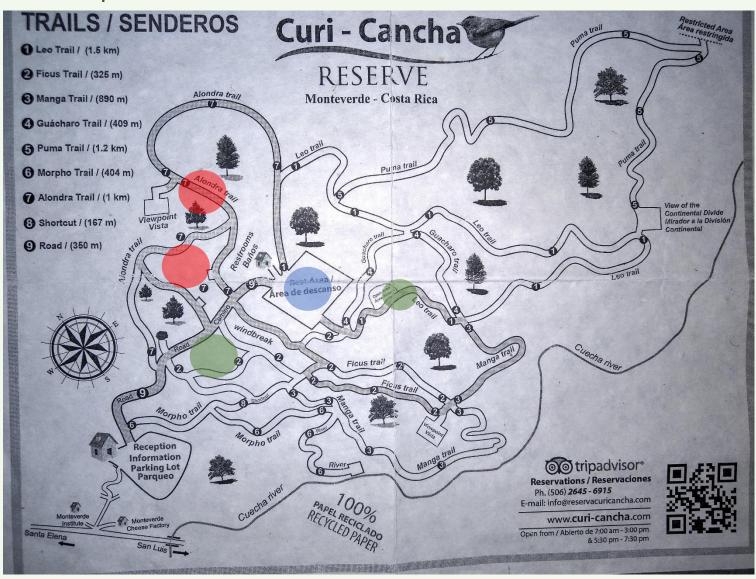


- Red: Thicket Antpitta

Map 2b: Trails Arenal Observatory Lodge



Map 3: Curi Cancha

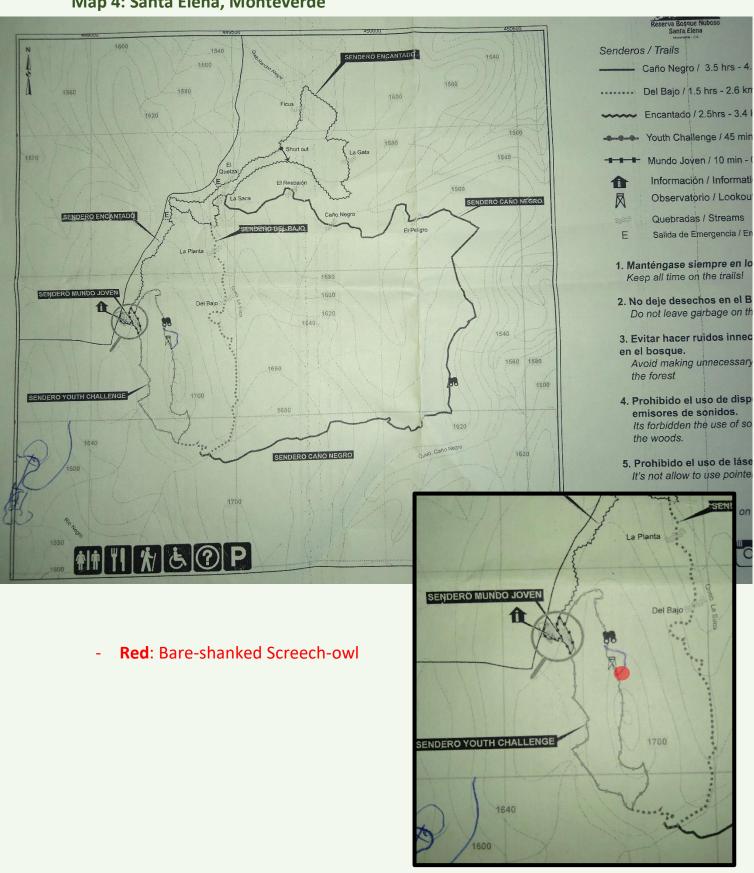


- Blue: Hummingbird Garden

- Red: Best area for Resplendent Quetzal

- Green: Best area for Three-wattled Bellbird

Map 4: Santa Elena, Monteverde



Map 5: Carara, River Trail



- **Red:** Best part of the trail, 3 species of manakins here. (Maps.me)

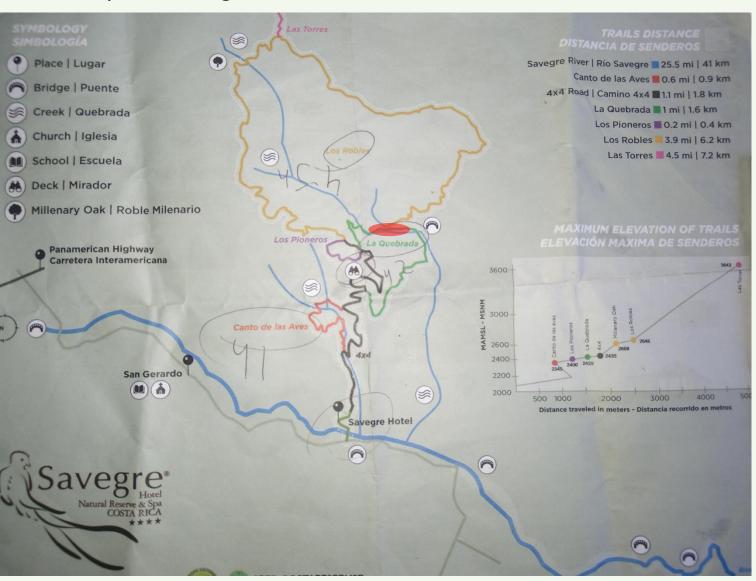
Map 6: Trails Hacienda Baru Lodge



- Red: Red-capped Manakin

- **Orange:** Orange-collared Manakin

Map 7: Trails Savegre Hotel



- Red oval: Best part of the trail for Wrenthrush