

Departments of *Vaupés, Chocó, Risaralda, Santander, Antioquia, Magdalena, Tolima, Atlántico, La Guajira, Boyacá, Distrito Capital de Bogotá, Caldas*

These comments are provided to help independent birders traveling in Colombia, particularly people who want to drive themselves to birding sites rather than taking public transportation and also want to book reservations directly with lodgings and reserves rather than using a ground agent or tour company.

Many trip reports provide GPS waypoints for navigation. I used GoogleEarth/Maps, which worked fine for most locations (not for El Paujil reserve). I paid \$10/day for AT&T to hook me up to Claro, Movistar, or Tigo through their Passport program. Others get a local SIM card so that they have a Colombian number (cheaper, for sure); still others use GooglePhones, which provide connection through other providers with better or worse success, depending on the location in Colombia. For transportation, I used a rental 4x4 SUV to reach places with bad roads but also, in northern Colombia, a subcompact rental car as far as Minca (hiked in higher elevations, with one moto-taxi to reach El Dorado lodge) and for La Guajira. I used regular taxis on few occasions. The only roads to sites for Fuertes's Parrot and Yellow-eared Parrot could not have been traversed without four-wheel drive and high clearance, and this is important to emphasize: vehicles without these attributes would have been useless, or become damaged or stranded. Note that large cities in Colombia (at least Medellín, Santa Marta, and Cartagena) have restrictions on driving during rush hours with certain license plate numbers (they base restrictions on the plate's final numeral). So this law restricts where you can go when. The fines are substantial for violations. Your rental agency will patiently explain all of this to you. They should have print-outs and key-tag reminders as well. If driving oneself, it's important make sure that the overnight lodging has some kind of place for parking that is protected (even guarded)—and also to make sure that there will always be staff present, at the lobby or lot, who can unlock the parking area early in the morning for you. Not all hotels (even the expensive ones) have 24-hour desks.

Driving in Colombia can be serious business. For veterans of driving in Latin America, including the Caribbean, it will not seem daunting. But in the course of 43 days there, I saw 12 bad accidents, with half definitely having fatalities at the scene. A few were really bad (including a totaled bus). Passing on blind curves, in heavy fog/cloud/rain, is common behavior, and surely this contributes to danger on the roads. Motorcycles do as they please, assuming that drivers will both see and avoid them but themselves conforming to no discernible rules of the road. Buses seem almost thirsty for accidents with cars—treat them as you might a large, unpredictable wild animal and give them a wide berth whenever possible. Bus drivers are no more courteous to car drivers than are motorcyclists. Truck drivers do seem to follow rules of the road more than others, but they will also pass on blind curves. Defensive driving, and being alert at all times for other drivers' behaviors and for sudden changes in road conditions (landslides are common, changes in road surface types also common), is a must. Places to pull off the road are often non-existent in mountainous areas but also in valleys, so always bear in mind what the strategy for accident avoidance might need to be. The lack of pull-outs also has an impact on birding strategies and is a good reason

to have a local guide or birder with you in many areas (see notes below). Roads are often 1-vehicle width, and that includes roads that are the link between fairly large cities; so going slowly, staying vigilant for oncoming vehicles, and always being prepared to stop quickly and back down into a (narrow) pullout is important. Most drivers on the narrowest roads are highly cooperative. I had only 1 flat tire in six weeks, which would be excellent in much of Latin America in my experience. There are many places in towns and cities where you can get your tire repaired. But check to make that you have a full-sized spare tire and jack and tool kit, plus 2 red traffic cones (required), before you take possession of a rental vehicle. It doesn't hurt to have a reflective vest in your kit in case you're doing the tire changing on the road. Driving at night is to be avoided when possible; in addition to rapid changes in road conditions, livestock often wander into roadways, and drunk driving appears to be not uncommon.

I believe that contributing to the local eco-tourism economy is vital for habitat preservation, and I hope that belief is accurate. So even in areas where guides were not required, I tended to hire someone. I always tipped, even though the culture isn't really a tipping culture; and I often bought guides a beer or two or a good meal. I know that there are many good reasons to economize when traveling, but this trip was not about seeing the greatest number of species for the lowest dollar. The goal was to get to know the birds well, and so I went to many sites that had similar avifauna. Lodgings varied greatly, though one common theme is that hot water in bathrooms was rare. I stayed in places that were clean and quiet (almost all the time) rather than noisy and bedbug-infested (just once for that). In some cases, that meant paying US rates, but in others, perfectly lovely places that were clean and quiet cost just \$8US per night. Contact numbers and people change frequently; almost all of the information in online sources was outdated (a big reason for providing this trip report).

Guides also varied quite a bit. In some cases, I knew more about certain species, or families, than my guide. In these cases, I tried to point out what I knew in a helpful way, without becoming in effect a trainer (and thus missing out on 'birding' itself). Guides were all younger than myself, ranging in age from 17 to 35. None were professionals in the way that many European or US people might conceive, but several were licensed by the government as guides, thus 'professionals' on paper in Colombia. In any case, all of them added to the experience by spotting birds (many of which I would have missed) and providing much information on the culture of their corners of Colombia. None spoke English, really; nor did 99% of the hotel/restaurant/shop workers I encountered. Having some working Spanish is still vital for the independent traveler to Colombia. I traveled alone in some cases but also with friends for the Amazon and areas north of Medellín. My spoken Spanish is poor, but I understand others fairly well. Make sure in all cases, no matter how pleasant, you have a quote on pricing from your guide, or from any vendor you're dealing with. Ask that they write it in a small notebook for you. That way, there is no possibility of misunderstanding or gauging. Do this also for people who provide transportation. Online courses in Colombian Spanish vary in quality. I took one that helped me a great deal, but it focused mostly on youth culture.

My basic strategy in birding abroad includes a few principles: 1) always be in position very near or inside good/prime habitat before dawn; 2) use the heat of the day for travel/repositioning/errands unless at altitude, then bird all day when feasible; 3) if travel is necessary to reach a morning destination, scout the route the evening

beforehand, so that the route and especially the road conditions are already well known; 4) always bird at dusk and into darkness. I kept to these principles with one exception. I used mostly trip reports and the information in them. The directions in the book *Birdwatching in Colombia* are typically either deficient in key specifics (at best) or erroneous (in many cases); and the book is now well outdated in most respects. One appreciates the effort nonetheless, and I took it along to see if critics were correct (they were). A visiting birder should not show up with the book and expect to use it to locate birding sites. Study the sites via GoogleMaps in detail via online trip reports. Even using eBird “Directions” will be much better than the book, but a strong cell signal is never guaranteed, even in larger cities.

Credit cards can be used on rare occasions at larger hotels in larger cities and occasionally at city gas stations such as Terpel. ProAves reserves also accept credit cards when you make full payment in advance in reserving rooms there. Otherwise, cash is king here. Even smaller towns can have an ATM, but don't count on it. Keep a good supply of cash (\$500US or more) on hand. WhatsApp is often used by Colombians. Download and use it.

Travel in Colombia involves frequent stops to pay tolls on major roads. These are surprisingly expensive (average 12,000COP), but generally these main roads are in good condition. There are few bypasses; major roads pass through numerous small villages and hamlets, many of which have probably sprung up in response to the building or improving of the road. Hawkers abound where traffic slows, and in larger cities, those pesky windshield washers can be aggressive. Have plenty of coins on hand if you'd rather just go with the flow. During Carneval (early March), road blocks are common, with celebrants requesting a tip for dancing or dressing in drag or blackface or whiteface, etc. Best to just give them coins rather than risk getting the vehicle scratched.

Food in Colombia is basic but nourishing, and portions can be generous. The arepas are not as good as Venezuela's except in Norte de Santander (where they make them like Venezuelans). Don't count on being able to “pop in” to a gas station market for food or other supplies; most gas stations have no stores associated with them (they do in larger cities increasingly). Best to stock up in grocery stores and markets.

Birding is excellent overall in Colombia, but in many places, you'll need to budget extra time—especially places where heavy rains are likely (even during the “dry” season, “verano”, which means summer but refers to any local time of year that is dry). If you have a good guide, that will cut the amount of time you'd need to spend looking for the more difficult species, of course, but even a good guide can't make it stop raining. Rushing through certain places, or not having an extra day's “padding” here and there, can mean you simply miss out. That's true anywhere with tricky roads, frequent landslides, traffic jams, and accidents, but Colombia's rich avifauna takes time to see well and learn well. My weeks were a mere introduction to the lay of the land. If I had to plan it over again, I would have budgeted one or two more days for the higher reaches of the central Andes (Termales del Ruíz and Termales San Vicente area; Camino Nacional out of Salento), where I lost some time because of illness and road problems.

The bottom line: I absolutely adored Colombia and Colombians. I cannot wait to return. The birding is excellent, but the hospitality is as good as it gets. Go—soon.

Day 1, Thursday, 3 January

Air travel from Norfolk, Virginia, over Miami, Florida, to arrive Medellín by 14:30. Rented a TrailBlazer (4x4) from Localiza **but made the reservation through partner Hertz**, which saved about 25%. Cost was still nearly \$100US/day. Important to have the Hertz paperwork in hand (printed), **with the quoted rate**, as Localiza claims to have nothing in their computer system regarding the price from Hertz (they say this is normal; I find it almost beyond belief).

Hacienda La Extremadura was an excellent lodging with good food (and a few common birds on the grounds). The price was high for Colombia, but I wanted something near La Romera for the next morning. Other birders were staying there as well (private group with Manakin Tours). My contact in reservations for this property was Laura Londoño. Very smooth process throughout, in contrast to many Colombian properties. I was able to pay by credit card at check-in. No deposit required. The décor is very much as one would see in Extremadura, Spain, and that is where the original hotelier came from. The manager, Mónica González, was

Night at Hacienda Hotel La Extremadura

Rate: 1 night at about \$100US

Street address: Carretera 32 N, 71 Sur 220 interior 127, Sabaneta

Phone: +57 (4) 378-0218

Cell phone: +57 316 282-3630

Email: reservas@laextremadura.com or gerencia@laextremadura.com (Mónica)

Web: <https://laextremadura.com>

Day 2, Friday, 4 January

Parque Ecológica La Romera at dawn. Navigation there using GPS points in other trip reports without problem using GoogleMaps. Arrived predawn and birded the gully from below the entrance arch to about 800 m above it, where the habitat ends. Red-bellied Grackles, Sickle-winged Guans, and Stiles's Tapaculo quite easy. Yellow-headed Manakin not detected. Work on the archway area suggests that perhaps a fee and attendant will be there in the future. A caretaker arrived promptly at 06:00 to open the locked gate there.

I then drove then 1.7 hours to **Bolombolo** area, where I had added many GoogleMaps sites in Favorites from various trip reports. Navigation was not problematic, but the intense heat (100F+) meant I could not find Grayish Piculet or Apical Flycatcher. Also, very difficult to park along the roads in this area and essentially impossible in many of the specified locations from others' trip lists. Antioquia Wren was calling in one arroyo, so at least that endemic was detected. In the afternoon, I drove the rest of the way to ProAves reserve **RNA Las Tangaras**, about 3 hours including brief stops. I used 5.852194, -76.180105 for navigation to the lodge there, which worked well. Watch for the very modest entrance road just after the bridge on the left. I had paid for two people (\$360US) for two nights, including meals. My buddy dropped out last minute and I wasn't able to get a refund, so this ended up being the most expensive property during the six weeks I was in Colombia. My contact was Elizabeth Salaman,

but she stopped working in November 2018 and was replaced by a new reservations manager named Piedad, who was reachable for several weeks via WhatsApp (but did not reply after January on that line) and remained reachable via email. Nice set of hummingbird feeders with common species on the lodge property; another set of feeders is maintained at the ridge (different species here). It seems that in the case of most remote lodges, one rarely speaks directly with the staff on site; rather, the contact people are in a main office in a city somewhere.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S51293949>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52403340>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52403779>

Night at Las Tangaras

Physical location of lodge: 5.852194, -76.180105

Phone: +57 310 352-1461

Contact for payment: Piedad via WhatsApp at +57 315 434-7780

Rates: \$360 for two nights, all meals starting with dinner (rate for 2 people)

Email: visit@conservation.co

Web: <http://www.proaves.org/las-tangaras-bird-reserve/?lang=en>

Access: No restrictions; public road and trail birding

Guiding: Optional; for no extra charge, the forest guard will accompany guests; he has only Spanish but knows the 'target' birds pretty well and the trails very well. He is married to the manager of the property, who also does the cooking. I tipped them each 50,000COP on my last day there, and their reactions suggested that this was generous.

Day 3, Saturday, 5 January

All day birding **Las Tangaras** main trail with accompaniment of forest guard; the lodge delivered us a hot lunch directly while we were on trail. Highlights included 5 Black Solitaires, Choco Vireo, Handsome Flycatcher, Flavescent Flycatcher, Beautiful Jay, Purplish-mantled Tanager, Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager, Black-and-gold Tanager, Crested Ant-Tanager, Gold-ringed Tanager, White-headed Wren, Yellow-collared Chlorophonia, Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia, Club-winged Manakin, Toucan Barbet, Tooth-billed Hummingbird, Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Tatama Tapaculo, Nariño Tapaculo, Fulvous-breasted Flatbill, Crested Quetzal (heard), Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner, Buffy (Pacific) Tuftedcheek, Uniform Treehunter, Streak-capped Treehunter, Fulvous-dotted Treerunner (2), Empress Brilliant, Brown Inca, Purple-throated Woodstar, Rufous-gaped Hillstar, Violet-tailed Sylph, Velvet-purple Coronet, Booted Racket-tail, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, Dusky Chlorospingus, Bronze-olive Pygmy-Tyrant, Black-billed Peppershrike, Uniform Antshrike, Rufous-rumped Antwren, Rufous-throated Tanager, Tricolored (Choco) Brushfinch, White-naped Brushfinch, Olive Finch, Dusky Piha, Olivaceous Piha, Indigo Flowerpiercer, Glistening-green Tanager, Sooty-headed Wren, Striolated Manakin.

Missed were Bicolored Antvireo (difficult), Yellow-breasted Antpitta, Yellow-breasted Antwren, Yellow-vented Woodpecker.

Although not quite as spectacular as birding at Montezuma, this was fine birding. Twelve mixed flocks in 2.6 km of trail birding, with relatively few lulls in the action. Plenty of furnariids, and I'm sure I missed identifying some good ones because of inexperience and quick looks. The trail is no longer a loop, as a massive landslide occurred a few years back, but it's still a very good trail. There is also a very steep trail above the hummingbird feeding station that I checked out briefly on the second day. No signs of Spectacled Bear during the stay. Crab-eating Fox was common.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52404352>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52405092>

Night at Las Tangaras.

Day 4, Sunday, 6 January

Morning birding (alone) at Las Tangaras. Depart late morning for Jardín area (2.5 hours). Afternoon visit to **RNA Loro Orejiamarillo** (Yellow-eared Parrot reserve) area.

The morning birding added Black-cheeked Mountain-Tanager, a nice male Green Thorntail, Red-bellied Grackles, Black-throated Tody-Tyrant, Golden-headed Quetzals, plus more looks at the higher-elevation hummingbirds, Booted Racket-tail, Violet-tailed Sylph, Greenish Puffleg, Brown Inca, Velvet-purple Coronet, Purple-throated Woodstar, Rufous-gaped Hillstar, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, and the very fine Empress Brilliant. It's nice to have this extra morning for greater familiarization with the birds at this elevation and moving some birds from the "heard only" to the "ahhh" category (such as Uniform Antshrike, Sooty-headed Wren here).

I had planned in early afternoon to check Andean Cock-of-the-Rock lek on edge of Jardín and also to look for Blackish Rail nearby. Time had gotten tight, and I scrapped both plans after getting settled at the Hotel Campestre El Cielo Jardín (no reservations, and I got their last room; they are now an eco-hotel, a popular theme, along with 'boutique,' but these sobriquets mean almost nothing). Instead of birding in town, I went up the very rough and narrow road toward the Yellow-eared Parrot reserve, despite the threat of rain. I encountered nearly flash-flood conditions on the road when the rain materialized, then a massive hail storm, which I rode out beneath a large tree. As others have noted, the Yellow-eared Parrots are relatively easy to find, although not especially close, in the open area with palms (at 5.530045, -75.804099) that lies down the road past the locked ProAves reserve gate (5.538939, -75.804226). Other birds here along the road included Tyrian Metaltail, Collared Inca, Mountain Velvetbreast, Chestnut-crested Cotinga, Slaty-backed Chat-Tyrant, Pale-naped Brush-Finch. I noted many no-trespassing signs on property along the road, likely evidence that birders tromping into the fields after the parrots (or Noble Snipe) had resulted in our exclusion, as one sees the world around now. This is a shame, but it is expected. This exclusion had occurred since 2013, when the site guide book was published. In my birding today, I concentrated on the area from just below the trout farm to the open area with parrots.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52408429>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52408555>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52408750>

Night near edge of Jardín, at Hotel Campestre El Cielo Jardín

Rate: about \$57US

Street address: Km 3 Jardín–Riosucio Road, Jardín, Antioquia

Phone: +57 (4) 378-2018

Web: <https://www.elcielojardin.com/inicio>

Access: No restrictions

Guiding: Local contacts if needed for vehicular transport: José +57 310 396-5252; Diego +57 311 752-6550.

Day 5, Monday, 7 January

Again, driving toward the Yellow-eared Parrot reserve and birding the slopes below it on the Jardín side, then using that road to continue toward Montezuma area (5 hours).

Much birdier with a bit better weather this morning up the same road. Fantastic morning flights of Yellow-eared Parrots almost all the way from the trout farm to the fields where I had seen them the day before. Good studies of many hummingbirds (including Sword-billed), Spillmann's Tapaculo, Blackish Tapaculo, Gray-hooded Bush-Tanager, Streak-throated Bush-Tyrant, Red-hooded Tanager, Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Sharpe's Wren, Gray-browed Brushfinch, Slaty Brushfinch, Black-capped Hemispingus, Grass-green Tanager, Purplish-mantled Tanager, Blue-capped Tanager, Masked Flowerpiercer, Blue-and-black Tanager, Yellow-vented Woodpecker; heard Andean Pygmy-Owl.

Missed here yesterday and this morning were several notable species possible here: Tanager Finch, Rufous Antpitta, Chestnut Wood-Quail, Rufous-bellied Nighthawk, Glowing Puffleg, White-bellied Woodstar, Green-fronted Lancebill, Blue-backed Conebill, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Chestnut-naped Antpitta (there is a feeding station somewhere!), Undulated Antpitta, Ocellated Tapaculo, Tyrannine Woodcreeper, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Flammulated Treehunter, Rufous-headed Pygmy-Tyrant, Green-and-black Fruiteater, Saffron-crowned Tanager. The underlined species I never saw in Colombia during my visit, though some are relatively common. In some cases, I just assumed I'd run into them and never trolled for them (or in the case of the nighthawk, didn't stake out a good site specifically). Poor weather probably suppressed singing/calling this morning, hence the dearth of antpittas recorded.

I passed through Pueblo Rico in the late afternoon and had a bit of trouble finding the narrow track just west of town that is the start of the road to Montezuma. I didn't have a waypoint for it but assumed there would be a small sign. There was not. A km or so after a police checkpoint, start looking for a narrow road on the left that is running uphill; immediately across from the start of this road is a small home or shack (on the right side of the road). You'll need to drive for 30 minutes to get to the lodge on this narrow little country road. I was glad to have 4x4 here (you'd need at least high clearance on parts of the road); above the lodge, the road continues for 13 more km into the heart of Tatamá National Park, and there, 4x4 plus high clearance is a necessity. Landslides often close parts of this road to vehicles. Most people rely on Montezuma Rain Forest Lodge for transportation as well as lodging and food. Expect rain here.

The attraction of this place lies not just in the concentration of Colombian endemic (11 species) and near-endemic or regional endemic (37 species) birds but in the mind-blowing quality of birding here between the top/end of the road at the military base (2600m) and the lodge (1340m). Montezuma Rain Forest Lodge is currently the only accommodation in the area. The gracious Michelle Tatiana is the proprietress (owner/manager/guide). Her daughter also works as a guide (Yesennia), as does an excellent young local man named Fernando, who was my guide for two days there. There are hummingbird feeders (bebederos) at the lodge (mostly the same species as at Las Tangaras); bananas are put out for frugivores (and mammals such as Tayra).

Both the lower and the upper part of the road should be birded on different days. Most people start at daybreak at the top (delivered there by staff, for an extra charge; I had my own vehicle) and walk down over the course of the day. The owners can transport people to the top along with breakfast (with cocoa or coffee); breakfast is delivered hot at midday by a person on motorcycle or horseback. Another full day should be devoted to the lower portion of the road. To walk from the top (near military base) down to the lodge, birding along the way, takes about 7 hours, I would estimate. I was glad to have the vehicle, as the vehicle normally used to transport birders to the top was not present. Also, on the second day (with steady rain), I wanted to go just to the Tanager Finch site (fairly high) before coming back to the lower slopes, as we had not seen Tanager Finch the day before. The vehicle was used several times as shelter during especially heavy downpours. A colleague who overlapped with me by one day had walked an entire day in heavy rain and wasn't pleased about it. (Tip: Bring extra-sturdy zip-loc bags for your field guide; most of the Colombia field guides are printed on paper that turns to mush if it gets moist.)

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52409077>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52409596>

Night at Montezuma Rain Forest Lodge

Rate: Bed and meals 180,000COP per night; 150,000 daily guiding fee (required); optional transportation from Pueblo Rico to Montezuma 70,000; transportation to the top to walk back down 180,000 (I didn't pay this, as I brought my vehicle in).

Physical location: 5.2309833629679 -76.079538348131

Phone: +57 317 684-1034 but calls are received from: +57 316 396-8806

Web: <http://montezuma-ecolodge.blogspot.com>

Email: rainforestmontezuma@gmail.com

Facebook: Rain Forest Montezuma (Best not to attempt reservations via Facebook.)

Access: No restrictions known, but apparently best to park respectful distance from military base at the top of the hill / end of the road.

Guiding: Guides said to be required in NP. Provided by the lodge for a fee in addition to bed and board.

Day 6 & 7, Tuesday & Wednesday, 8-9 January

Both days birding **PN Tatamá** (Montezuma area) all day. Be careful with eBird checklists, as there are multiple hotspots in different departments with the same name. I

elected to use the main national park hotspot (after some confusion) rather than the nicknames for certain parts of the road; it's unclear where the boundaries of such areas should/might be, and of course there is no cellular service here. It's just a 13-km stretch of road, and guides are mandatory, so there probably isn't any strong reason to use "Los Cajones" or "Los Chorros" unless you know how/why to employ these areas. I found this to be a problem with eBird checklists in Colombia generally, and to make matters more difficult, many hotspots are plotted in the wrong place (and frequently misspelled). Also, eBird bar charts for hotspots include numerous errors but also include many birds from areas quite far from the actual hotspot.

Rather than try to list all of the bird discoveries here, I'll paste links to the eBird checklists. Among top highlights were White-faced Nunbird (first day) and the area's second record of Orange-crested Flycatcher (second day). This must be some of the best birding in the Andes. The checklist for the 13 km of road probably legitimately tops 500 species, remarkable for a rather tiny area.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52410308>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52411395>

Nights at Rain Forest Montezuma Lodge.

Day 8, Thursday, 10 January

Depart at 05:00 for Santa Cecilia and the Area de Manejo Especial Étnico del Alto Amurrapá (lower portion only). I went with Fernando (whom I paid 100,000COP for the morning), and we picked up a local guide, Blas, in Santa Cecilia area (his phone number +57 321-940-4276; cost 60,000COP through 11:45). Blas took us up into habitat for Baudo Oropendola and Guan. Scarlet-thighed Tanager, Rose-faced Parrot, Lita Woodpecker, Blue-tailed Trogon, Spot-crowned Barbet, Pacific Antwren, Gray-headed Chachalaca were among other highlights. Missed were Slaty-capped Shrike-vireo, Green-backed Thornbill, Blue-whiskered Tanager, Choco Woodpecker, but this was a short visit, and we got a rather late (30 min. late) start around 6:30 a.m.

I dropped Fernando back at Montezuma, then headed back toward the east, getting to the Chinchiná area by 5:00 p.m. I birded the reservoir area there for 80 minutes, then went to lodgings (where I had called ahead) at Palestina. Very quiet and welcoming hotel there; it would probably be best, if staying here, to arrange the reservation well in advance. Payment using credit card is possible, but the employee who handles that is not present after circa 5 p.m. Some of the phone numbers are cell phones of the owners rather than the office; they are a friendly, vivacious retired couple. There are some common garden birds on the premises such as Andean Motmot. I like places like this because they are typically quiet, have security, are clean, have a restaurant, and are not inside bustling towns.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52411847>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52412060>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S51540740>

Night in Palestina at Palestina Ecohotel.

Rate: 100,000COP (dinner extra; restaurant on site)

Street address: Km 7 on the Chinchiná–Santágued Road

Phones: +57 310 832-8556 and +57 310 832-8575 and +57 301 469-3837

+57 (6) 870-5370 and +57 301-424-3426

Web: <http://www.palestinaecohotel.com>

Email: reservas@palestinaecohotel.com OR palestinaecohotel@gmail.com

Facebook site yes (Best not to attempt reservations via Facebook).

Day 9, Friday, 11 January

This was an “off” day. I had first planned, or considered, doing some birding at the Hacienda El Bosque, specially for Crescent-faced Antpitta. This is a cattle ranch [at 5°01'21.0"N 75°22'06.1"W] with feeding station for antpittas on the Letras–Manizales Road, The owner is Juan Martin, who speaks English. His telephone number is +57 321 811-6189. His local guide had been Arturo Parra, but Arturo moved on to Río Blanco, then to Hotel Termales del Ruíz. Forest fragments there also have Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Barred Fruiteater; feeders (active only since October 2018) have Rufous Antpitta. Because Crescent-faced was not showing lately, I decided against going there. I considered an eBird hotspot called Vereda Río Claro. Daniel Uribe, a birder from Chinchiná, was a good contact there (Facebook/Messenger). To gain access to that site, I was to telephone Gladis at +57 321 930-8927 or Victor Mendez +57 300 784-0563 (information provided by David Ocampo).

Instead of any of this, I went back briefly to the main reservoir by town (nothing new); apparently greater access to the habitat there is possible by arranging it in advance with personnel at +57 311 319-6832. I then went to a well-vegetated park on the western side of Manizales called Ecoparque Los Alcázares-Arenillo, birding until late morning, then going to Reserva Ecológica Río Blanco, a rather good site that is run by the local water authority, for afternoon check-in. Here, I had tried for many weeks to wire them the required deposit (using seven different money transfer services), but it turned out to be impossible. Fortunately, they finally agreed to hold a room for me without the deposit, but this permission took weeks of emailing to obtain. Payment in cash only. There is a gate here with a buzzer. Don't try entry outside of normal office hours. After they determine you have a valid reservation, they open the gate. Then you drive uphill for about a mile to the actual lodge.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S51547439>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S51550461>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52412579>

Highlights here on both days included Bicolored Antpitta, Brown-banded Antpitta, Slaty-crowned Antpitta, Chestnut-crowned Antpitta (all four species at feeding stations the next morning but also calling in the afternoon), Golden-plumed Parakeet, Rusty-faced Parrot (the parrot and parakeet only as good flybys), Rufous-banded Owl, Stygian Owl, White-throated Screech-Owl (all owls near the lodge and uphill from it), Flammulated Treehunter, Buff-tailed Coronet, Tourmaline Sunangel, White-bellied Woodstar, Long-

tailed Sylph, Speckled Hummingbird, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Collared Inca, Bronzy Inca, White-throated Wedgebill, Andean Emerald, Green-and-black Fruiteater, Tyrannine Woodcreeper, Sharpe's Wren, Slaty-backed Chat-Tyrant, Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatcher, Powerful Woodpecker, Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Gray-hooded Bush-Tanager. Missed here were: Chestnut-naped Antpitta (feeder shy lately), Undulated Antpitta (rare), Dusky Piha, Masked Saltator (the oft-mentioned "bear cage" no longer stands, and the species is apparently harder to locate here lately), Slaty Finch, Mountain Cacique, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Rufous-bellied Nighthawk (forgot to check the open areas along the ridge trail at dusk for the nighthawk!).

Night at Río Blanco Lodge.

Rate: 292,000COP covers meals and guide for 1/2 day and 1/2 day; tipped 50,000COP
Location: 5.0744269,-75.4321718 [NOTE: **GoogleMaps include several incorrect and misleading locations labeled as Reserva Ecológica Río Blanco; double check your data before navigation.**]

Phone: +57 312 226-1116; contact Viviana Muñoz

Landline +57 (6) 887-9770, extension 72187

Email: reservarioblanco@aguasdemanizales.com.co

Web: <https://www.facebook.com/RioBlancoReservaNatural/>

Reserve manager: Albeiro (albeiroamphita@hotmail.com) and his wife Selene (+57 320-739-7113, 314-200-8472, 036-870-3810); or WhatsApp through Viviana Muñoz

Contact: reservarioblanco@aguasdemanizales.com.co (Natalia is the contact)

Access: No restrictions to those with confirmed reservations; bring all paperwork to gate

Guiding: Guide required in the reserve; guides often know the top target birds

Day 10, Saturday, 12 January

I spent the morning with guide at Río Blanco; the antpitta feeders were enjoyable, but I think I more enjoyed seeing Tyrannine Woodcreeper, Flammulated Treehunter, White-rumped Hawk, and other species I had not yet encountered.

I then moved toward Hotel Termales del Ruíz via the jeep track/road (single lane), which passes through good habitat. That road is marked "Vía a Gallinazo" in Google Maps as well as "La Enea—Gallinazo." This is the road that passes through the area nicknamed "La Gruta" in eBird, as well as in Google, so I have the (modest) checklists under that hotspot. Crescent-faced Antpitta seems no longer findable along here, but I played back anyhow. The hotel feeders have Black-thighed and Golden-breasted Pufflegs, Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Tourmaline Sunangel, Shining Sunbeam, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Mountain Velvetbreast, Great Sapphirewing; also here was 1 Viridian Metaltail (Tyrian is fairly common in the area).

NOTE: Most directions to the hotel and to the highland/paramo areas here will route you along Route 50 (the "Letras—Manizales" Road) and have you turn onto the Vía Al Nevado del Ruíz at the Tourist information center (double switchback marked "El 8" in Google Maps). That road is suitable for passenger cars, whereas the jeep track I took is suited for trucks.

The Hotel Termales del Ruíz is under new management, based in Manizales. There is no heat here other than a small electric wall-mounted heater in the room, so

you can bring the temperature up to about 55-65F. With its round-the-clock hot springs, the property is something of an upscale boom-boom room. So although there is no music blasting all night (as in many places), there is amorous activity aplenty, and because the doors are thin (and adjoining doors between rooms especially so), you might find that you're a participant in audio to pleasures you hadn't counted on. Also, the stark architecture and décor, lacking any sound-dampening elements (rugs, plants), means that activity in the hallways echoes powerfully. People on the first floor have no hesitation in shouting down the hallways all night. If you're on the ground level, and the room above you is occupied, it will sound as though elephants are moving furniture around. In short, if you do stay here, get a second-floor room, emphasize that you need a "quiet" room that has no adjoining door, ask for a manager's number to call if you're disturbed, and emphasize that you need sleep and need to rise early. (Bring earplugs or headphones for all travel in Latin America, of course.)

Making reservations was not straightforward. There was no way to make them directly with the property. Instead, the sister property in Manizales (Hotel Carretera) required that I wire a deposit of about \$56.50US (173,500+COP) to bank account 05980495500 (Bancolombia) as partial payment for a room at that property and they would then transfer the money to Termales del Ruíz. There was no record of the reservation or deposit when I arrived. I had all the emails (many) printed out, as well as all the bank deposit and routing data printed. I had to insist that the deposit and reservation be honored, which they were, ultimately. The final checkout was lengthy, and the day manager tried, again, not to apply the deposit. I have run boutique properties nearly this size, and there was no reason for the chaos. If one does not speak or understand Spanish, it would be very difficult to deal with situations such as this one. I was polite, but for the money, this place was disappointing. The restaurant seemed upscale, but this was the only place in Colombia where I got food poisoning. Hopefully, operations will improve in the future.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52412797>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52413220>

Night at Hotel Termales del Ruíz.

Rate: 1 night at about \$113US

Street address: 4.97181,-75.385351 (4°58'13.92"N, 75°22'39.21"W)

Phone: +57 310-455-3588

Web: <http://hoteltermalesdelRuiz.com>

Email: reservas@hotelcaretero.com

Access: No restrictions (self-guiding trails, hummer feeders) to guests; Arturo Parra is on hand to help day visitors with hummingbird identification and hand-feeding

Guiding: Arturo might also be available for private guiding; inquire on premises

Day 11, Sunday, 13 January

Los Nevados del Ruíz area all morning. I found a male Purple-backed Thornbill (not at feeders in the hotel) just outside the hotel grounds, about 20 m beyond the entrance, on small flowers downslope. I walked and drove upslope from the hotel in early morning,

running into flocks of Rufous-fronted Parakeets (26 total), Ocellated Tapaculo, Tawny Antpitta, Paramo Seedeater, Paramo Tapaculo, Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant, Andean Condor, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle. The highest elevations, reached by truck (road was fine for passenger cars), were also productive. The Las Brisas station (4.933643,-75.349976) was reliable for Buffy Helmetcrest (in fact, there is a small wooden overlook there for them), Stout-billed Cinclodes, Plain-capped Ground-Tyrant, Andean Tit-Spinetail. There was no need for paying entry to the national park if not going through the gates here. I began feeling what I interpreted as altitude sickness here (at 4201m, or 13,782 feet), so I cut short the searches for White-chinned Thistletail and White-browed Spinetail and maybe Crowned Chat-Tyrant. In any case, I came back to the hotel, where a small foot trail (that leads to a maintenance area with brush piles) was good for Golden-crowned Tanager, a beautiful bird. The trail starts on the left side of the road just upslope from the hotel gate. I used the same jeep road (La Enea—Gallinazo) to return to the Manizales area, thinking I'd feel better on descent, but the malady turned out to be food poisoning. Nevertheless, I tried birding from the large monument area (4.972527,-75.383935) down to Termales area, and I ran into one decent flock with a Rufous-crested Tanager. Then I drove toward Santa Rosa de Cabal and from there to Finca Cortaderal, near Potreros. To reach this area, which is the only viable site lately for Fuertes's (Indigo-winged) Parrot, I headed east out of Santa Rosa on Calle 8, bearing left at 4.865198, -75.607702, and followed the road (in very rough shape, but passable in a 4x4) for about an hour, passing a disused army checkpoint and keeping left at a fork in the road, until the valley opens up at about 4.866170, -75.484660. This is 70 minutes (25 km) from town but feels like 2 hours. I had 17 of the parrots about 500 m past those coordinates, in a boggy swale with small trees and some mistletoe. I did not have the strength to bird for a long time, so I headed back soon after finding the parrots. I didn't detect Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Bar-bellied Woodpecker, Blue-backed Conebill, Mountain Avocetbill, reported from this vicinity. I'm not sure I was ever in a location for Black-backed Bush-Tanager, but according to the owner of Manakin Tours, whom I met in at Termales del Ruíz, the very high road above Río Blanco (track starts around the caretaker's home) is good for that species. I did not see any wet swales for Noble Snipe, here or at Yellow-eared Parrot reserve, probably not surprising, given that this is the dry season.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52413301>
<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52413792>
<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52415278>

Night at small local hotel in Santa Rosa (no name marked but was along Calle 8)
Rate: 1 night at about \$17 US, breakfast included (many lodging options in this town)

Day 12, Monday, 14 January

I slept late, until 06:30, and at 07:00 took the hotel's complementary basic breakfast before driving to Otún Quimbaya, where I had booked two nights' stay at the local lodge. I birded all day and afternoon there, seeing many of the birds I'd hoped to see with

relative ease: Cauca Guan, Red-ruffed Fruitcrow, Multicolored Tanager, etc. In hindsight, I think one night's stay here would be sufficient. The check-in here by staff of the indigenous/local collective that runs the lodge is professional and polished. This is the only such check-in I experienced in Colombia except in big cities.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52414618>

Night at Otún Quimbaya.

Website: <http://www.parquesnacionales.gov.co/portal/en/ecotourism/andean-region/otun-quimbaya-fauna-and-flora-sanctuary/>

Rate: All correspondence was via WhatsApp, which has erased the conversation; rates were reasonable, but I don't have a record of them (similar to what others have noted)

Street address: 4.729 N, -75.577848 W

Phone: Adalberto (very friendly); WhatsApp +57 313 695-4305

Landline +57 (6) 314-4162

Email: yarumoblanco2009@hotmail.com (? no reply; not sure if they have email)

Access: No restrictions

Guiding: required only in the forest on trails, not along the road that passes through

Day 13, Tuesday, 15 January

Birding Otún Quimbaya all day. I started at 05:00 owling along the road, quickly finding Colombian Screech-Owl about 3 km down the road from the lodge. From there, I checked the territory of the Hooded Antpitta about 200 m before El Cedral just past the end of the large clearing at 4.705435, -75.540186. This is 6 km from the lodge. I was very glad to have high clearance in the vehicle; the road is not good for passenger cars. The Hooded Antpitta is known to favor the right side of the road (up the steep hillside). For some reason, I chose not to audiolure this bird, possibly because it's the only one I've heard about that's reliable at the moment. I did get audio of it singing. I later learned that this bird had been badly harassed in weeks prior by birders, including at the nest and with fledgling, so I was glad that I had left it in peace. I had just one Moustached Antpitta along the route back to the lodge. I had booked an all-day (8-hour) guide so that I could walk the trails on both sides of the road legally (staff stress that this is important when you check in; some posted trip accounts suggest that sneaking onto the trails is not a problem, but that's not the case). The only bird of note all day was a "free-range" Brown-banded Antpitta on the Sendero los Bejucos, which starts at 4.72828,-75.577014. Guides won't start their day here until 09:00, so birding the heat of the day wasn't great. We even missed Torrent Duck down where there is a small bridge (go back down the main road 100 m or so toward La Florida and take the first right, walking about 100 more m; watch for roosting night monkeys in the bamboo); another birding group did see a pair of ducks here. My guide was Oswaldo Toro Valencia (+57 320 511-4559; +57 318 434-6718; montesandinos9@gmail.com), who has a line on Mountain Tapir viewing beyond El Cedral.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52414696>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52414724>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52415147>

Night at Otún Quimbaya.

Day 14, Wednesday, 16 January

After brief morning birding (good looks at Wattled Guan, finally), I drove 1 hour 15 minutes to Salento to bird the Camino Nacional, a dirt road that goes through fragments of habitat to a ridgeline about 19 km away. A safe area, it has several excellent birds. My directions were to watch for an old quarry on the LEFT (as you're going uphill), and about 50-70 m beyond that, there is a hot territory for Crescent-faced Antpitta. Also Mountain Avocetbill in the area. This road goes all the way to rejoin Route 40, which goes to Ibagué. I had planned to make a full day of that road, staying the night near Ibagué. Unfortunately, after driving this rough road for 40 minutes, I encountered a tipped-over dairy cattle transporter (leaned on its side, blocking the whole road). So I backed up and instead went down to Route 29 toward Armenia, then turning east on the trans-Andean Route 40, which has heavy truck traffic and requires good nerves. I went then along the rough roads above Juntas. Birding there in the afternoon was much better than I anticipated, and I came across Tolima Blossomcrown, Tolima Dove, White-tipped Swift, Yellow-headed Brushfinch, the last species being the only one of the bunch that seemed common along the road here. In early evening, I then drove all the way north on Route 43 (and a small side road that shortens [?] the trip, Cataratas Medenia—Victoria Road) to the little town of Victoria, where I found a clean, friendly hotel with local help around 10 p.m. This was a very long travel day, but I didn't know where the Camino Nacional terminates on Route 40, so there was no way to try it from another angle (and it was already far too late in the day for a Plan B there; the antpitta sings normally in the early morning).

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52415560>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52416748>

Night at Hotel Maria Paula, Victoria.

Website: none, but check Google reviews

Rate: 20,000COP - tipped the night desk lady (very friendly) to keep an eye on the truck

Street address: A 8-75 Carretera 4, #81, Victoria, Caldas

Phone: +57 320 680-8105

Day 15, Thursday, 17 January

Morning birding at RN Bellavista, 20 minutes from Victoria, then on to Río Claro.

Bellavista was not overly impressive, but that is surely because I didn't bird it correctly. The parts I birded had Sooty Ant-Tanager, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher (with hardly any ochre?!), Golden-crowned Spadebill, Rufous-naped Greenlet, Velvet-fronted Euphonia, and a quick Beautiful Woodpecker. I was hoping for Tody Motmot (apparently no longer here), White-mantled Barbet, and White-bibbed Manakin, but I didn't realize that most of

these are along the fork in the road I didn't take far enough: as you enter, you'll see a fork in the first km, with the road on the right going slightly uphill. The left fork takes you to a school and to the new cabañas that can be rented there. Not much in that area but common widespread open-country and edge species. I did walk the right fork until the habitat petered out (about 100 m), but according to people who go there regularly, the *best birding is in the habitat fragments farther down this road*. A pity! This is not mentioned in any online trip reports that I have seen, so I wanted to mention it. Antioquia Bristle-Tyrant has not been seen here in many years, according to several people.

The drive to Río Claro was uneventful, though the bridge over the Río Magdalena had Black Skimmer and Cocoli Heron. The gates at Río Claro are very much like you'd encounter at a small national park or amusement park (Río Claro combines the feel of these). To come in and bird for a bit, the cost is 50,000COP (you must wear a color-coded bracelet). I chose to lodge here and take meals here; birders almost never do this. The check-in process continued at the cafeteria with manager David, who speaks English (not common) and who explained all of the rules and regulations. I had to submit proof of health insurance to him and fill out various hold-harmless papers, which were necessary to present to the gate staff as well (these were emailed as attachment when I made the reservation). Meals and lodging and entrance fees come to about \$100US per night.

The room itself in the "Mulata Cabins" (near the birding spot) is spare, and there is mosquito netting but open windows in both bathrooms and bedroom, so that large numbers of wasps entered during the night, though I kept all lights off after dark. Probably much better to stay at an outside property and come in for the day, as I did on a later visit (see below).

I birded in the afternoon along the road and up the Mulata Creek Trail, which is unmarked but is easy to find because there are wooden corral structures at the start (on the west side of the road, same side as the Mulata Cabins but a bit closer to the park entrance). Unfortunately, the habitat here suffered during a massive storm in November 2018, so trees were down everywhere and bird activity minimal on my days here (both this visit and the next visit). I'm sure this was once a great birding location, but I didn't have that experience. Fortunately, I ran into Trevor Ellery and Jesse Fagan, both conducting tours here, and they gave me recent gen on sightings. The afternoon was relatively quiet; gangs of Dusky-faced and Tawny-crested Tanagers, plus lots of loud Bay and Scaly-breasted Wrens, kept the binoculars moving. I managed to fall while trying to cross the creek to the steep far side of the trail and so had to go back to change clothes; Bare-crowned Antbird, Blue-lored Antbird, Blue Cotinga, and the other birds of this trail were not to be. Two flyover Saffron-headed Parrots were nice, and the first Magdalena Antbird called near the head of the Mulata Creek Trail. A pair of Semicollared Hawks appeared in the canopy there as well, apparently courting. This was a new species for me, much enjoyed. I had a heard-only Antioquia Bristle-Tyrant up the trail but not a peep out of the foliage-gleaner. Around the cabins, a family of One-colored Becards and a Double-toothed Kite. Flowers and hummers were scarce; both plumeleeters, a Pale-bellied Hermit, but all others unidentified. In the evening, I joined the other groups for the emergence of Oilbirds from the cave; a Magdalena Antbird was

about halfway down that trail as well. The cave is across the river from a small 'beach' at 5.886938, -74.85272.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52417081>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52417347>

Night at Río Claro.

<http://www.rioclaroreservanatural.com/en/home/>

Email: info@rioclaroreservanatural.com

Address: 5.901719, -74.856803

Guides: none required

Access: no issues for guests staying on premises

Day 16, Friday, 18 January

Río Claro all day. Very hot, with not very many birds overall; of 11 hummingbirds seen, zero were identified! Crested Owls calling nicely around the cabin at nightfall. Try as I might along the first 2 km of the Mulata Creek Trail, I could not find an Antioquia Bristle-Tyrant, White-mantled Barbet, or Slaty-winged Foliage-gleaner, and the bird species I did see were mostly widespread Neotropical species. It was very hot, so I did not try the far/high trail, and so I also did not locate Black Oropendola, Black-faced Antthrush, Gray-cheeked Nunlet, Scarlet-browed Tanager, Yellow-browed Shrike-Vireo. Some of these I've seen in Panama. I think a bad/slow day is possible in many places, but I don't think the storm damage helped here.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52417581>

Night at Río Claro.

Day 17, Saturday, 19 January

Birding in the early morning at Río Claro was better. Cinnamon Woodpecker, Barred Puffbird, a pair of Antioquia Bristle-Tyrants, a Slaty-winged Foliage-gleaner, and a few others were along the first km of the Mulata Creek Trail. From here, I made the 2.5-hour drive to the Medellín main airport to pick up Sam Wilson and Margeaux Maerz at noon. We departed soon after noon, after a quick stop at a gourmet shop (!), for the Chestnut-capped Piha Reserve, about six hours' drive from the airport. Nice evening birding there, another fine lodge. Booking should be straightforward through ProAves.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52417755>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52070204>

Day 18, Sunday, 20 January

Chestnut-capped Piha Reserve all day. Birthday for Margeaux, with wine and chocolate and flowers (? - Sam presented a bromeliad!). Tropical Screech-Owl and Mottled Owl around the cabins; we didn't walk into the reserve to listen for Cinnamon Screech-Owl. We hiked the main trail through the reserve in a loop during daylight hours, hoping for Pavonine Cuckoo (no luck) and Chestnut-capped Piha (found 2 easily). Astonishingly, we lucked into a Plumbeous Hawk near the start of the trail, a small but significant range extension for the species. Among the other great birds were Lanceolated Monklet, King Vulture, Wattled Guan (h), Golden-headed Quetzal, White-mantled Barbet, Parker's Antbird, Uniform Antshrike, Stiles's Tapaculo, Brown-billed Scythebill, Striped Woodhaunter, White-crowned Manakin, Wing-barred Piprites, Orange-bellied Euphonia, Purplish-mantled Tanager, Multicolored Tanager, a distant Black Hawk-Eagle, and 2 female Scarlet-and-white Tanagers. Playback at the small marsh produced responses by Russet-crowned and White-throated Crakes, plus a Blackish Rail.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52070190>

Night at the Piha reserve.

Day 19, Monday, 21 January

We birded Chestnut-capped Piha Reserve in morning. After breakfast, I trolled the road along the edge of the reserve and got a Pavonine Cuckoo response from well uphill. The forest warden says that he hears the bird regularly but rarely sees it. We tried the shorter trail this morning, finding Green Hermit, White-tipped Sicklebill, Chestnut-crowned Gnatcatcher, Red-bellied Grackle. And then a long drive to Cerulean Warbler Reserve. We picked up a few birds along the route, including Blue-and-yellow Macaws. The road to San Vicente de Chucurí was not good, and we ended up getting a flat tire right before town (plenty of shops to fix that; took 25 minutes!). We got settled at Hotel Faraones, the best in town, right off the town square. Parking is not free in the town square, and you have to hunt down the meter maid during the day to pay her (she will leave tickets in the window overnight). Not a great town for restaurants, but we did okay!

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52070185>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52070181>

Night at Hotel Faraones

Email: none

Address: Cl. 10 #11-20, San Vicente de Chucurí (right off the town square)

Phone: +57 7 625-6666

Day 20, Tuesday, 22 January

Cerulean Warbler reserve all day. We did something in hindsight not very clever, which was to pull into the reserve lodge at dawn. The poor warden wasn't expecting us, and they apparently do not receive visitors without reservations. He kindly let us check the

trees and feeders before going. Had the gates been locked, we wouldn't have driven in. We bushwhacked directly from the road through cattle pastures and barbed wire to the head of the reserve trail. We should have taken the cobblestone path uphill, but we did end up doing that on the way back. We didn't get there at daybreak, but we did enjoy an early chorus, at some distance, of Gorgeted Wood-Quail. Memorable birds for the morning were Black Inca, White-mantled Barbet, Rufous-rumped Antwren, Magdalena Tapaculo, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Variegated Bristle-Tyrant, Wing-barred Piprites, Cerulean Warbler, White-winged Tanager, White-shouldered Tanager (female at lodge feeder).

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52070174>

Night at Hotel Faraones

Day 21, Wednesday, 23 January

Cerulean Warbler reserve all day, the first five hours with Sam and Margeaux, the last few hours of the day solo. We birded mostly the lower areas (lodge and lower), enjoying Black-throated Mango, Spot-breasted Woodpecker, Bar-crested Antshrike, Strong-billed Woodcreeper, Brown-billed Scythebill, Bran-colored Flycatcher, Cinereous Becard, Niceforo's Wren, Spectacled Thrush, White-naped Brushfinch, Yellow-tufted/Black-faced Dacnis, Turquoise Dacnis, Guira Tanager, and Thick-billed Seed-Finch. Margeaux and I might have seen a Chestnut-bellied Hummingbird, but it did not stick around. We could not locate a Double-banded Graytail or a Yellow-browed Shrike-Vireo during the entire visit! Three hours in the late afternoon were much better for hummingbirds, with a Gorgeted Woodstar and a Chestnut-bellied Hummingbird. Extensive trolling for graytail and shrike-vireo were to no avail.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52069643>

Night at Hotel Faraones

Day 22, Thursday, 24 January

The early plan was to drive to the to Pauxi Pauxi Reserve (~1 hour from Hotel Faraones) and bird the morning there. However, ProAves doesn't accept visitors here, and they also will not furnish directions to the area unless one has reservations made and paid well in advance. So Sam and I headed instead back to the Cerulean Warbler reserve, enjoying Beautiful Woodpecker (a well-named bird) and White-eared Conebill (2.5 hours). Our drive toward Puerto Boyacá added a road-killed Striped Owl and Savanna Hawk, and a wetland right along the road near Zambito (in eBird as Ciénaga Zambito Peaje because it's right at a toll booth) had 5 Northern Screamers, 170 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, 2 Yellow-billed Terns, and 3 Lesser Yellow-headed Vultures. A larger flock of 38 screamers was just down the road. Once we got settled at a hotel in Puerto Boyacá, a short stop down by the river added Large-billed Tern, Black-collared Hawk, and White-winged Swallow. I had thought it best to scout the road to the Blue-

billed Curassow reserve in the afternoon, but I didn't follow through - instead we went to dinner and drinks early, deciding to risk it in the morning in the dark, using Googlemaps and other map apps.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52069638>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52069634>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52069630>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52069627>

Day 23, Friday, 25 January

That was a silly mistake. Blue-billed Curassow Reserve is probably easy to find, and it's just 3 hours or so from Puerto Boyacá, but we took the wrong route. I had no directions but thought that the roads in the map apps would be passable. They were not. We ended up bottoming out a fair amount along the poor, muddy roads through Santander. Locals were very kind to tell us we were going the wrong way, and so we had to turn around and concede defeat. But with large flocks of parrots, two-dozen Chestnut-fronted Macaws, lots of Crested Bobwhite with young, tame Laughing Falcon, Tayra, Black-capped Donacobius, Large-billed Seed-Finch, plus many common open-country species like White-headed Marsh-Tyrant, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, Yellow-hooded Blackbird, Plumbeous Kite, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, it was an enjoyable morning (once we turned around!). A pity to miss not just the curassow for the trip but also shots at Black-billed Flycatcher, Pale-billed Hermit, Rufous Piha, Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Black-breasted Puffbird, Long-tailed Woodcreeper, Black Antshrike, Citron-throated Trogon, Bare-crowned Antbird, Blue Cotinga, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Rufous Mourner, Speckled Mourner, Yellow-browed Shrike-Vireo, and more species shared with lowlands of Panama and Venezuela (most of which I have seen in those countries already). But then we headed over to the Oilbird spectacle at Río Claro, enjoying good looks at Antioquia Bristle-Tyrant, Russet-winged Schiffornis (close!), and Scaly-breasted Wrens. I was able to slip away to clean the truck of mud in Doradal. Night between Doradal and Río Claro in a simple country hotel.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52069622>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52069619>

Night at Amaranthus Hotel

Autopista Medellin-Bogota Km 111, Doradal 053447 (sharp uphill left turn if traveling W)

Phone: +57 310 499-6073

Rate: about \$50US for a single

Day 24, Saturday, 26 January

We once again slipped into Rio Claro (entry is COP50,000 just to look around) for morning birding. Highlights were Chestnut Wood-Quail, Rufous-breasted Hermit, White-vented Plumeleteer, Chestnut-backed Antbird (close), Magdalena Antbirds (heard), Cocoa Woodcreeper, Russet-winged Schiffornis. Noon departure for Medellín airport

(2.6 hours), with an adult dark-morph White-tailed Hawk on the drive. Flight to Bogatá for me was at 7:05 p.m. Returned rental truck at 3:40 p.m.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52069284>

Day 25, Sunday, 27 January

Early morning flight, arriving at the airport in Mitú at 10:38 a.m. I had arranged through EtnoBirding Vaupés to have a guide meet us at noon. Our guide, Agripino, was a no show. Many texts later between me and Zaiza Rodríguez Rivera, it turns out he wasn't around. (Zaiza no longer works for EtnoBirding Vaupés, so I'm not listing her contact details here.) The next guide hired, Geovanny, also never showed. So I arranged for a new guide, named Edimilsa Lima (+57 321 468-7274), to work with us over the week. She was very affable, mostly a generalist naturalist, but she knew the areas we wanted to go see, though she only knew a few antbirds, etc. She also arranged transport, both by boat (with her husband) and by truck. No matter, it was great to have a guide who could step in when others flaked or bailed. The lodgings at Hotel Los Paisos were fantastic! Air-conditioning worked well enough for about half the stay. The owners/staff are very friendly, and it was easy to make a reservation over WhatsApp; they responded immediately and cordially. They confirmed that credit card payment with Visa was possible (nice not to have to carry the extra cash). They own the restaurant right on the corner as well. The portions are generous, the food quite good. In the evenings, the local well-fed dogs stroll by to see if any tourists will feed them. This one did. Some really excellent hounds in the bunch. I ended up really liking Mitú a great deal, and I look forward to returning.

At 1:10 p.m., I went by myself by tuk-tuk to Urania, birding for at least 4 hours from about 500 m before the first bridge into the community itself and back. I arranged with the driver to pick me up at dusk. In all, the guide mix-ups cost us about three hours of birding time, but at least it wasn't at dawn. Some highlights, all rather common Amazonian birds, were Speckled Chachalaca, Yellow-tufted Woodpecker, White-throated Toucan, Gilded Barbet, Black and Red-throated Caracaras, Cobalt-winged Parakeets, Red-and-green Macaw (from the cerro), Amazonian Streaked-Antwren, Sulphury Flycatcher, Screaming Piha, White-crowned Manakin, Azure-naped Jay flock (base of cerro), White-banded Swallow, Green Oropendola, Yellow-backed Tanager. Before the community, in a brushy field, I also found a White-naped Seedeater. I was not expecting it to be in disturbed habitat near town like this. Despite returning five times to this spot, we were not able to relocate this bird.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52429499>

All nights at Hotel Los Paisas

Address: Carretera 13A # 15-45, Mitú

Email: hotelospaisas@gmail.com

Website: <http://www.vaupes.gov.co/turismo/hotel-los-paisas-184904>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/hotelospaisas#!/hotelospaisas?sk=info>

Telephone: +57 310 375-9101 (great for WhatsApp - I think this is a cell phone)

Landline (?): +57 098 564-2284

Day 26, Monday, 28 January

We three started out at dawn with Edimilsa at the trail head to Senda Mitú Cachivera at 5:45 a.m. and walked as far as we could, into the tallest forest. I wanted to return by the Senda Bocatoma, but Edimilsa wasn't sure where the connector trail was, so we walked back out the same we we came in. We skipped Cerro Guacamaya, as the ELN was training young men there at the time; several of the young men were walking back to the community via the trail we used, fairly early in the morning (0800ish). Total of 9 hours in the field there. In the evening, I went back and spent 2.5 more hours on the road to Urania.

Highlights of the long walk were Black-bellied Cuckoo, Great-billed (Amazonian) Hermit, Amazonian Motmot, Paradise Jacamars, Many-banded Aracari, Black-headed Parrot, Scarlet Macaw, Fulvous-throated (Negro Stipple-throated) Antwren, Pygmy Antwren, Cherrie's Antwren, Spot-backed Antwren, Spot-backed Antbird, Slender-footed Tyrannulet, Ringed Antpipit, Double-banded Pygmy-Tyrant, White-eyed Tody-Tyrant, Cinnamon Manakin-Tyrant (awesome bird - *Neopipo* ! - with excellent contrast to Ruddy-tailed Flycatcher a bit later), Citron-bellied Attila, Swainson's Flycatcher, Guianan Cock-of-the-rock (3 heard; one seen in flight), Dwarf Tyrant-Manakin, four other manakins (Yellow-crowned, White-bearded, White-crowned, Golden-headed), more Azure-naped Jays, Coraya Wren, Hauxwell's Thrush, Rufous-bellied Euphonia, a puzzling female Fulvous-crested Tanager, Opal-crowned Tanager.

Highlights of the short evening walk were Variegated Tinamou (heard), a big flight of nighthawks that I assume to have been Commons, Lettered Aracari, Red-fan Parrots, Red-bellied Macaws, Gray-bellied (heard) and Black-chinned Antbirds, and 2 Amazonian Umbrellabirds.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52348782>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52430635>

Day 27, Tuesday, 29 January

We went by boat at 5:15 in Mitú to the indigenous Santa Marta community on the Río Cajure and walk the trail there (called Senda Cajure in some reports, Garrafa or Garafa in others). We walked the very nice trail until 12:55 p.m. We went back to Urania for 3 hours at 3:30 p.m. Spotlited from the boat were 2 Band-tailed Nighthawks over the river at eye level, apparently regular at the Cajure River mouth.

On the morning walk, we heard one Gray-legged Tinamou well in deep forest and tried to audiolure, but with the usual results from a tinamou (nothing). Also here were 5 Bronzy Jacamars, 1 White Hawk, 1 Orinoco Piculet, 1 Red-necked Woodpecker interrafting with a Crimson-crested, 189 Mealy Parrots, 41 Scarlet Macaws, 29 Maroon-tailed Parakeets, 7 Orange-cheeked Parrots, 32 Cobalt-winged Parakeets, 3 Amazonian Antshrikes, 1 Rusty-fronted Tody-Flycatcher, 1 Bar-bellied Woodcreeper (relatively rare species), 3 Saffron-crested Tyrant-Manakins putting on a great show. That afternoon,

we found a Green Heron at the Urania bridge, apparently a departmental first, well photographed. Also there were usual species but no Red-fan Parrots this time.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S54097604>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52349054>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52348792>

Day 28, Wednesday, 30 January

We spent almost all morning and early afternoon, 9 hours, between Puente Lata and road to Tayazú. At dawn, we watched 3 Fiery Topazes at the bridge (sensory overload). We then worked down the road toward Tayazú, taking the trail by that name. We got back to the hotel around 6:10 p.m. For the last 2 hours 20 minutes, I stood in the open bed of the truck and birded as best I could along the route northward back to Mitú. It would have been amazing to visit this area before the massive deforestation along this road (for powerline cut but much more extensive—and now pasture).

Morning highlights were the topazes (!!), White-bearded Hermit with them, Straight-billed Hermit (for me), Black-eared Fairy, Yellow-billed Jacamar, Lemon-throated Barbet, Chestnut-eared Aracari, Many-banded Aracari, Ivory-billed Aracari, Tawny-tufted Toucanet (one of my favorite birds of the trip), Ringed/Atlantic Black-breasted Woodpecker (for me), Scarlet-shouldered Parrotlets (5 flyovers), Ash-winged Antwren, Mouse-colored Antshrike (heard), Yellow-throated Antwren, Long-winged Antwren, Black-faced Antbird, Silvered Antbird, Black-throated Antbird, so-handsome Chestnut-crested Antbird (hallelujah, right at the clearing on the trail; also present here three days later), a heard-only Reddish-winged Bare-eye identified by our guide, Thrush-like Antpitta, Black-banded Woodcreeper, Curve-billed Scythebill, Duida Woodcreeper, Chestnut-winged Hookbill, Grayish Mourner, Cinereous Mourner, White-browed Purpletuft (another favorite), Magpie Tanager, Yellow-bellied Tanager, White-bellied Dacnis (a pair!), Short-billed Honeycreeper. On the drive back, a jacamar that could have been a good one and a Tiny Hawk were the only notables; I tallied 148 Swallow-winged Puffbirds sitting out. Probably drove by a few Burrowing Owls, which we forgot to look for on this trip. My usual afternoon around Urania produced Gray-breasted Sabrewing, Green Ibis, a calling Tawny-bellied Screech-Owl at dark south of the road, and mostly expected birds otherwise.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52348796>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52439744>

Day 29, Thursday, 31 January

We walked the Pipeline Trail (Senda Bocatoma) from 6:00 a.m., for a total of 7 hours 40 minutes; we crossed four or five streams, with one heavy rain shower in the late afternoon as we were returning. I spent 2 hours on the road to Urania starting at 4:40 p.m. that day.

Morning highlights were Gray-headed Kite in raucous display (I was sure it was a hawk-eagle, such a racket, but no), Green Ibis, a pair of Great Jacamars, Pearly

Antshrike, a pair of Imeri Warbling-Antbirds that took us a minute to figure out, 5 Grayish Mourners, a Pompadour Cotinga, a bathing male Black Manakin, a female White-crowned Manakin on the nest, Olive Oropendola, and Fulvous Shrike-Tanager.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52348803>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52439490>

Day 30, Friday, 1 February

We walked part of the trail known as Edimilsa's Trail because it goes to her chagra. It starts near her home in the village of La Libertad. Way out on the trail, she does get White-naped Seedeater fairly regularly, and she has had Red-billed Ground-Cuckoo twice, but keep in mind that she goes out there regularly. We hiked 6 hours, 20 minutes, and Edimilsa's husband José picked us up by boat on a caño east of town around 12:20 p.m. We returned to the Senda Mitú Cachivera at 3:00 p.m. for another 2.5 hours of birding. Edimilsa's kids are Darwin and Sofía. Edimilsa is apparently a Brazilian name, as her mother is from Brazil. Tucano men must marry outside their language group, with the result that Tucano villages are multilingual to an astonishing level. Edimilsa speaks at least 7 languages plus Spanish. This came in very handy in tracking down the right capitan or capitana in each village to pay respects (and access fee). What a fascinating world, Amazonia.

Around La Libertad, 2 Spix's Guans were great to see. Also 1 Blackish Nightjar, 2 Blue-tailed Emerald, 1 White-chinned Sapphire, 2 Blackish-gray Antshrikes (at last!), 1 Spot-winged Antshrike, 3 White-flanked Antwren, 2 Gray Antwren, 2 Black-chinned Antbird (nicely, for the group), 1 Striped Woodcreeper, 1 Elegant Woodcreeper (for me), 1 Yellow-breasted (Olive-faced) Flycatcher, 1 Drab Water Tyrant on the river, 1 Cinnamon Attila, 1 unexpected Variegated Flycatcher, 1 Gray-capped Flycatcher, 1 Pompadour Cotinga, 2 Black-capped Becard, more Azure-naped Jays, 1 Plumbeous Euphonia (for me), and 3 fine Yellow-green Grosbeaks. The afternoon was not very productive except for 1 White-chinned Woodcreeper, 1 Black-eared Fairy, and 1 *duidae* Fuscous Flycatcher (Campina Flycatcher), thanks to Sam.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52348807>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52348814>

Day 31, Saturday, 2 February

We spent 5 hours between Puente Lata and road to Tayazú. At 4:40 p.m., we made another brief visit out to Urania. White-throated Tinamou was vocal on this visit, as were Marbled Wood-Quail. Rather early, the guide and I saw a large, long-tailed bird crossing that appeared to be a Crestless Curassow to her. Other memorable birds were Fiery Topazes (again, same spot), a cluster of Green-backed Trogons, a calling Amazonian Trogon (finally), a calling apparent Blue-crowned Trogon (sounding not like eastern subspecies, maybe *peruvianus* here), 2 duetting Brown-banded Puffbirds in response to speculative playback, 6 White-fronted Nunbirds, 1 Tawny-tufted Toucanet again, 1 Red-stained Woodpecker, 3 Common Scale-backed Antbirds, 1 Rufous-capped Antthrush, 1

each Slender-billed and Rufous-tailed Xenopses, Chestnut-crested Antbird, 1 calling Cinnamon-rumped Foliage-gleaner, 1 Ringed Antpipit bill-snapping, 1 Whiskered Flycatcher, 1 Citron-bellied Attila that looks different from illustrations (photos), and 1 Dusky-capped Greenlet. In the afternoon, we got everyone nicely caught up with Red-fan Parrots and Green Oropendolas.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52348822>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52348828>

Day 32, Sunday, 3 February

We spent a few hours at Urania before returning to the hotel to get ready to fly out. We settled up with guide and drivers for the week. We thought that our flight departed at 11:08 a.m., but it was delayed several hours. Wish that I had called the airline to inquire before coming back so soon! We enjoyed fine looks at Guianan Cock-of-the-rock, Scale-breasted Woodpecker, and Paradise Tanagers (and I fell, for a third time!, on the slick cerro) before finishing up. We ran into an American group with wonderful guide Manuela Restrepo (Manakin Tours) one more time and said our goodbyes. We had seen them at Río Claro as well.

In the afternoon, I took a taxi to the Parque Ecológico Distrital de Humedal Jaboque. Apparently, Apolinar's Wren has become impossible there. I did not see or hear Subtropical Doradito, but its habitat is way way out (assuming they favor *Juncus* here), not accessible so far as I could tell. But lovely views of Short-eared Owl, Aplomado Falcon, Bogota Rail, and Silvery-throated Spinetail from the dike here. A walk into the adjacent (very crowded) park produced nothing.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52348830>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52348717>

Day 33, Monday, 4 February

Flight home.

Day 34, Sunday, 24 February

Flight to Barranquilla. Late arrival, no birding today. Because this component of the visit is so well known, I don't have notes on species below, just the logistics. Species are noted in the eBird accounts. I found eBird hotspot bar charts fairly good in the case of northern Colombia for study. It's critical to know vocalizations well in northern Colombia, as elsewhere, though the studying (and birding) is far easier here than in Andean and Amazonian areas. It's more challenging than, say, Trinidad, but not as challenging as Chiapas.

Night in Barranquilla at Wyndam Garden Hotel

Cost: COP 136,000 (pay at check-in)

Booking: 1748108768

Address: Calle 87 No. 47-88, Barranquilla

Phone: +57 5 311-2020

Day 35, Monday, 25 February

I took a taxi to the Universidad del Norte at 0545 to look for Chestnut-winged Chachalaca; saw Forrest Rowland and Rockjumper group pulling in as we were departing. I took the same taxi back to airport. Picked up Avis car at 0640 or so (Avis: 25 Feb—5 Mar; \$261.49), then went to bird Km 4 (half hour drive) first, then the little rest stop for Bronze-brown Cowbird, then Isla de Salamanca. Alas, it took 90 minutes to get the car rental sorted out, and it was hot by the time I got to Km 4 (and Rockjumper group was there, nice to see them but I would bump into them at virtually every stop later on!). I then drove to Santa Marta to Minca (2 hours), where I had lunch at Hotel Minca - La Casona (and greeted Tom Johnson and Cory Gregory of Field Guides). I paid to park the car for the next four days at Hotel Minca. Then mototaxi to El Dorado (ca. 3 pm). These were not very large expenses (not recorded). Normally, as a ProAves reserve, El Dorado is expensive, but in this case, I got a price break (cost for 2 nights \$105.00), basically a fam rate. As for other ProAves lodges, reservations must be made well in advance online. There is no telephone here at the lodge that one may call, and no email so far as I know. No cell service here, either. I paid in local currency and added a gratuity for staff. For the rental car, it was much cheaper to get a weekly rate than to return a car in Minca and get another in Minca later to drop in Barranquilla.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53263122>
<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53263377>
<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53263443>
<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53263557>
<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53263651>
<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53266214>

Night at El Dorado Lodge.

Day 36, Tuesday, 26 February

Birding above and below the lodge at El Dorado. The very nice gent (Elvis) who feeds the Santa Marta Antpittas at the bio station called them in for us rather late in the morning (ca. 9:00 a.m.). Another independent birder was around, and we tipped him about 20,000COP each for the courtesy.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53266515>
<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53267185>

Night at El Dorado Lodge.

Day 37, Wednesday, 27 February

Birding on foot along the road from up to bio station and then to the summit, where there is a backpacker's hostel. I had set up a reservation there via Facebook, but it turned out I had "booked" with the owner's kids down in Minca, and they hadn't mentioned anything to Mr. Moncho (cell service is almost nil here). Anyhow, total cost with all meals: COP204,000 for 2 nights. Decent food, and the water here is spring water and is potable (no issues). Alas, the place was crawling with bedbugs, so there was a price to be paid for the pleasure of being in an inexpensive place right in the habitat! (One sees a lot of bare-legged backpackers with inflamed bedbug bites in Minca.) The birding was wonderful, however, and to watch a Stygian Owl hunt for 22 minutes was life-changing, truly. Most of the tours that drive up early in the morning from El Dorado don't see this bird.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53267747>

Night at Hostal donde Moncho.

Day 38, Thursday, 28 February

Birding around the summit, with itchy nap but nice hot lunch midday.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53267953>

Night at Hostal donde Moncho.

Day 39, Friday, 1 March

Hike from the summit to Minca. Very birdy for much of this route, and a pleasure to connect with Santa Marta Blossomcrown and others I had not encountered to that point. Around the Hotel Minca, Tropical Screech-Owl is fairly common, and Rufous Nightjar is audible predawn from the terrace there. Blue-and-yellow Macaws in the area could be from the pet trade but are lovely to see in the morning bird traffic here.

This hike is a difficult 23.9 km or so, downhill; eBird considers this distance too long to be meaningful to birders, so it is a hidden checklist unless you have this link:

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53262625>

Night at Hotel Minca - La Casona

Cost: COP110,000 includes breakfast (booked online via hotels.com or similar)

Check-in: 3 pm and later

Phone: +57 315 519-3679

Email: info@hotelminca.com

Website: <http://www.hotelminca.com/en/index.html>

Location: Calle Principal diagonally across from the police station (this is a long driveway on the right as you start to come into town)

Day 40, Saturday, 2 March

Morning birding at Minca, then start coastal birding around Riohacha/Camarones on the peninsula; night in Riohacha (tough town; best security is at a very average but expensive place on the beach called Hotel Gimaura).

Local people on the coast near Camarones are the Wayuu; the best bird guide in the area is Jose Luis. He knows where to find all of the Guajira specialties and is passionate about birding. Phone: + 57 310 701-2276 or 315 375-8491. If you can't get him, there are more guides, and you'll likely be met by one or more offering services around the oceanside restaurant at Camarones.

For listers, don't miss: El Remanso del Santuario (11.43278, -73.08577; well signed); you will want to tick your House Sparrow! I forgot this one.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53280752>
<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53290440>
<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53291996>
<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53295900>
<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53301835>
<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53299187>

Night at Hotel Gimaura Resort

Cost: About \$100US

Email: recepcion@hotelgimaura.com

Phone: +57 5 728-0574

Website: <https://www.hotelgimaura.com>

Day 41, Sunday, 3 March

Bird Camarones areas, then westward along coast to the national park. The routine for getting into the National Park is fairly straightforward, but expensive and time-consuming. The Jasayma Tayrona was a nice enough place to stay (cost: COP 220,000 per night less 4400 prepaid; pay 215,600 in cash on arrival). I missed my only target bird here, Blue-billed Curassow, but it's normally only seen early in the morning on the road edges, before the tourists swarm this park. However, the traffic of the vendors and staff is intense even pre-dawn, so one would need to be lucky.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53403386>
<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53403441>
<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53403474>
<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53403852>

Night in Tayrona National Park at Jasayma Tayrona (eastern end of park).

Day 42, Monday, 4 March

Birding around Tayrona, then back to Palermo, with a few stops; night in Barranquilla.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53404045>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53384707>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53386959>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53399078>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53399011>

Night at Hotel Stanford Plaza

Avenida Olaya Herrera #84-78/Carrera 46 No 84-78, 080020 Barranquilla

Cost: about \$100US (3x normal rate because of Carneval)

Email: via website

Phone: +57 5 367-6767

Cell phone: +57 317 510-3269

Website: <http://www.hotelstanford.com.co/?lang=en>

Day 43, Tuesday, 5 March

Drop off rental car; fly out.

Bird observations

The table below includes only the first observation/contact with the species listed. I've tried to record subspecies as well, but most of these are based on geography rather than critical study of plumage, structure, or voice, so take them with a grain of salt (I do). In all, 977 species were logged, including 59 Colombian endemic species (of about 87 listed currently), with a further 88 regional endemics (those recorded in adjacent countries). Of the Colombian endemics I tried to find, Blue-billed Curassow did not work out, nor did Apical Flycatcher (midday miss on first day). Apolinar's Wren has become almost impossible in the site I visited, as it turns out. Other endemic species for future visits include Dusky Starfrontlet (not present in midwinter at Montezuma), Santa Marta Sabrewing (no locations known to me), Santa Marta Wren, Blue-bearded Helmetcrest (in both cases, higher elevation areas closed to birders), Perija birds (Metaltail, Thistletail, Brushfinch, Tapaculo), Green-bearded Helmetcrest, Gorgeted Puffleg, Colorful Puffleg, Chiribiquete Emerald, Sooty-capped Puffbird, Flame-winged (Brown-breasted) Parakeet, East Andean Antbird, Cundinamarca Antpitta, Urrao Antpitta, Matorral Tapaculo, Paramillo Tapaculo, San Andres Vireo, Apolinar's Wren, Antioquia Brushfinch, Dusky-headed Brushfinch, Mountain Grackle. Of the regional endemics, Greater Scythebill and Bicolored Antvireo were sad misses (no responses at known territories during rainy visits at Montezuma), as was Masked Saltator at Río Blanco. I can't complain. I had a blast. Great people, great birds. If anyone would like a list of the 977, plus subspecies notes, or mammal list, email me at thalassoica@gmail.com.

— Ned