

COSTA RICA

WITH

WILD INSIGHTS

1– 16 FEBRUARY 2025



THE ULTIMATE TRAVEL COMPANY
ESCORTED TOURS



Wild Insights
Costa Rica



INCORPORATING
BRIDGE &
WICKERS

COSTA RICA – PARADISE OF THE NEOTROPICS

1 – 16 FEBRUARY 2025



Arenal

LEADERS: KEITH AND LINDA OFFORD

Keith and Linda Offord are both zoology graduates, very experienced field ornithologists and have run countless wildlife watching holidays around the world. Together, they set up Wild Insights in 2004 and have operated a consistently sold-out UK and overseas programme with over 95% repeat bookings - a reflection of their consistent professionalism, care and attention.

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DETAILED ITINERARY

Be prepared to be stunned by the extraordinary array of birds and other wildlife which awaits you in Costa Rica. This tiny country strategically positioned on the migration route for the Americas boasts over 800 species of bird including some of the most eye-catching in the world. The forests drip with tanagers and warblers and echo to the exotic utterances of Montezuma Oropendolas while whole new families of birds can be discovered such as foliage-gleaners, antbirds and woodcreepers. Perhaps the most memorable are the iridescent hummingbirds which whiz around like large insects, pausing only to feed from nectar-producing flowers. High in the trees, fabulously coloured trogons might be spotted along with the aptly named Resplendent Quetzal. We will be exploring a number of key habitats from cloud forests to coastal plains, taking time to enjoy and savour the riches on offer. Our accommodation has been chosen for comfort, quality and location and we will be assisted by Paco Madrigal, one of the finest guides in Costa Rica.



Three-toed sloth





DAY 1: SATURDAY, 1 FEBRUARY

LONDON / SAN JOSE

Depart London Gatwick at 11.05 hrs on a British Airways direct flight to San Jose arriving at 16.50 hrs. On arrival, transfer to the Buena Vista Hotel for the first night. Buena Vista is a delightful, perfectly situated boutique hotel near to the International airport, located in the lush mountains of Alajuela with incredible views of the volcanoes Poas, Barva and Irazú, the central valley, tropical forest and coffee plantations. No doubt we will encounter our first birds in the garden such as Greater Kiskadee, Brown Jay, Blue-gray Tanager and Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, amongst others. The mature trees can attract the very impressive Pale-billed and Linneated Woodpeckers along with our first Keel-billed Toucans.

DAY 2 - 4: SUNDAY 2 – TUESDAY 4 FEBRUARY

SAN JOSE / SAVEGRE

After breakfast we set off for Cerro de la Muerte, stopping en route at Paraiso Quetzal for lunch. The feeders here attract a wide array of highland hummingbird species and along with a multitude of forest birds including the stunning Golden-browed Chlorophonia, both Long-tailed and Black-and-yellow Silky-flycatchers, Fiery-throated Hummingbird and the unusual Large-footed Finch, we may be lucky enough to encounter our first, aptly named, Resplendent Quetzal. Our next destination is the highest point we travel to, the paramo, where trees give way to low-growing vegetation. This is the top spot for the highly specialised Volcano Junco and possibly Timberline Wren. We then continue to the delightful Savegre Hotel where three nights are spent. Eighty-nine kilometres south of San Jose in a private natural reserve of 400 hectares and just 9 km from Los Quetzales National Park this is the perfect starting point for exploring Costa Rica's magnificent tropical cloud forest. The rest of the afternoon is spent around the gardens and grounds where Resplendent Quetzals are regularly seen as well as an array of hummingbird species, Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Sooty Robin and Sooty-capped Bush-tanager to name a few. Nicely appointed cabins and excellent food add to the enjoyment of our stay in the fresh mountain climate.

We spend the next two full day exploring the gardens, riparian highland habitats, and old growth tropical oak cloud forests surrounding the Savegre Hotel. Walking through the gardens and along the Savegre river, we can hope to see Flame-coloured and Spangle-cheeked Tanagers, Collared Trogon, Torrent Tyrannulet, Volcano Hummingbird, White-throated Mountain Gem and Talamanca Hummingbird among many others. Some of the other species we will be looking for include Black-faced Solitaire, Spotted Wood-Quail, Buffy Tuftedcheek, Ruddy Treerunner and Ochraceous Wren.



Emerald Basilisk



Sunbittern



DAY 5 - 7: WEDNESDAY 5 – FRIDAY 7 FEBRUARY

SAVEGRE / VILLA LAPAS

We now travel to Hotel Villa Lapas, down on the Pacific coast, for the next three nights. Our route will initially take us south where we will be looking for Turquoise Cotinga, Pearl Kite and Fork-tailed Flycatcher which are on the northern edge of their range. We will take lunch en route. As close as it is possible to get to Carara National Park, Villa Lapas combines comfortable air-conditioned accommodation and tasty cuisine with stunning surroundings, packed with flora and fauna. Just by walking the beautiful flowing river which goes through the grounds of the hotel it is possible to see an amazing number of rainforest species. We will explore the bird-rich grounds, and hope to see Scarlet Macaws and Bare-throated Tiger Herons, Long-tailed Manakin, and Gartered Trogon. We will also visit the nearby Playa Azul and dry forest where some of the species we will look for are White-throated Magpie-Jay, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Melodious Blackbird, Pacific Screech-Owl, Spectacled Owl, Crane Hawk, Streaked Oriole and many species of shorebirds.

We spend the next two days in and around the Carara Biological Reserve, a unique climatological zone where the ecosystem of the humid southern coastal region joins the dry climate of the northern Pacific area, becoming a rich meeting ground for species from both regions. This is truly one of the highlights of the tour, where we hope to find the Orange Collared Manakin dancing in their lek. It is also great location to spot antbirds, up to five different species of Trogons, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, and Royal Flycatcher. During our time here we will be taking a boat trip on the river Tarcoles which gives us close encounters with birds of the mangroves such as Mangrove and Prothonotary Warblers, Panama Flycatcher, potentially five species of kingfishers, Zone-tailed and Black Hawks plus an array of waders including Collared Plover.

DAY 8 - 10: SATURDAY 8 – MONDAY 10 FEBRUARY

VILLA LAPAS / ARENAL



Green Violet-ear
Ant-thrush



Black-faced

After a relaxed start, we travel to Arenal Observatory for three nights, stopping for lunch en route. Set high on a ridge facing Costa Rica's most active and spectacular volcano and the only lodge located within the Arenal Volcano National Park, travellers enjoy a high standard accommodation and a truly unique experience. The lodge itself is within 870 acres of land including 270 acres of primary rainforest fitted with well-marked trails and the feeding station at the Observatory is a magnet for a range of birds. This mid-elevation area also is an excellent spot for birds such as Crimson-collared, Bay-headed, Silver-throated, Emerald and Hepatic Tanagers, Red-legged and Green Honeycreepers, Spotted, Bicoloured and



Ocellated Antbirds, Tropical Pewee, Black-thighed Grosbeak, Buff-rumped Warbler and a wide range of raptors including Ornate Hawk-eagle and White Hawk.

The extensive trails take us through a wide range of habitats, from more open pasture to dense rainforest and this provides an equally varied range of bird species. We will also visit the nearby Bogarin Trail which are outstanding for a range of easily-viewed birds and feeders and provides very good chances to see Three-toed Sloths.

DAY 11 - 13: TUESDAY 11 – THURSDAY 13 FEBRUARY

ARENAL / SELVA VERDE

Today we travel, birdwatching along the way, to Selva Verde Lodge in the tropical lowlands of Sarapiquí where we spend the next three nights. Selva Verde is set in its own rainforest grounds which border the fast-flowing River Sarapiquí. It also adjoins La Selva Biological Research Station which has a truly amazing range of flora and fauna. The combination of tasty food and comfortable accommodation, makes this an ideal centre from which to explore the area. This lowland rain forest region at the base of the Caribbean slope is well-known for hosting the greatest diversity of tropical flora and fauna in the country. Here the Sunbittern, Black-faced Grosbeak, and Rufous-naped Wood-Rail are a few of the inhabitants of the area. This is the most likely spot on the trip to see the Great Green Macaw, an endangered species. Also lurking in the forest are two- and three-toed sloths, 3 different species of monkeys, and peccaries.

We spend the next two days in and around La Selva Biological Station run by the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS), clearly a highlight of the tour. The station is among the four most famous tropical research facilities in the world and home to more than 420 bird species, 500 species of butterflies, 55 species of snakes, and 120 species of mammals. A vast variety of different species of trees can be seen in the arboretum. There are also three species of Tinamou that inhabit La Selva. We will be looking for Rufous Motmot, Trogons, Caciques, Purple-throated Fruit Crow, and Snowy Cotinga, among many others. Animals here are not camera shy, so there will be ample photo opportunities. Peccaries (wild pigs), agoutis, coatis, sloths, and monkeys frequent the area. We will also be taking a boat ride on the river Sarapiquí with chances of Bay Wren, Bat Falcon and Green Ibis.

DAY 14: FRIDAY, 14 FEBRUARY

SELVA VERDE / SAN JOSE

Our final morning will be spent at the nearby Pierella Gardens, a perfect place to see a wide range of Costa Rican butterflies as well as having bird-rich trails. After lunch we then call at a private reserved owned and run by the fine artist, Cope. He has set up a fantastic bird observation hide with feeders and time permitting we may be able to see some very special forest birds including Crested and Spectacles Owls. We return to San Jose for the final night at the wonderfully comfortable Bougainvillea Hotel which draws birdwatchers from far and wide, not only for the high standard of accommodation and food but also the 4 hectares of tropical gardens which provide another chance to see a range of central valley species. Only 45 minutes from the international airport it is ideally placed for a relaxed final stop.

DAY 15: SATURDAY, 15 FEBRUARY

SAN JOSE / LONDON

After a relaxed morning, enjoying more birding in the grounds we have lunch and then transfer to San Jose Airport for a direct British Airways flight to London Gatwick departing at 18.30 hrs.

DAY 16: SUNDAY, 16 FEBRUARY

LONDON

Arrive at London Gatwick at 10.50 hr



TOUR PRICE

COST: £6,750 PER PERSON

Single Supplement: £790 per person

Please note that the minimum number group size for the tour is 8 and the maximum is 12.

PRICE INCLUDES

- economy class scheduled flights
- air passenger duty, passenger service charge, airline security charges, airport taxes and fuel surcharges where applicable - currently £100 (liable to change without notice)
- accommodation throughout as shown in the itinerary
- all meals
- all entrance fees, visits, excursions and transportation as per the itinerary
- gratuities in restaurants for included meals; gratuities to guide/s gratuities to driver/s; portage
- the services of your tour leader throughout

PRICE EXCLUDES

- travel insurance
- items of personal expenditure (e.g. telephone calls / laundry etc.)
- government levies or taxes introduced after costing and publication of this programme on 28/03/23

AIRLINE TICKETS

As a tour operator we have access to special airfares. While these offer good value, they do carry certain restrictions applied by the airline. Please ask us for details.

Note: If you are thinking about using air miles to upgrade to a premium cabin on the flights, please check with us first as fare restrictions might not permit this.

AIRLINE SEATING

The rules governing the pre-booking of seats vary from airline to airline. Some allow us to pre-book seats immediately and without charge, some only once the tickets are issued but with charge, and others only when you check in either online or at the airport.

We will clarify the rules for your specific carrier(s) with our confirmation documents. In the event that seating cannot be arranged until tickets are issued (normally six weeks prior to departure) and you prefer not to wait, we can issue your tickets earlier provided you are happy to pay in advance for the flight costs in addition to the required deposit for the holiday. However, please be mindful that the majority of our discounted fare tickets, once issued, are non-refundable and will attract fees should you wish to make any date changes. Nor will you be allowed to change the actual flight routing.



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BOOK WITH CONFIDENCE

You will probably be aware of the difficulties many travellers faced with obtaining refunds when their holidays were disrupted or cancelled as a result of such events as ash cloud and political unrest and are again facing now because of the Coronavirus pandemic. By booking your travel arrangements with us, not only are you guaranteed the peace of mind that comes with full financial protection but also all the round the clock assistance we are able to provide, should the need arise.

Should there be restrictions in place during the immediate lead up to the trip that prevent you from travelling, we will either postpone it or offer you an alternative. If neither of these two options are acceptable, we will offer you the choice of a Refund Credit Note, redeemable on a specified date and fully protected by our ABTA bond, or a cash refund of all monies paid.

CHANGES TO THE ITINERARY

Please note, that certain elements of this itinerary, and/or the order of events, may well be subject to alteration due to circumstances beyond our control.

FITNESS TO TRAVEL

The pace will be relaxed throughout. There will however be walks, generally no longer than 4 Km, at a gentle pace, mostly on level gradients but occasionally over uneven ground. Opportunities will be taken routinely to stop. A reasonable level of mobility is required throughout. Whilst we do not impose any age limitations on joining a tour, participants must be reasonably fit. The very nature of the activities involved in our tours (and the difficulties of direct access by vehicle in various places) means that a certain amount of walking and standing is unavoidable on almost all tours. We regret that our tours are not suitable for people who have significant difficulty in walking, may require wheelchair assistance at any time, or are unable to keep pace with the group. If you are in any doubt as to the suitability of a tour, please make this known to us before you book, and we will advise you accordingly. The Ultimate Travel Company reserves the right to decline a reservation without necessarily giving a reason.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

As we are not medical experts, we advise that you contact your doctor or local health authority for up-to-date medical advice.

We would advise that all your routine vaccinations are up-to date prior to travel. No special precautions are required for travel to Costa Rica and no inoculations are compulsory, although a Yellow Fever certificate is required if you have travelled within an infected area recently.

Our local ground agent provides a clear protocol which minimises the impact on the tour and other guests should anyone contract Covid-19.

A number of inoculations are 'recommended' in certain circumstances - hepatitis A and B, polio, tetanus, typhoid, diphtheria & TB and Japanese B encephalitis.

PASSPORT AND VISA INFORMATION

British nationals do not need a visa to enter Costa Rica. Passengers should hold a full passport. Please ensure that your passport is valid for at least six months from the date of entry.



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FCO ADVICE

We recommend that you periodically review the travel advice issued by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, which relates to all aspects of your destination, at www.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo.

OTHER

Please ensure that your travel insurance is in order. It is important that you take details of your travel insurance with you since this will contain important contacting information in the case of an emergency.

WHY CHOOSE US?

The Ultimate Travel Company has been organising bespoke, tailor-made holidays and escorted group tours around the world since the early 1990s. The opportunity that we identified then was for a travel company with the knowledge and enthusiasm of a smaller specialist, but with the range and buying power of a much larger organisation, and we like to think that we have maintained this balance over the years.

More importantly, we try to be an easy and friendly company to deal with, and because most of us have had the good fortune to work abroad, we are able to approach travel in a sensitive and intelligent way.

QUALITY OF SERVICE

We like to think that our success has been built on a simple formula - to deliver a high standard of service before, during and after each holiday, a duty of care and commitment to you, and value for money. We aim to be totally flexible in our approach, as this allows us to create the holiday that you want and one that is easy and enjoyable to plan.

However, if you feel that there are areas in which we could improve our service to you, please do not hesitate to contact either our Managing Director Nick Van Gruisen, or Executive Director Rowan Paterson, on 020 7386 4646. You can also email them:

nick@theultimatetravelcompany.co.uk
rowan@theultimatetravelcompany.co.uk

WHAT WE OFFER

First-hand knowledge and personal service is at the core of what we offer. Our consultants travel to all the destinations that we feature on a very regular basis, so that the advice you receive is accurate and up to date. They will also look after you from the outset and assume full responsibility for ensuring that your travel plans are designed and delivered as requested. Planning a holiday should be an enjoyable and effortless experience, and we will do all that we can to ensure that this is the case.

OUR REPUTATION

We have grown largely through personal recommendation and repeat business, and so we treat our reputation with care. The directors and owners of the company, led by Nick Van Gruisen, are very much 'hands on' so immediate decisions can be taken to ensure the standard of service that our clients have come to expect is maintained.

LOCAL REPRESENTATION

Equally crucial is the quality of our local associates and suppliers. It is they who look after you on holiday and it is their guides, vehicles and general support service that will determine your enjoyment of it. We therefore take great care to ensure that our ground handlers have the requisite expertise, efficiency and



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creativity, and also the ability to deal sensitively and swiftly with any situation that might arise. The fact that we have worked together for many years and know each other well is a further bonus.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

As a company with a passion for travel, we understand the vital support that tourism can provide to communities and fragile habitats throughout the world. At the same time, we are aware that tourism can have a negative impact and are committed to doing what we can to minimise this risk.

In 2007, an independent body completed an Environmental Audit on all aspects of The Ultimate Travel Company. This covered not only our own practices but those of our worldwide suppliers, thereby ensuring that we all met the necessary environmental and employment criteria.

The audit also measured the carbon footprint produced by our London office and by our international travel, and we now offset this with an annual donation to Social Change and Development, a small but dynamic tree planting initiative in India.

Further initiatives include a 'charity donation' scheme, whereby we ask clients for a voluntary contribution of £10 which we then match. As a result of this initiative, a handful of small overseas charities, and the healthcare, environmental and educational projects that they run, now share an annual donation of more than \$100,000.

If you want further details of these initiatives, please ring Nick Van Gruisen on 020 7386 4646.

EXTRA VALUE

It can be difficult at times to recognise the extra value promised by travel companies. Generally speaking, we all offer the same flight, the same hotel, the same excursion, the same sunset, and at similar prices... indeed, in many ways, the same holiday experience!

Here, at The Ultimate Travel Company, we strive to go further. While we believe that the diversity of destination, intimate product knowledge and personal service we offer already sets us apart, we supply all our clients with detailed information on all aspects of their forthcoming journey, a 10% discount voucher at Daunt Books (described by The Daily Telegraph as 'the most beautiful bookshop in London - designed for travellers who like reading') and a welcome home 'surprise'.

Honeymooners can also look forward to a wedding gift on arrival at their chosen destination.

Moreover, we continually monitor your movements while you are away so that we can offer any assistance that might be required, effectively and without delay. And if genuine problems do arise as a result of any error on our part (few as these may be!), we will not shy away from our own responsibilities and our commitment to you.



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Wild Insights overseas tours are part of a wider programme of Ultimate Travel Company holidays worldwide, and their terms and conditions apply. The Ultimate Travel Company is fully licensed and bonded with ABTA and IATA and all their overseas tours are fully protected by their Civil Aviation Authority ATOL Licence, number 5111.

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