

On the Trail of the Great Green Macaw

May 20-29

This tour will take you to the last remaining habitat in Costa Rica for the critically endangered Great Green Macaw (*Ara ambigua*). Throughout this trip you will be searching for and observing the Great Green Macaw, while also learning about the conservation efforts for this species. You will also have the opportunity to view the other macaw species in Costa Rica, the Scarlet Macaw (*Ara macao*), which is also endangered in Costa Rica.

Day 1 San Jose

Arrive in San Jose, Costa Rica where you will be picked up and transferred to your hotel for a welcome and introduction to the trip. Overnight at Hotel Bougainvillea.

Day 2 Tirimbina

Make your first stop at the newest addition to the Costa Rican Bird Route, Quebrada Gonzalez. Quebrada Gonzalez offers access to the impressive Braulio Carrillo National Park, a park that protects 115 acres of highland rainforest and cloud forest. Of the 864 species of birds found in Costa Rica, 550 have been reported at Braulio Carrillo...truly worth the stop! Continue on to Tirimbina Rainforest Center where you will learn about this site's ongoing conservation efforts and the role that eco-tourism has taken in this region. Overnight at Tirimbina.

Day 3 Albergue

Spend the morning visiting one of the remote sites of the Bird Route, Albergue El Socorro. Albergue is nestled in the mountains, and boasts the highest elevation of any of the sites, offering a chance to view bird species not found elsewhere in the Bird Route. Meet the landowner, Jose Miranda, who will take you on a tour of his operation and share stories of recent Great Green Macaw sightings. Enjoy a home-cooked meal and get an understanding of the migration of the Great Green, or Lapa Verde, as it's commonly called in Spanish. Return to Tirimbina for the afternoon where



Photos by Mark Stafford and Amy Leist

you have the option of doing some afternoon birding on the trails and suspension bridges, or opt to take the famous Chocolate Tour of Tirimbina. Overnight at Tirimbina.

Day 4 Maquenque

Journey deep into Great Green Macaw country as you head toward Maquenque Eco-Lodge, a newly created 148-acre reserve just north of Boca Tapada de San Carlos. This site offers access to the newly created Maquenque National Wildlife Refuge and provides some of the best viewing opportunities of the endangered Great Green Macaw (GGM). Spend the day looking for the macaw, stopping at a nest tree for the GGM. Overnight at Maquenque.

Day 5 Mi Pedacito

Visit nearby Mi Pedacito de Cielo, another Bird Route site offering prime Great Green Macaw habitat, and another chance to visit a macaw nesting tree. Mi Pedacito de Cielo translates to "My Little Piece of Heaven," and it will not take you long to appreciate why it was so named. This charming site overlooks the San Carlos River and is the perfect place to relax after a morning of birding. Enjoy a homemade feast by the owner and learn about this family's efforts to protect rainforest habitat. Return to Maquenque Eco-lodge in the afternoon where you will have the option (\$) of exploring on foot, or trying a new perspective of seeing the rainforest...on horseback! Overnight at Maquenque.

Day 6 Laguna Lagarto

Just a short distance away is yet another excellent location for seeing the endangered Great Green Macaw, the Bird Route site Laguna del Lagarto Lodge. This site offers 1,250 acres of prime habitat to explore. After birding, learn about how the history of this site and its role in protecting habitat for the macaw. Another emblematic species to be on the watch for here is the Agami Heron, typically found hiding near the lagoons. Enjoy a buffet lunch, keeping an eye on the feeders out front, and in the afternoon return to Maquenque Eco-Lodge for one last evening.

Day 7 Termales del Bosque

Pack up your things and begin to head south, making a stop at the house where Great Green Macaw research began a decade ago, launching the regional effort to bring this species back from the brink of extinction. Continue on to Termales del Bosque, a lodge located at the base of the Platanar volcano and the Juan Castro Blanco National Park, providing a unique ecosystem. The main agenda item will be relaxation, as this site boasts seven natural hot spring pools, which vary in temperature, and are surrounded by forest. Overnight at Termales del Bosque.

Day 8 Villa Lapas

Leave the trail of the Great Green Macaw behind as you head toward the Pacific coast of Costa Rica and the opportunity to see a different variety of birds, and the other macaw of Costa Rica, the Scarlet Macaw. Your destination on this day is Villa Lapas (Macaw Village), aptly named as this private reserve is but a short distance from Carara National Park, where one of the largest remaining populations of Scarlet Macaws is

known to exist in Costa Rica. Spend the remainder of your day at Villa Lapas, birding and enjoying the amenities at this site abundant on colonial charm.

Day 9 Carara National Park

Arise early to take advantage of the birding at Carara National Park. Carara lies within the northernmost region of Pacific rainforest remaining in Costa Rica, and is the beginning of the transition zone into the tropical dry forests of the northwest. An abundance of birds utilize this park, including several species of trogons, motmots, antbirds and manakins. Visit a Scarlet Macaw nesting tree and learn about the Scarlet Macaw research project that is based out of Carara. In the afternoon you are in for a real treat, as you will take a birding boat tour through the mangrove swamps on the Rio Tarcoles. Be prepared for a staggering number of shorebird species that will appear around every bend of this relaxing ride. Overnight at Villa Lapas.

Day 10 Departures

You will be shuttled to the airport for your flight home.



Photos by Bill Volkert, Holly Robertson and Yehudi Hernandez



Rate: \$1,750, based on double occupancy. Single room supplement is \$408. Price of tour includes daily breakfast, lodging, ground transportation, guides, entrance fees, \$50 donation to [Rainforest Biodiversity Group](#), and activities not noted as Optional (\$). Price of tour does not include airfare, airport tax (\$26), alcoholic beverages, snacks, bottled water, meals other than breakfast, activities indicated as optional, or gratuities.

Register by: February 20, 2010 (50% deposit due at time of registration). To register or for more info, contact Holly Robertson at info@servicebirding.com.