

**Florida Keys Tropical Research Ecological Exchange Institute:
Unique Birding & Nature Experience in Costa Rica
9 days, 8 nights
March 11-18, 2017
Optional 3 night add on to Corcovado Private Preserve
March 18-21, 2017**

Thanks to its unique position as an ecological bridge between North and South America Costa Rica contains an extraordinary level of biodiversity within a relatively small area. It is home to nearly 250 species of plants, more than 900 bird species, 220 species of reptiles, and 160 species of amphibians.

The bird life is truly extraordinary. In addition to typical resident neo tropical families such as toucans (6 species), trogons (10 species), parrots and macaws (17 species) and motmots (6 species), Costa Rica's is also characterized by many migratory birds coming from The US and Canada to winter like warblers, herons, raptors and even some hummingbirds. You will love seeing our upper Midwest feathered friends in their winter home!

The purpose of this unique itinerary is to provide an immersion in the rich fauna and flora of the varying tropical habitats of Costa Rica with an emphasis on bird watching. We won't let you go without having shown you at least 3 species of toucans and the stunning scarlet macaws among many others.

We will combine easy-paced bird watching led by highly experienced local guides with other activities like zip lining, as well as visits to hot springs, and volcanoes. And we will leave plenty of time for relaxing at some of Costa Rica's most exclusive hotels and lodges.

San José – Carara area – Monteverde – Arenal – San José

A Costa Rican Adventure of a Lifetime

Day 1: airport – Santa Domingo de Heredia – Hotel Cariari

You will be welcomed at the airport by your guide and transferred in an air-conditioned bus to Hotel Cariari for your first night. This beautiful hotel is located only 10 minutes from the airport. There you can relax in the lovely rooms and enjoy the large swimming pool, good restaurant, bar and casino. There will be evening cocktails while our guide presents an introduction to the days to come.

Day 2: transfer to Carara area – Tarcoles boat tour – Hotel Villas Caletas

Your local guide will start with an optional bird walk in the beautiful gardens of the hotel. After breakfast we will check out and then travel by air-conditioned, private coach all the way down to the Pacific coast to the tiny town of Guacalillo. Here a refreshing fruit snack and fruit juice will welcome us. Afterwards a private boat tour is scheduled on the Tarcoles River where we will explore the mangroves in search of birds like Little blue, tricolored and yellow-crowned night-heron, common black hawk, osprey and up to 5 species of kingfishers can be expected here! And we will have a chance of spotting huge American crocodiles of up to 5 meters long...afterwards a lunch will be served at the edge of the river.

In the afternoon we will check into the fantastic [Hotel Villas Caletas](#), a luxurious boutique hotel located on a rainforest hilltop overlooking the spectacular coastline and lush tropical forest. In the late afternoon we can enjoy one of the most spectacular sunsets the country has to offer while pairs of scarlet macaws fly by.

Day 3: Parque Nacional Carara – tropical beach – Hotel Villas Caletas

In the morning we will explore the rainforest of [Parque Nacional Carara](#). Your guide will talk about the ecology of this precious ecosystem and will help you spot animals like monkeys (up to 3 species), sloths, agouti's and many birds. Parque Nacional Carara is known as one of the top locations for bird watching in the country with beautiful species like the colorful orange-collared manakin, black-headed trogon, turquoise-browed motmot, black-mandibled toucan and great tinamou. In the afternoon we will visit

the private beach of the hotel where we can enjoy the scenery and the many seabirds like brown pelicans, magnificent frigate birds, royal terns, and laughing gulls.

Day 4: Monteverde – Monteverde Lodge and Gardens

We will leave the ocean and climb the Tilaran highlands where we will pass through beautiful rural countryside as we make our way to the unique cloud forest environment of Monteverde.

We will stay at the lovely [Monteverde Lodge and Gardens](#) featuring lovely forest views. After lunch we will have time to explore the beautifully landscaped garden of the hotel featuring typical plants of the cloud forest such as tree ferns, bromeliads and orchids. We will take a look at the hotel's butterfly garden where we can expect several colorful species including the spectacular blue morpho. There are also many delightful birds species here such as the emerald and the hummingbird gallery attracts several species that can be approached up to half a meter, including violet sabrewing, purple-throated mountain-gem and also a chance to see the coppery-headed emerald with a distribution limited to the mountains of Costa Rica and nowhere else in the world.

Day 5: Monteverde - Hanging Bridges trail –

An early optional bird walk in the hotel gardens will be offered for the early risers. After breakfast we will go to the [Selvatura hanging bridges](#) trail, where we can experience the unique cloud forest from the treetops by large suspension bridges.

This allows us to enjoy unique forest canopy views and explore the fauna and flora of the upper levels of the forest. An additional local guide will accompany us in search of the unique avifauna of the area. With some luck we may see one of the most beautiful birds in the world--the resplendent quetzal...the male of this glittering-green and red trogon has a tail of more than 1 meter.

The highlands of Costa Rica including Monteverde are among the best places within the quetzal's range to see this wonderful bird. In the afternoon there will be time for optional activities like zip lining, horseback riding, continued bird watching with the guide, or simply relaxing at the hotel.

Day 6: Arenal – Hotel Arenal Nayara

Passing by the beautiful Lake Arenal we will arrive in the La Fortuna area where the dark, almost geometrically perfect cone of the Arenal volcano rises out of the emerald rainforest This will be our setting of the following two day.

For the lunch we will be guests of a local farmer who will guide us through his vegetable garden where you can get to know some typical tropical fruits and vegetables like squash, sugar cane, cas, the pejiballe palmnuts, plantains etc. He will invite people to help with the harvest and preparation of a typical Cost Rican meal and will also show his oxen-driven mill to press sugar cane sticks into a sweet juice that is used to process into a rum-like spirit.

After lunch we will check-in to the beautiful [Hotel Arenal Nayara](#), a 5 star hotel that Conde Naste Traveler named as the number resort in Central and South America. Here you will enjoy luxurious bungalows with private balconies plus an outside Jacuzzi with spectacular volcano views. In the late afternoon we will visit the famous [Tabacon Grand Spa](#) and thermal resort. Here you can soak yourself in one of the many small naturally heated pools scattered throughout this spectacular rainforest setting and get a natural hydro massage from one of the many small waterfalls pouring from above...afterwards we can enjoy the tasteful buffet dinner at Tabacon.

Day 7: Arenal – trails of the Arenal Observatory Lodge

After an optional early bird walk and healthy breakfast, we will head for the very isolated [Arenal Observatory Lodge](#). Here we can enjoy panoramic views of the surroundings and walk the beautiful trails through an impressive tropical garden and along the rainforest edge.

This area is very rich in birds and can easily produce a list of 50 + species in a couple of hours including the stunning keel-billed toucan, Montezuma oropendola's, and colorful tanagers like the red-legged honeycreeper, green honeycreeper and golden-hooded tanager. The area is also very good for hummingbirds with the Violet-headed Hummingbird and possibly the black-crested coquette. In the afternoon optional activities will be offered including horseback riding, zip-lining, mountain-

biking (additional cost), another bird walk with our local bird specialist or just relax and enjoy the luxury of the hotel or have a massage in their spa complex.

Day 8: Danaus Ecocenter – Santo Domingo de Heredia

On the way back to the Central Valley we will stop at the [Danaus Ecocenter](#) to explore a small piece of rainforest with a pond in the middle with a nesting colony of the peculiar boat-billed herons. They are used to people and can be approached easily for some great pictures. Besides that often three-toed sloth and the Central American agouti can be seen here. Passing by the beautiful rainforest of the San Luis area we will get back to the Central Valley to spend the last night in Hotel Buena Vista. This hotel provides beautiful views of the Central Valley, a small garden, swimming pool and short trails through the coffee plantations providing more bird watching opportunities.

*Day 9: transfer to airport Transfer to the airport
End of your trip unless taking the add on*

Details and Pricing

What is included?

All luxury accommodations included in double rooms

Meals and drinks:

Nine breakfasts, seven lunches, five dinners. Unlimited bottled water is included as well as trails snacks.

Ground Transportation:

All transportation is included and will be by private coach. We will be using a Marcopolo air-conditioned bus; with 20 participants we will travel in a Marcopolo Senior (26 seater).

Tours/guides:

- Experienced licensed English-speaking naturalist guide equipped with telescope and green laser pointer from airport pick up until airport drop off.
- Extra local guides: on day 3 in Parque Nacional Carara, on day 5 during hanging bridges walk and on day 7 during walk in Arenal Observatory Lodge.
- All tours / activities as mentioned in the itinerary

Also Included:

- All entry fees
- Information package that will be send forty-five days before arrival with practical information and background information in order to prepare for the tour.
- Pre-trip conference call two weeks prior
- One “Wildlife of Costa Rica” guide per person
- One stainless steel water bottle per person.
- One detailed roadmap of Costa Rica per room

Not included:

- International flights
- Not mentioned activities / meals
- Alcoholic beverages
- Tips

Pricing:

Per person staying in double room

Max # of participants	Price per person double
20	\$3700

The trip fee includes a tax-deductible gift of \$500 to support the conservation efforts of West Wisconsin Land Trust.

For trip booking and questions please contact:

Florida Keys T.R.E.E. Institute
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First Optional Add On Trip
Luxury in a Remote Rainforest
March 19-23-2017
Three private bungalows

March 19, 20 & 21: local flight – Corcovado

You will be transferred by private van to the airport and during a short flight of about 30 minutes you will enjoy stunning views of the dramatic Central Mountain Range with a chance of seeing the smoking Turrialba Volcano. Upon arrival in Puerto Jimenez you will be transferred to the isolated and very exclusive five-star [Rio Lapas Eco Lodge](#).

During your three-night stay you will be able to enjoy a luxurious bungalow located along a spectacular ridge, which overlooks the rainforest and Pacific Ocean. The bungalows are separate units and are open-air with screens that allow you to experience the sounds, sights and smells of the rainforest and the ocean. Among the many amenities of your bungalow are a private outdoor deck with rain head shower and lounge chairs and spacious indoor bathroom with two showers. Expect to be overwhelmed not only by the luxury of the lodge but also by the intense natural experience that this rare location provides.

At the edge of [Parque Nacional Corcovado](#), one of the largest and most intact pieces of lowland virgin rainforest in Central America, some of the most spectacular wildlife will be around you the moment you step out of your room. Up to two species of sloths, all four species of monkeys (including the endangered Central American Squirrel Monkeys), Scarlet Macaws, and two species of toucans are just a few examples of what can be seen during a short walk from your room to the restaurant!

During your stay you can relax and disconnect from everything, and enjoy delicious gourmet meals based on fresh, local products in the resort's a la carte restaurant. But if desired you can also participate on one of the many activities that the tour desk has to offer such as dolphin watching, horseback riding, a guided visit to Corcovado National Park, kayak tours, or a massage or yoga session overlooking the Ocean.

3/22: local flight – San José

Transfer back to Puerto Jimenez from where you will fly back to San José. Last night you will spend on a beautiful hotel a little outside of the busy center with a large botanical garden full of exotic plants like bromeliads, heliconias and impressive orchid collection.

3/23: transfer to the airport

Private transfer to the airport

What is included?

Accommodations: All accommodations included in double rooms, ocean view bungalow in Lapa Rios Lodge, 3/19-3/22.

Hotel Bougainvillea-garden view room on 3/22

Meals and drinks: three meals a day are included from breakfast on 03/19 through breakfast on 3/23. Each meal includes a non-alcoholic beverage.

Transportation: 03/19: shuttle to airport, local flight San José – Puerto Jimenez, meet and greet at airport in Puerto Jimenez, land transfer to Lapa Rios Ecolodge. 3/22: land transfer from Lapa Rios lodge to Puerto Jimenez airport, flight to San José and shuttle to Hotel Bougainvillea. 03/23: shuttle to airport

Tours/activities: Early and Sunset Bird tours, Wild Waterfall, Local Medicine hike, Rain Forest Ridge Walk, Osa Trail, Matapalo Tour, Night Walk, and “Twigs, Pigs and Garbage

Pricing: \$2,400.00 per person staying in double room

Extra costs: Not mentioned activities, Alcoholic beverages, tips

Second Optional Add On Trip
Immersed in a Remote Rainforest

March 19-23-2017

Only 4 rooms available

March 19-22: local flight – Golfe Dulce

You will be transferred to the airport By private van and during a brief flight of about 30 minutes you will be able to enjoy stunning views of the dramatic Central Mountain Range, with a chance of seeing the smoking Turrialba Volcano.

Upon arrival in Puerto Jimenez you will be transferred to the pier and a scenic boat ride through the blue-green waters of the Golfe Dulce will bring you to a secluded rainforest lodge. A boat transfer is the only way to get here!

At the lodge you will be welcomed by dramatic views of rainforest covered mountains. The lodge lies in its own private 165-acre rainforest reserve, bordering the Parque Nacional Piedras Blancas, it protects almost 35,000 acres of primary rainforest and considered together with the nearby Parque Nacional Corcovado it is one of the most intact and least accessible natural areas of the country.

This is one of the few places in Central America where large predators such as jaguars and pumas still roam free, and where endangered mammal species like Baird's Tapir and the rare Central American Squirrel Monkey are still to be found.

Local naturalist guides will be sharing their passion and knowledge about this fantastic ecosystem and will help you spot and identify the resident fauna and flora. The lodge is proud to be one of the few in Costa Rica that has been rewarded the highest rating - five leaves – for sustainability by the government's national Tourism Board. This sustainable tourism program recognizes hotels and lodges that comply with a sustainable model of natural, cultural and social resource management.

Besides a sublime natural experience, the eco-friendly lodge provides private rooms with open air showers, jungle views, private terraces and louver doors and windows that wrap around the room offering great panoramic views. Enjoy family-style meals in the open-air canopy level restaurant using healthy and fresh local ingredients.

The pristine natural area surrounding the lodge is perfect for relaxing and enjoying nature. Feel free to go for a swim in the ocean, as well as taking part in kayaking, paddle boarding, snorkeling, dolphin watching or fishing. You may want to venture out into the rainforest and explore hidden waterfalls and the unbelievable plant and bird life.

March 22: local flight – San José

Boat transfer back to Puerto Jimenez from where you will fly back to San José. You will spend the last night at beautiful hotel a little outside of the busy center with a large botanical garden full of exotic plants like bromeliads, heliconias and an impressive orchid collection.

March 23: private transfer to the airport

Included:

Accommodations: All accommodations included in double rooms:

3/19,20 &21: mangro room in [Playa Nicuesa Rainforest Lodge](#)

03/22: standard garden view room at Bougainvillea Hotel.

Meals and drinks:

Three meals a day are included from breakfast on 03/19 until breakfast on 03/23. With each meal is a non-alcoholic beverage included

Transportation:

3/19: shuttle to airport, local flight San José – Puerto Jimenez, meet and greet at airport in Puerto Jimenez, transfer to pier of Puerto Jimenez and boat transfer to lodge

3/22: boat transfer from lodge to pier in Puerto Jimenez, transfer to Puerto Jimenez airport, flight to San José and shuttle to Hotel Bougainvillea

3/23: shuttle to airport

Tours/activities: includes self-guided hikes, use of kayaks, snorkel and fishing equipment

Pricing: \$1400.00 per person double occupancy

Extra costs: not mentioned activities, alcoholic beverages, tips

Your Guide



Belgian biologist Pieter Westra has been bird watching in Costa Rica since he was a little boy. Pieter started travelling to Costa Rica at the age of 14 and fell in love with its overwhelming natural beauty and with the birds of Costa Rica in particular. In 2002 Pieter decided to move to Costa Rica and become a bird watching guide and organizer. Pieter loves to share his passion and knowledge about the country and its spectacular avifauna.

Ecotourism in Costa Rica

Peter is aware of the negative impact tourism can produce on the natural environment, the culture and the local socio-economic situation and he makes a great effort to minimize these negative effects.



Pieter and his team support AOCR & Great Green Macaw

The Great Green Macaw is one of the most endangered birds of Costa Rica. This bird has suffered from habitat loss and pet trade, but populations have been able to recover in the last couple of years. Pieter is an official sponsor of the AOCR (Asociación Ornitológica de Costa Rica), a Costa Rican non-profit organization founded in 1993 in honor of the first ornithological congress in Costa Rica. AOCR associates are people living in Costa Rica with different backgrounds who all share one passion: the observation of the birds of Costa Rica in their natural surroundings.