Southwestern Andes Birding Trail
In Colombia’s southwest, spectacular landscapes rise up from Pacific mangrove forests to farms, forests, and jungled mountainsides, creating habitat for more than 1,000 bird species. Sadly, half of the region’s endemic birds are in decline.

Considering Colombia’s birdwatching potential and the pressing need for conservation, the National Audubon Society has partnered with the government of Colombia to promote bird tourism as a means of encouraging sustainable development and as a way to build support and promote conservation to reverse the decline of many bird species. Audubon is working in the Southwest Andes with local landowners to develop new destinations in the recently stabilized country and have trained 97 local people to serve as birding guides and conservation stewards through launching agreements to promote conservation and habitat restoration within their territories. Investing in the communities through tourism create economic opportunities that creates lasting incentives to help support the conservation of wildlife and ecosystems in 1.1M acres of protected habitats.

Audubon has designed exciting birding itineraries, each featuring a unique region of the country. Birders and tour operators can follow these routes exactly, or use them as starting points to design individually tailored Colombian excursions.

The Southwestern Andes Birding Trail, the third in the Audubon series, explores the departments of Cauca, Valle del Cauca (Valle), and Nariño. We’ll arrive in Valle and spend the first week exploring a variety of elevational habitats in the Western Andes above the city of Cali. We’ll find colorful tanagers, iridescent hummingbirds, and a mix of antbirds, puffbirds, motmots, and quetzals. From Valle, we’ll move south into Cauca to sample the Central Andes and the associated páramo, a high-elevation habitat that is as beautiful as it is unusual. Of the many páramo birds we’ll seek, the Andean Condor—the New World’s largest bird—might be the most prized. Dropping from the páramo, our trip concludes in the Patía Valley’s dry forest before returning north to Cali for departure. Birders with extra time and a thirst for adventure should continue south into Nariño, south into Nariño, which is significantly more rustic than Valle or Cauca, but presents fantastic birding, particularly on the humid Pacific Slope.

Though designed mostly around birdwatching, this itinerary also offers a wonderful sample of Colombian landscapes, people, and culture. The itinerary won’t overwhelm birders who are first-time travelers to Colombia, nor will it bore those who have visited the country before. We invite you to travel the Southwestern Andes, experience Colombia, see hundreds of amazing birds, vibrant cultures and become an active participant in a valuable conservation project!
Detailed Itinerary

DAY 1 - ARRIVAL IN CALI AND TRANSFER TO LA HUERTA FOR THE NIGHT
Travelers should aim to arrive in Cali as close to midday as possible. This will facilitate the transfer north to La Huerta (75 minutes driving) while assuring extra time for flight delays or other travel complications. Travelers can spend the afternoon relaxing or exploring the grounds and adjacent entrance roads. Regardless, everyone will enjoy the sweeping vistas of Lago Calima from the hotel. La Huerta has a delightful pool and hot tub, so don’t forget your swim suit! Dinner will be served at the hotel, and we’ll retire early in preparation for an early start on Day 2.

DAY 2 - MORNING AT RÍO BRAVO AND AFTERNOON AT YOTOCO, NIGHT AT LA HUERTA
We’ll have an early breakfast at the hotel before departing for Río Bravo, a beautifully preserved subtropical forest just 25 minutes from La Huerta. Río Bravo was under-visited until recently because of security concerns, but with the advent of peace its birding wealth is being discovered. We’ll begin at 1,500 meters (~4,900 feet) and descend through the valley and associated primary forest with a mix of driving and walking. The dirt road offers good footing...
and visibility, and from it we’ll search for the Andean Motmot, Masked Trogon, Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner, and Masked Tityra. We’ll also have a chance to see a variety of tanagers, including the prized Multicolored, a spectacularly patterned Colombian endemic. Other endemics in the area include the Chestnut Wood-Quail, Grayish Piculet, and Crested Ant-Tanager. The walking is entirely downhill and makes for an easy introduction to Colombian birding. We’ll spend the entire morning at Río Bravo before returning to La Huerta for lunch.

After lunch, we’ll relax at La Huerta and then drive 15 minutes to the Reserva Natural de Yotoco at 1,600m (5,250 feet). More than 300 species of birds have been recorded at Yotoco, and red howler monkeys often bounce around the trees near the reserve entrance. Species here mostly overlap with Río Bravo but the Cauca Guan, an endangered species that is found only on the slopes of the Western and Central Andes, can be spotted at Yotoco. It will take luck to find that bird, but we might see the Plain Antvireo, Slaty Antwren, or White-bibbed Manakin instead. When we’re finished at Yotoco, we’ll return to La Huerta for dinner and a second night.

**DAY 3 - MORNING AT LAGUNA DE SONSO, AFTERNOON AT LA MINGA AND DAPA/CHICORAL, NIGHT AT ARAUCANA LODGE**

Located just 30 minutes downslope from La Huerta, Laguna de Sonso is a wetland formed by the slow meander of the Cauca River between the Western and Central Andes. Nearly 400 species have been recorded at the reserve, and we’ll spend the morning exploring a series of impoundments as we look for the Horned Screamer, Wattled Jacana, Southern Lapwing, Buff-necked Ibis, Cocoi Heron, Pinnated Bittern, Snail kite, Amazon Kingfisher, and Yellow-hooded Blackbird. Adjacent thickets could hold the Common Potoo, Gray-cowled Wood-Rail, Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, Striped Cuckoo, and endemic Grayish Piculet or Apical Flycatcher. Not to be missed are the adorable Spectacled Parrotlets that nest in the picnic area. Very accustomed to people, they usually allow close inspection. The walking at Sonso is flat and easy, and we’ll explore the reserve for most of the morning.

Driving two hours south and west, we’ll ascend into a beautiful Andean cloud forest at 2,000 meters (~6,600 feet). At a private reserve attached to La Minga Ecolodge, we’ll search for the Golden-headed and Crested Quetzals, Yellow-vented Woodpecker, Ashy-throated Cholorospingus, Streak-capped Treehunter, Marbled-faced Bristle-Tyrant, Scape-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, Golden-winged Manakin, and others. The lodge has a wonderful porch with hammocks. From it we’ll watch hummingbirds and tanagers come and go from the various feeders. We’ll hope for a Multicolored Tanager appearance, particularly if we missed it at Río Bravo. La Minga is a secluded paradise, and groups of six or fewer should consider spending a night or two at the charming guesthouse. It would be easy to spend an extra day birding La Minga and the nearby Dapa-Chicoral road before resuming the itinerary. Larger groups should continue to the Araucana Lodge for the night (~1 hour). La Minga is private, so birders should contact the property ahead of time to arrange a visit.
DAY 4 - MORNING AT SAN ANTONIO FOREST AND AFTERNOON AT KILOMETER 18 AND FINCA ALEJANDRÍA, SECOND NIGHT AT ARAUCANA LODGE

Easily accessed from Araucana, these closely clustered sites will continue the cloud forest theme begun at La Minga. An early morning walk at Bosque de San Antonio might yield the Collared Trogon, Southern Emerald Toucanet, White-whiskered Puffbird, Montane Foliage-gleaner, Spillmann’s Tapaculo, Whiskered Wren, Scaled and Green-and-Black Fruiteaters, or Chestnut-capped Brushfinch. With nearly 400 species recorded at San Antonio, we’ll run out of energy before we run out of birds!

Returning to the main road from San Antonio, we’ll continue north a few kilometers to reach Bosque de Niebla Kilómetro 18 (Cloud Forest Kilometer 18). The birding along this dirt road is very similar to San Antonio but is additionally highlighted by Finca Alejandría, a private residence with an incredible feeder array. The comical Booted Racket-tail, the stunning Long-tailed Sylph, and the tenderly diminutive Purple-throated Woodstar are regular visitors to the nectar feeders, and it’s not uncommon to observe a dozen species of hummingbirds in a single visit. Tanagers won’t disappoint either; Golden, Scrub, Golden-naped, Saffron-crowned, Metallic-green, Beryl-spangled and the endemic Multicolored all make regular appearances. Golden-headed Quetzal is often in the area, and a wide variety of furnarids and flycatchers patrol the habitat along the edges of the property. If you’re a photographer, make sure to have your camera battery charged and plenty of memory cards. Finca Alejandría is that good!

DAY 5 - ALL DAY ON THE UPPER ANCHICAYÁ SLOPES, THIRD NIGHT AT ARAUCANA LODGE

The Anchicayá River flows down the Western Andes to meet the Pacific Ocean at Buenaventura Bay, and the mostly abandoned Old Buenaventura Road offers incredible birding as it follows the river’s descent from 1,600 meters (~5,200 feet) to sea level. Included in the 500+ species that
have been recorded along the road’s length are many Chocó endemics, species restricted to the world-famous Chocó bioregion running mostly along the thickly-forested and very wet Pacific slopes of Colombia and Ecuador. That biocorridor claims more than 50 endemic birds, and we’ll make a special effort to find a number of those in the most accessible portions of the upper Anchicayá Valley. It is possible to reach the lower part of the valley, but that journey requires a lot of coordination — it’s two to three driving hours each way, must be done as a long day trip, and requires a four-wheel drive vehicle. Tour-type vans will not make it. Birders interested in reaching lower Anchicaya should consult Araucana for advice.

We’ll start our Upper Anchicayá birding at the tiny town of El Queremal at 1,500 meters (~4,900 feet), then drop elevation along the Old Buenaventura Road using a mix of walking and driving. Chocó endemics include the Toucan Barbet, Uniform Treehunter, Chocó Tyrannulet, Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Club-winged Manakin, Tatamá Tapaculo (Colombian endemic), Crested Ant-Tanager (Colombian endemic), and Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager. Visiting the hummingbird feeders at El Descanso (aka Doña Dora), we might add yet more Chocó birds, such as the stunning Empress Brilliant, Velvet-purple Coronet, and Violet-tailed Sylph. Descending beyond that private residence, we’ll find even more species. With 350 species reported from just the upper part of Anchicayá, they’ll be no shortage of great birds. When we’ve had our fill, we’ll return to Araucana for a third night.

DAY 6 - THE PACIFIC LOWLANDS AT SAN CIPRIANO, NIGHT AT ARAUCANA OR CALI

Because the lower portions of the Anchicayá Valley are so difficult to access, San Cipriano has emerged as the best place in Valle to access the Pacific lowlands. San Cipriano’s Pacific rainforest is incredibly lush, very wet, and home to lower elevation Chocó endemics that weren’t present at Upper Anchicayá the previous day. A note of caution: San Cipriano is more convenient than the habitat-equivalent lower Anchicayá, but it still makes for a relatively long day trip. Less ambitious birders could instead use this day to explore around Araucana, San Antonio, Kilometer 18, and Finca Alejandría, or skip directly to Day 7 - Pance/Farallones. Those skipping the Nariño extension will not have another chance to visit the Pacific lowlands, so they are particularly encouraged to visit San Cipriano.
Our day at San Cipriano will be filled with amazing birds and thrill-seeking adventure! We’ll make a very early start from Araucana and drive about 75 minutes to reach the Brujita terminal off the main Buenaventura Road. Translated as “little witch,” the Brujita is a local method of transportation that combines elements of trains, motorcycles, and skateboards. It’s an engineering marvel that all visitors should experience. Perched atop it we’ll shoot down the Pacific Slope to San Cipriano (~30 minutes), an isolated river community that relies completely on the Brujita for its connection to the outside world.

Walking south of town, we’ll search for the Five-colored Barbet, Chocó Toucan, Chocó Woodpecker, Rose-faced Parrot, Stub-tailed Antbird, Bicolored Antbird, and Black-tipped Cotinga — all Chocó endemics. Slightly more widespread yet equally spectacular are the Broad-billed Motmot, Pied and Black-breasted Puffbirds, Spotted Antbird, Rufous Mourner, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Bay Wren, Tawny-crested Tanager, and Blue Cotinga. The possibilities are endless, and those looking to maximize trip lists will not want to miss out. San Cipriano is located just 200 meters (~650 feet) above sea level, so the heat and humidity will increase throughout the morning. After birding and lunch in town, we’ll board the Brujita and make our exit. The folks at Araucana can help with San Cipriano logistics.

This afternoon has been left open. Some groups may wish to spend the entire day in San Cipriano; some will be ready to leave after lunch as the birding tends to slow down later in the day. Birders can either return to Araucana or drop to the south side of Cali for the night. That second option will require changing accommodations but will facilitate access to Pance/Farallones the following morning. That destination is two hours from Araucana but only 30 minutes from the south end of Cali.

**DAY 7 - MORNING AT PANCE/FARALLONES, AFTERNOON DRIVE TO CAUCA/POPAYÁN, NIGHT AT HOSTERÍA COCONUCO**

Located just 30 minutes from the southern outskirts of Cali, the Pance Valley on the east side of Farallones National Park is the perfect morning destination as we turn our attention south towards Cauca. Birding primary forest between 1,600 and 2,000 meters (~5,200 and 6,500 feet) we’ll search for the Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Bar-crested Antshrike, Scaled Antpitta, Immaculate Antbird, Andean Solitaire, Golden-collared Manakin, Blue-necked Tanager, Scrub Tanager, and the endemic Colombian Chachalaca and Grayish Piculet.

Birding will be a mix of walking and driving, and we’ll spend a leisurely morning exploring Pance before starting the 3.5-hour drive to the Hostería Coconuco for the night.

Depending on timing, an afternoon or dinner stop in historic Popayán
is recommended for those seeking a cultural excursion. The city has a more distinctly Colombian personality to it than the more cosmopolitan Cali, and it’s worth taking a short walk through the charming central plaza if time allows. The Hostería Coconuco is only a one-hour drive from downtown (on paved roads), so it would be easy to have dinner downtown and finish the drive after. For those who want additional birding en route, make a late-afternoon stop at Ecoparque Rayos del Sol on the north side of Popayán or any other of the Ecodestinos of the Birdwatching Network of Cauca before continuing either into the city (15 minutes) or to the Hostería (-1 hours).

DAY 8 - FULL DAY AT PURACÉ NATIONAL PARK, NIGHT AT HOSTERÍA COCONUCO

Today we will make a very early start and venture to the high-elevation páramo, a uniquely Andean habitat that many highly specialized bird species call home. Climbing through Puracé National Park, we’ll ascend to 11,000 feet in the park’s San Juan section. There we’ll walk a trail through some high Andean forest and search for the Blackish Tapaculo, Pearled Treerunner, White-browed Spinetail, Slaty and Pale-naped Brushfinches, Citrine and Black-crested Warblers, and Blue-backed Conebill. Scarlet-bellied, Lacrimose, Hooded and Buff-breasted Mountain-Tanagers are also in the area, as is the Golden-crowned Tanager, a cobalt-blue bird so brilliant it must be seen to be believed. The short trail terminates at a stunning series of volcanic hot springs. Surrounded by steep cliffs and fanciful páramo plants, the pastel blue pools are beautiful. Andean Teal are often lounging in the steaming waters, and Noble Snipe sometimes poke around the periphery. This will be one of the highlights of the trip and will make you forget all about the early start to the day!

We’ll spend two or three morning hours at San Juan before dropping back through the park to reach La Piedra del Condor (Rock of the Condor) for the 10 a.m. Andean Condor feeding. Local indigenous people have long held the condor in special esteem, and a group of them offer food to the birds as a daily token of reverence. The birds don’t come to the food every day, so we’ll have

Andean Condor. Photo: Dorian Anderson.

Scrub Tanager. Photo: Dorian Anderson.
to be a bit lucky to see them. But stunning scenery and Carunculated and Crested Caracaras are present regardless of whether the condors make their dramatic appearance.

After the condor feeding, we’ll venture higher for some more páramo birding. Exploring the main park road and a series of short trails, we’ll scout a landscape dotted with unusual frailejón plants for the Many-striped Canastero, White-chinned Thistetail, Tawny Antpitta, Golden-fronted Redstart, Masked and Glossy Flowerpiercers, and Plumbeous Sierra-Finch. Species density is comparatively low, but almost every bird will be a new one for the trip. For those not continuing on to Nariño, Puracé will be the only trip to the páramo, so we’ll bird really hard on this exciting day. We can spend as much time as we want on the páramo before dropping back to the Hostería Coconuco for the night.

If time allows, we can make a before-dinner trip to a volcanic hot spring in Coconuco for swimming. There, the thermal water has been diverted into a series of swimming pools, and a variety of temperatures ensures that everyone will find an appropriate place to marinate. We’ll eat dinner and spend the night at the Hostería.

**DAY 9 - MORNING AT BOSQUE LEGUARO, AFTERNOON DRIVE TO PATÍA, NIGHT AT HACIENDA VERSALLES**

Just 10 minutes down the road from the Hostería is Bosque Leguaro, a private reserve located at approximately 2,400 meters (7,900 feet). Higher than the areas we visited outside Cali and lower than our previous day at Puracé, Leguaro presents slightly different species. Wandering through cow pastures
1. Galapagos Nature Reserve
2. Cerro El Inglés
3. La Montaña touristic corridor
4. Laguna de Sonso
5. Yotoco
6. Río Bravo
7. San Cipriano
8. Anchicayá
9. La Minga - Dapa/Chicoral
10. San Antonio/Km 18/Finca Alejandría
11. Pance/Farallones/Leonera y Pichindé
12. Ecodestinos Meseta Popayán
13. Bosque Leguaro
14. Puracé National Park
15. Hacienda Versalles
16. Páramo Bordocillo
17. Laguna de la Cocha
18. Bosque Altoandino Daza
19. Circunvalar Galeras
20. Río Ñambí
21. La Planada
22. Cumbal
23. Km. 42
24. Finca Maragrícola
25. Tumaco/Playa Morro
26. Isla Bocagrande
and along forest edges we'll search for four key birds: Golden-plumed Parakeet, Tufted Tit-Tyrant, Rufous-crested Tanager, and Cinereous Conebill. In between those, we might encounter the Sickle-winged Guan, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, White-capped Dipper, Pale-edged Flycatcher, Blue-and-black Tanager, and Golden-rumped Euphonia.

Returning to the main house after our walk, we'll relax as we watch the Long-tailed Sylph, White-bellied Woodstar, Bronzy Inca, and the incredible Green-tailed Trainbearer at the hummingbird feeders. Depending on how much time we spend at Leguaro (and particularly if we missed the Golden-plumed Parakeet), we might make a roadside stop at Cascada La Calera for some bonus birding. The massive waterfall is breathtaking, and its spray is a wonderful way to cool off after a morning of birding. As Leguaro is a private property, birders will need to arrange Leguaro visits in advance.

If we bypassed Popayán en route to Coconuco, we'll probably stop in the city for lunch and a quick bit of urban exploration. After that, we'll continue two hours south to Hacienda Versalles, a private hacienda located in the Upper Patía Valley's dry forest. We'll have the entire following morning at Versalles, but those who want to get a jump start on birding can explore the property as soon as we arrive. Those with less late-afternoon birding ambition can take a dip in the pool instead. Tropical Screech-Owl often call very close to the house, so we can try to scout that bird after dinner. Versalles is a private property, so birders will need to arrange visits in advance.

**DAY 10 - MORNING AT HACIENDA VERSALLES AND AFTERNOON RETURN TO CALI**

Situated at just 600 meters (~2,000 feet), the dry forest will be a dramatic departure from the other habitats we’ve visited. It may at times feel as though we’re visiting Arizona or Texas. As you might imagine, the dry habitat will present many species that we haven’t yet encountered. Leisurly walking the dirt roads that crisscross the ranch, we’ll look for the Blue Ground-Dove, Dark-billed Cuckoo, Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, Spot-breasted Woodpecker, Pale-breasted Spinetail, Apical Flycatcher (endemic), Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Red-breasted Meadowlark, and White-lined Tanager. We’ll make an extra effort to find the Scarlet-backed Woodpecker, an irresistibly cute bird otherwise confined to similar dry forest habitat in western Ecuador and northwestern Peru. The Patía Valley is the only place in Colombia to see it, so it’s the signature bird for the area.

We’ll spend the whole morning at Versalles, have lunch, and in the afternoon begin the long drive (5+ hours) back to Cali for the night. We’ll stay at a hotel in the northwest part of the city to facilitate airport access the next morning.

Though this is the last full day of the itinerary for those not continuing onto Nariño, it would be easy to customize this final portion of the itinerary. One possibility is to drive only as far north as Popayán on this day. That would break up the long drive to Cali and give travelers an additional day to explore the city or do more birding en route. It’s also possible to spend the remainder of the day and a second night at Versalles before returning north to Cali.
Birders undertaking the Nariño portion will depart Versalles after lunch and continue south to Pasto for the night (about three hours). That city will provide the starting point for four extra days of birding in wild and relatively unexplored Nariño.

**DAY 11 - MORNING DEPARTURE FROM CALI**
Birders should try to arrange morning departures from Cali. For those not flying directly out of Colombia, connecting flights to Bogotá are frequent.

**LONG ITINERARY**
The Nariño portion of the itinerary is offered as an extension for several reasons, the main being convenience and flexibility as birders can tailor the route to their individual needs. But Nariño also offers some logistical challenges, mostly because of limited tourism infrastructure, and it’s important that travelers know this ahead of time. Roads are rougher and lodging is sometimes a bit more rustic. There are fewer public reserves, and accessing some private areas— particularly those in the Pacific Lowlands—will require prior arrangements. Nevertheless, those who experience Nariño should be prepared for some fantastic birding!

**DAY 11 - MORNING AT PÁRAMO BORDONCILLO AND LAGUNA DE LA COCHA, AFTERNOON DRIVE TO LA PLANADA, NIGHT AT LA PLANADA**
Our first Nariño morning will be spent at Páramo Bordoncillo, high above Pasto and just across the border from the neighboring department of Putumayo. Exploring high Andean forest and páramo between 3,200 and 3,400 meters (10,500 - 11,150 feet), we’ll search
for many of the same birds as we did in Puracé National Park three days prior. In addition to those, we'll keep eyes open for the Masked Mountain-Tanager and Chestnut-bellied Cotinga, two species more likely at Bordoncillo than at Puracé. Other possibilities include the Rainbow-bearded and Purple-backed Thornbills, Great Sappedirewing, Golden-breasted Puffleg, Bar-bellied Woodpecker, Rufous Antpitta, Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant. Plus, there are five species of Tapaculo: Ash-colored, Blackish, Spillmann’s, Páramo, and — best of all — Ocellated! The birding at Bordoncillo is great, but the trail is steep and participants will need to be in very good physical shape to walk it given the high elevation.

Less physically demanding is Laguna de la Cocha, our second stop on this first Nariño morning. Positioned below Bordoncillo at 2,800 meters (9,200 feet), the lake will afford us leisurely looks at a number of water birds that we haven’t encountered up to this point. We’ll search for Yellow-billed Pintail, Andean Duck, Slate-colored Coot, Andean Gull, and Subtropical Doradito. A boat ride around la Cocha’s marshes will reveal species we might have missed from shore. The lake is gorgeous, and we’ll take in additional views of it from the fun and funky town of Puerto El Encanto during lunch. After eating we’ll make the four-hour drive to La Planada for the night.

**DAY 12 - LA PLANADA - ALL DAY AND NIGHT**

Situated at 1,800 meters (~6,000 feet) on Nariño’s Pacific slope and squarely in the Chocó bioregion, La Planada offers some of the best birding in Colombia. Nearly 300 species have been recorded at the reserve, but that is probably an underestimate given that political conflict restricted access to Nariño for many years. The real beauty of La Planada is the habitat. While primary forest has been hugely fragmented in other parts of Colombia—particularly in the heavily inhabited and farmed Andes—Nariño’s Pacific slope is one of the least developed regions in the entire country. The view from the mirador (lookout) at the top of the preserve is beautiful, and it’s possible to imagine what much of the country looked like before the arrival of humans.

La Planada’s very close proximity to Ecuador minimizes the possibility of Colombian endemics, but there are many important Chocó endemics for which we’ll search this morning: Hoary Puffleg, Fulvous-spotted Treerunner, Nariño Tapaculo, Golden-collared Honeycreeper, Yellow-Collared Chlorophonia, and Black Solitaire. Most interesting might be the Dark-backed Wood-Quail, Plumbeous Forest-Falcon, and Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan — three typically Ecuadorian species that only reach Colombia around La Planada. Beyond specialists, more widespread species such as the Green-fronted Lancebill, Mottled Owl, White-faced Nunbird, Ornate Flycatcher, and Flame-faced Tanager are all possible. We could easily spend a week at La Planada and still not see everything it has to offer!
Nevertheless, the lack of nearby development from which La Planada derives its secluded beauty also presents challenges. First, access is difficult as the 7-km entrance road is very steep and rocky. Visitors are advised to have a sturdy four-wheel drive vehicle, since some tour-type vans won’t be able to reach the reserve. Second, the rooms are very basic (nothing beyond a bed, blanket, and light bulb), and reaching the bunkhouse requires a 500-meter walk (with luggage) along a dirt trail from the parking area. Bathrooms are communal and separated from the sleeping quarters. They are covered, but clothing and shoes are required to reach them. There is no hot water, the dining area is very basic, and food options for guests are limited to whatever the staff make for themselves.

Despite these challenges, La Planada is a really great place if you don’t mind a few nights without the usual comforts. The reserve and facilities are collectively owned by the local indigenous community, and a visit to La Planada will provide exactly the sort of stimulus that locals need to improve the facilities and protect the surrounding habitat. Though the bed might be basic, you’ll sleep well knowing that your visit is helping the community.
DAY 13 - MORNING AT RÍO ÑAMBI, AFTERNOON AT FINCA MARAGRÍCOLA, NIGHT AT HOTEL CORALES IN TUMACO

Today we’ll depart La Planada and drop 2,000 vertical feet down the Pacific slope to reach Río Nambí at approximately 1,200 meters (~3,900 feet). Here, Maroon-tailed Parakeets call from above, Rufous Motmots keep an ever-vigilant and stoic eye over the forest, and groups of Scarlet-rumped Caciques move noisily through the habitat. Walking a trail through some secondary growth and into primary montane forest, we’ll look for yet more Chocó endemics including the Beautiful Jay, Chocó Vireo, Scarlet-and-white Tanager, Indigo Flowerpiercer, Golden-chested Tanager, and Moss-backed Tanager. If we’re exceptionally lucky, we might hear the Long-wattled Umbrellabird, an otherworldly Chocó bird with an elaborate headpiece and chest ornamentation (wattle). The trail at Río Ñamí requires a bit of uphill
walking and can be slippery, but most birders will be able to handle it.

From Río Nambí we’ll leave the mountains and drop onto the coastal plains as we approach the Pacific Ocean. Our first stop will be Finca Maragrícola, an old university field research station that has been converted into a private reserve. The property has only recently opened to birders, but about 250 species have already been observed on the grounds. The habitat is a mix of primary and secondary growth forest and features a large wetland area where shorebirds, herons, and waterfowl are usually found. Pied Water-Tyrant and White-throated Crake skirt the impoundment’s edges, and Ecuadorian Ground-Moss-backed Tanager.

Photo: Pedro Arturo Camargo Martínez.

...dove, Guayaquil Woodpecker, Pacific Parrotlet, Blue-headed Parrot, Pale-legged Hornero, Pacific Antwren, and others lurk in the surrounding thickets and forests. It will be very hot and humid, so we won’t stay too long before continuing to the coast at Tumaco where we’ll head directly for our hotel. Situated right on the beach and with a very nice pool, it will be the perfect place to cool down after a long day of birding.

Birders who want to visit Finca Maragrícola will need to call ahead to arrange access. The property is right off Highway 10, about 13 kilometers southeast of central Tumaco, but is not signed in any effective way. This is the sort of additional effort that Nariño’s Pacific Slope requires!

**DAY 14 - MORNING AT KILOMETER 42, AFTERNOON IN TUMACO, SECOND NIGHT AT HOTEL CORALES**

An early start will help us beat the heat to Kilometer 42, another birding site on Nariño’s coastal plain. The site is just a private road running through some nice secondary growth, and in that mostly open habitat we’ll search for a variety of lowland birds including the Hook-billed Kite, Collared Aracari, White-necked and Pied Puffbirds, Black-cheeked Woodpecker, Pacific Antwren, Chestnut-backed Antbird, Great Antshrike, Cinnamon Becard, and Black-faced Dacnis. The road is flat, well-conditioned, and wide, and we’ll make our way (about 7 km) to the Río Mira with a mix of driving and
walking. The Rufous-headed Chachalaca, Orange-fronted Barbet, and Ecuadorian Ground-Dove are among the most prized birds here; each is more typically Ecuadorian and reaches Colombia only in southwestern Nariño. The heat will eventually drive us from the reserve, and we’ll return to the hotel for lunch and a leisurely final afternoon. Prior arrangements are required to visit Kilometer 42.

If we have the energy, we can explore a few areas near the hotel to add a few final species to the trip list. Peruvian Meadowlark and Chestnut-throated Seedeater can be found in the grasses at the edges of the Tumaco Airport, and Blue-footed Booby, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Royal Tern, and variety of other waterbirds can be observed along the beach in front of the hotel. The area can get pretty crowded on weekends, so the beach might be worth an early morning stop on those days. The final night will be spent at the Hotel Corales as it offers easy access to the airport the following morning.

**DAY 15 - MORNING DEPARTURE FROM TUMACO**

There are only a few flights each day from Tumaco to Bogotá, so make sure to book well in advance.

Additional to the sites mentioned in the itinerary, you can check the map for other options suggested as extensions or day trips that can be easily arranged from the major cities. So that’s it! You’ve now explored the Southwestern Andes, seen hundreds of birds, and experienced Colombia in the most wonderful sort of way. The only question is when you’ll be back!
Logistical Notes

**DAILY RHYTHM AND PACE**
Most days will feature morning birding from around 6 a.m. until 10 or 11 a.m. Lunch will be followed by rest at accommodations (if we are staying multiple nights) or in the vehicle as we move between locations. Afternoon birding sessions will generally be shorter than those in the morning and will always take place close to the night’s lodging. There will be several longer days of birding (especially in the Anchicayá and Puracé areas), but we won’t need to change lodging on the two nights surrounding each of those day trips.

The pace of this trip is generally low intensity. There will be a moderate amount of walking on all mornings, but we’ll move slowly as there will be many birds competing for our attention! Anyone capable of walking one to two miles at a stretch will be fine. Whenever possible the vehicle will accompany us, and we’ll rarely (if ever) be more than an hour’s walk from it. Adventurous individuals or couples visiting the area on their own can find longer and more difficult trails, some of which are beyond the scope of this more group-oriented itinerary.

**ACCOMMODATIONS**
We have taken great care to suggest the best possible accommodations, and we have done our best to stay close to birding sites that we will visit, since that streamlines morning logistics. Birders should be prepared for 4 a.m. or 5 a.m. wake-ups on most days, particularly when we need to access remote areas (such as San Cipriano). We have also done our best to minimize one-night stays, but those are sometimes a necessity given the spacing of the birding sites. Those averse to one-night stays can simply stay an extra night and enjoy that particular birding site for another day.

Hotel La Huerta, The Araucana Lodge, Hostería Coconuco, and the Hotel Corales in Tumaco (Nariño) are fully modern accommodations with private rooms, private bathrooms (with hot water), and onsite restaurants. Nice hotels in any of the major cities — Cali, Popayán, or Pasto — will be similar. Finca Versalles is a classic Colombian hacienda with communal rooms that each sleep six to 10 people on individual beds (not bunks). The facility is so beautiful that visitors are unlikely to mind the sleeping arrangements. Only La Planada is likely to challenge travelers, but those caveats are discussed on Day 12 of the Nariño extension.

**MEALS**
When possible, breakfast will be early and at our place of lodging. Some days that won’t be possible, and we’ll have to grab something in transit. Likewise, every effort will be made to have a sit-down lunch, but we may have to request or to put together box lunches on some days. There’s no restaurant in Puracé, for example, and having to descend to Coconuco for lunch would double the day’s travel time and assure we spend more time driving to and from the páramo than birding in it. Participants with dietary requirements or allergies should inform their tour leaders ahead of time. Only at La Planada is food selection or variety likely to be an issue.

**VEHICLE AND DRIVING**
We will have a large and comfortable tour-type van for the Valle and Cauca portions of the trip. There will be some time on dirt roads but all can be safely navigated without four-wheel drive. The entrance road to La Planada will probably require four-wheel drive, and it’s advised that those continuing into Nariño switch to a suitable vehicle in Pasto. Unlike other lodges with long, rough entrance roads, La Planada does not have dedicated and appropriate vehicles to shuttle guests from the main road.

Every effort has been made to minimize driving times, but a few long drives (two to three hours) will be required. Those drives are scheduled for the after-lunch hours when people usually want to rest anyway. Day 11 of the core Valle and Cauca itinerary (the return to Cali from the southernmost point of the trip) will require a five- or six-hour drive. For those who want to split that drive over two days, an intervening and exploratory overnight in Popayán is suggested.
### Highlight Species

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chocó Tinamou (VU)</th>
<th>Orange-fronted Barbet (VU)</th>
<th>Orange-breasted Fruiteater (NE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Screamer (VU)</td>
<td>Five-colored Barbet</td>
<td>Chestnut-bellied Cotinga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Pochard (CR)</td>
<td>Toucan Barbet (NT)</td>
<td>Andean Cock-of-the-rock (VU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comb Duck (EN)</td>
<td>Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan (VU)</td>
<td>Olivaceous Piha (NT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orinoco Goose (VU)</td>
<td>Black-billed Mountain-Toucan (NT)</td>
<td>Red-ruffed Fruitcrow (VU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White-cheeked Pintail (NT)</td>
<td>Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan (EN)</td>
<td>Long-wattled Umbrellabird (EN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andean Teal (NE)</td>
<td>Chocó Toucan</td>
<td>Blue Cotinga (NE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruddy Duck (EN)</td>
<td>Grayish Piculet (E)</td>
<td>Black-tipped Cotinga (NE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombian Chachalaca (E)</td>
<td>Chocó Woodpecker (NE)</td>
<td>Yellow-headed Manakin (VU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baudó Guan (VU)</td>
<td>Scarlet-backed Woodpecker (EN)</td>
<td>Club-winged Manakin (NE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cauca Guan (E, EN)</td>
<td>Guayaquil Woodpecker (EN)</td>
<td>Chocó Vireo (VU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Curassow (VU)</td>
<td>Plumbeous Forest-Falcon (EN)</td>
<td>Beautiful Jay (VU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chestnut Wood-Quail (E)</td>
<td>Rusty-faced Parrot (VU)</td>
<td>Black Solitaire (NE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guanay Cormorant (NT)</td>
<td>Rose-faced Parrot</td>
<td>Rufous-chested Tanager (NT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andean Condor (CR)</td>
<td>Saffron-headed Parrot (NT)</td>
<td>Black-and-gold Tanager (VU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plumbeous Hawk</td>
<td>Golden-plumed Parakeet (VU)</td>
<td>Golden-chested Tanager (NE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-and-chestnut Eagle (EN)</td>
<td>Bicolored Antvireo (VU)</td>
<td>Moss-backed Tanager (NT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solitary Eagle (CR)</td>
<td>Pacific Antwren (NE)</td>
<td>Hooded Mountain-Tanager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White-throated Crane</td>
<td>Parker’s Antbird (E)</td>
<td>Masked Mountain-Tanager (VU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noble Snipe (NE)</td>
<td>Stub-tailed Antbird (NE)</td>
<td>Black-chinned Mountain Tanager (NE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuadorian Ground-Dove</td>
<td>Bicolored Antbird</td>
<td>Golden-crowned Tanager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banded Ground-Cuckoo (EN)</td>
<td>Moustached Antpitta (EN)</td>
<td>Multicolored Tanager (E, VU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violet-tailed Sylph (NE)</td>
<td>Bicoloured Antipitta (VU)</td>
<td>Scrub Tanager (NE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainbow-bearded Thornbill</td>
<td>Rufous Antpitta</td>
<td>Turquoise Dacnis (E, VU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoary Puffleg (NE)</td>
<td>Tawny Antpitta</td>
<td>Scarlet-and-white Tanager (NE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velvet-purple Coronet (NE)</td>
<td>Blackish Tapaculo</td>
<td>Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer (E, VU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empress Brilliant (NE)</td>
<td>Tatamá Tapaculo (E)</td>
<td>Indigo Flowerpiercer (NE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purple-throated Woodstar (NE)</td>
<td>Nariño Tapaculo (NE)</td>
<td>Crested Ant-Tagner (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-breasted Puffbird (NE)</td>
<td>Many-striped Canastero</td>
<td>Yellow-collared Chlorophonia (NE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sooty-caped Puffbird (E, NT)</td>
<td>Apical Flycatcher (E)</td>
<td>Fulvous-vented Euphonia (NE)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>