



COLOMBIA
BIRDWATCH

COLOMBIA

IS MAGICAL REALISM

THE COLOMBIAN MASSIF,
PUTUMAYO AND THE WESTERN
ANDES AND CHOCO BIOREGION



KM 18 - ANCHICAYA - SAN CIPRIANO -
PURACE NP - LA COCHA - BORDONCILLO
- TRAMPOLINE OF DIVERSITY - RUMIYACO -
SAN JOAQUIN - SAN AGUSTIN



2018

DAYS November 29 - December 15

2019

November 28 - December 14



The Trampoline of Diversity
Carlos Herney Castro

Colombia is the birdiest country on earth, with more than 1,950 species (almost 20% of the world's total). There are more species of birds in this country than on any other. It is easy to see why. Colombia is tropical, yet it also has ample elevation changes due to the Andes, furthermore it has both the Pacific and Caribbean coasts. Lots of different habitats ensure an abundance of bird species. To be exact, 1,930 species (almost 20% of the world's total in 1% of the landmass), with new species still being discovered and new records being announced often.

The KM 18 and San Antonio Cloud Forest provides an excellent introduction to birding in the Colombian Andes. More than 100 years ago, Frank Chapman, of the American Museum of Natural History, spent some time researching the bird diversity of this forest, which concluded in the first detailed bird survey for Colombia. The birding in the area is amazing, with mixed-species flocks of Multicolored, Purplish-mantled, Scrub and Golden-naped Tanagers foraging along side Scaled Fruiteater, Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonias and Golden-headed and Crested Quetzal.

Another area of equal importance in Colombia's ornithological history is found along the The Old Buenaventura Road, which descends from the western Andes to the Pacific Ocean along the Anchicaya River watershed and is one of Colombia's newest destinations to open up to birding. The birding along this gradient of insurmountable diversity is such that it inspired Steve Hilty to start work on Field Guide to the Birds of Colombia, the first ornithological field

guide for South America. The last stop in the Pacific region is San Cipriano.

The tour then heads to the Nariño and Putumayo departments, a region that promises to become the next must-bird region of Colombia. We start with a drive to Popayan, one of Colombia's oldest cities and known for its traditional cuisine and colonial architecture. From there we continue to view Condors in Purace National Park, before beginning our ascent of the Colombian Massif, a Unesco Biosphere Reserve and one of the principal fresh water producing regions in the country.

Several nights at the La Cocha Lagoon will give us time to explore nearby wetlands, the high altitude Paramo de Bordoncillo and the lagoon itself. Then a descent down the "Trampoline of Diversity", where we will spend 2 days birding a 6,000 foot altitudinal gradient. The road lends its name to the many switchbacks one has to navigate along the steep descent. A few days birding the Amazonian Piedmont in the department of Putumayo will surely yield some surprises, as this is an area that has not been explored extensively by birders.

A night in San Agustin allows for a visit to the largest group of religious monuments and megalithic sculptures in South America, that stand in a wild, spectacular landscape with excellent birding. Gods and mythical animals are skillfully represented in styles ranging from abstract to realist. These works of art display the creativity and imagination of a northern Andean culture that flourished from the 1st to the 8th century.

TOUR LEADERS



JOSE LUNA

Jose Luna was born and raised in the western Andes of Colombia, and has been birding since he was 16. He is the lead local guide for Colombia Birdwatch, and has shined amongst his colleagues for his proficiency in English and his ability to find birds. He enjoys birding and studying birds on his free time, is an avid e-birder, and has worked as a field biologist in numerous thesis projects and expeditions in the Colombia Andes and Choco Bioregion.

COST

\$5100 USD per person, double occupancy, not including international airfare. Single Supplement \$650.

AIRFARE

Approximately \$900 from the USA, or \$1400 from London, depending on origin, (quoted July 20176).

GROUP SIZE

Maximum 8 participants, not including leaders. Minimum group size is 6 participants.

NUMBER OF DAYS

17 days total, including estimated travel time.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Lodging will consist of 3 -4 -star hotels in Cali, Buenaventura and Popayan, a lovely boutique hotel in near KM 18 that is owned and operated by Colombia Birdwatch, a comfortable lodge in the Anchicaya Reserve, a lovely boutique hotel in San Agustín, a Swiss-built lodge at La Cocha Lagoon and a basic 3-star hotel with air conditioning in Mocoa. We expect relative comfort, hot showers and excellent local food and provide a nice variety of snacks and purified or bottled drinking water available throughout the trip.

Orange-eared Tanager
Brayan Coral





Crested Quetzal
Christopher Calonje



Multicolored Tanager
Juan Jose Arango

DAY 1

Arrive in Cali

Guests will be picked up at the airport.

Lodging: Hotel Araucana

DAY 2

The Infamous Km 18 and Cock-of-the-rock Lek

Today we spend the morning around the famous El 18, located on an 1800-meter (5,900-foot) pass 18 kilometers (11 miles) northwest of Cali along the road that connects Cali with the port city of Buenaventura. Birding can be very productive here, and we will look for four endemics - Chestnut Wood-Quail, Colombian Chachalaca, Grayish Piculet and the spectacular Multicolored Tanager. This area is a tanager paradise, where we have a good chance to see Purplish-mantled, Summer, Beryl-spangles, Flame-rumped, Golden, Metallic-green, Saffron-crowned, and Golden-naped tanagers as well as Ashy-throated Bush-Tanager and Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager.

We hope to be dazzled by an impressive show of hummingbirds at a private house along the same road, including the beautifully ornate Long-tailed Sylph, Booted Rackettail, Blue-headed Sapphire, Green Violetear, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Speckled Hummingbird, White-necked Jacobin. Brown Violetear and Tawny-bellied Hermit. Birding the forest can also produce many near-endemics such as Scrub Tanager, Purple-throated Woodstar, Nariño Tapaculo, Purplish-mantled Tanager and Yellow-headed Manakin.

Here we will may see striking birds such as Green-and-black Fruiteater, Chestnut-breasted and Blue-naped Chlorophonia, the inconspicuous Golden-headed Quetzal, Scarlet-fronted Parakeet, Red-faced Spinetail, Spotted and Rusty-winged Barbtails, Streaked Xenops, and the noisy, inquisitive Crimson-rumped Toucanet. We will also listen and search for species with interesting calls and songs, like the hawk-like whistle of the Scaled Fruiteater, warbling song of Black-billed Peppershrike, and beautiful flute-like song of Andean Solitaire. Other species we may find are Chestnut-breasted Wren, Greenish Puffleg, Montane Woodcreeper, Scale-crested Pygmy-tyrant, and the hyperactive Cinnamon Flycatcher. After birding we head to an afternoon visit to the Andean Cock-of-the-rock lek, which requires a 35 minute hike.

Lodging: Hotel La Araucana





Saffron-crowned Tanager
Juan Jose Arango

Slaty-capped Shrike-vireo
Juan Jose Arango





DAY 3

El Descanso Feeders and Upper Anchicaya Watershed

Perhaps Colombia's most famous birding location, the Anchicaya watershed is located along the edge of the Farallones National Park, one of the most diverse parks on the planet. The birding begins just 5 minutes from the hotel via a paved road that can offer many of the Choco endemics that this mega diverse locality has to offer. Our first day on the Anchicaya road will allow time to enjoy the upper portion of the road and some very well-maintained feeders at our breakfast spot where Rufous-throated, Glistening-green and Silver-throated Tanagers are known to occur. The road will surely yield many highly prized species Golden-collared Honeycreeper, White-whiskered Puffbird, Uniform Treehunter, Sooty-headed Wren, Green Thorntail and White-tailed Hillstar..

One of the main targets main targets is Toucan Barbet, sporting 5 different colors elegantly while still having a tough demeanor. We will search the skies for Barred Hawk, Ornate Hawk-eagle and Swallow-tailed Kites, whilst keeping an eye out for the attractive Ornate Flycatcher feeding on low branches. Another mega target is the recently described Pisones Tapaculo. The road can be extremely productive as this road rarely disappoints.

Lodging: Hotel EPSA Lodge



Green and Black Fruiteater
Christopher Calonje



Blue-naped Chlorophonia
Christopher Calonje

Crimson-rumped Toucanet
Christopher Calonje



Toucan Barbet
Juan Jose Arango



Glistening-green Tanager
Juan Jose Arango



Black-chinned Mountain-tanager
Juan Jose Arango

DAY 4

Lower Anchicaya Watershed

Birding again on this day is done along a lightly traveled road, but this time having the opportunity to explore the lower portion of the road. The "El Danubio" area is host to many interesting species, including the near endemics Rose-faced Parrot and Black-tipped Cotinga, Choco Trogon, Lita Woodpecker and Baudo Guan. The tanagers can be quite a treat, with chances for Scarlet-and-white, Golden-chested, Gray-and-gold, and Scarlet-browed Tanagers among many others. Lunch on the road will provide for a long day of birding, as we seek out other goodies such as Long-tailed Tyrant, Scarlet-rumped Cacique, Lanceolated Monklet, Bay Wren, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Collared Aracari and colonies of Russet-backed Oropendolas.

The area is teeming with many of our friends with the word "ant" in their name, and if we are lucky enough to encounter an ant swarm the action can bring bird such as Stub-tailed, Immaculate, Ocellated, and Bicolored Antbirds as well as Streaked and Pacific Antwren amongst many others.

The road to the Pacific lowlands can be rough but it offers such amazing birding opportunities that it makes the road inconsequential. This night is spent in the Anchicaya Reserve that is managed by a local university.

Lodging: Hotel EPSA Cabins



DAY 5

Pacific Lowlands to Buenaventura

Birding this morning is done right from the EPSA hotel to the port city of Buenaventura, with two mega targets such as Slaty-tailed Trogon and Five-colored Barbet. It seems like in this area everything is a target, and one doesn't have to spend too much time to find species such as White-whiskered Puffbird, Purple-throated Fruitcrow and Black-cheeked Woodpecker.

With the high humidity and heat, it is best to have bagged species such as Pacific and Checker-throated Antwrens, Pacific Flatbill, Cinnamon Becard, White-ringed Flycatcher, Blue-black Grosebeak, and Blue-crowned and Golden-collared Manakin before lunch.

In the afternoon we make our way towards Buenaventura, Colombia's main port on the Pacific. The hotel has a beautiful terrace with a pool and magnificent views of the bay and the port.

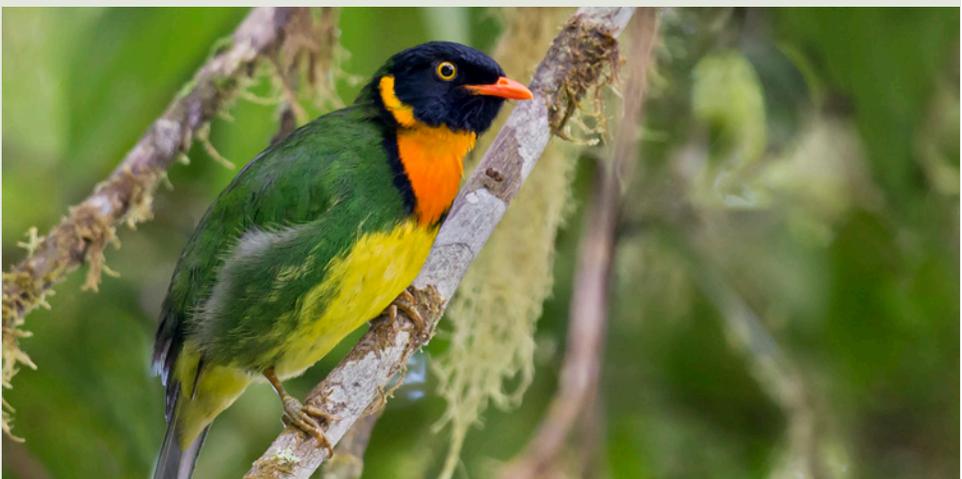
Lodging: Hotel Cosmos



White-tailed Hillstar
Christopher Calonje

Golden-collared Honeycreeper
Juan Jose Arango

Orange-breasted Fruiteater
Juan Jose Arango





Brujitas in San Cipriano
Christopher Calonje

DAY 6

San Cipriano and drive to Popayan

After a one hour drive to Zaragosa and a pleasant 20 minute ride on "brujitas" (motorcycle-powered wooden carts on rails), one arrives in the town of San Cipriano. The area is a protected reserve and is the source of drinking water for the nearby port city of Buenaventura. Located in the Choco Bioregion, it is known for being one of the wettest places on the planet. Some of the birds that are possible include Choco Toucan, Stripe-billed Aracari, Black-tipped Cotinga (NE), Rose-faced (NE) and Blue-headed Parrots, Spot-crowned and Five-colored Barbet (NE), Broad-billed Motmot, Black-chested Puffbird and Purple-throated Fruitcrow. The area is teeming with Antbirds, with chances to see Ocellated, Jet, Stub-tailed and Bicolored Antbirds. We will leave after lunch and drive 5 hours to Popayan in preparation for a close encounter with Andean Condor the following day.

Lodging: Hotel Dann Monasterio





Tooth-billed Hummingbird
Juan Jose Arango



Long-wattled Umbrellabird
Juan Jose Arango



Scarlet-and-white Tanager
Juan Jose Arango

Gray-and-gold Tanager
Juan Jose Arango



Slaty-capped Shrike-vireo
Juan Jose Arango



Purplish-mantled Tanager
Juan Jose Arango



Lita Woodpecker
Juan Jose Arango



Golden-chested Tanager
Juan Jose Arango



Scaled Fruiteater
Juan Jose Arango

DAY 7

Purace National Park

Purace National Park is home to one of Colombia's most active volcanoes, and it is here the group has the chance to have a very intimate moment with the largest flying bird on the planet. The local indigenous community has set up a feeding stations for two magnificent specimens, and if the birds cooperate it can be a one in a lifetime experience to be able to photograph a Condor at such close range. A visit to San Juan Hot Springs (unfortunately swimming in them is prohibited) to enjoy the scenery and for some landscape photography is a must. Surrounded by elfin forest, the hot springs are home to a large variety of mosses and lichens with a fascinating color palette.

An excellent chance to explore the surreal paramo, the ecosystem is referred to as Colombia's water factory, as it is the birthplace of the county's two largest rivers: Cauca and Magdalena. Birding in patches of elfin forest can produce many high elevation specialists, including Scarlet-bellied Mountain-tanager, Golden-breasted Puffleg, Rufous-vented Whitetip, Black-chested Mountain Tanager, and Black-backed Brush-finch. We will also seek out marshy habitat for

Noble Snipe, and eventually make it back to the hotel in Popayan.

Lodging at Hotel Dann Monasterio

DAY 8

Popayan to La Cocha via Patia Valley and Old Besuaco Road.

We will break up the long drive (7 hours) by making several birding stops. Our first stop is the Upper Patia Valley, a deep, arid valley where we will seek out species such as the near endemic Bar-crested Antshrike and the adorable Spectacled Parrotlet amongst the xerophytic vegetation.

After lunch we will begin ascending towards the Old Besuaco road for species such as Carunculated Caracara, Barred Anthrush, White-crested Elaenia, Red-hooded Tanager, Tufted Tit-tyrant, and White-banded Tyrannulet. We will arrive at the La Cocha Lagoon in time to settle in to our hotel, a cozy, Swiss-built hotel with fireplaces and spectacular views of the lagoon.

Lodging at Chalet Guamez.

Andean Condor
Juan Jose Arango







Yellow-throated Tanager
Brayan Coral

©Brayan Coral

Red-bellied Grackle
Juan Jose Arango



DAY 9

Paramo de Bordoncillo

We will spend the morning at the Paramo de Bordoncillo, not far from the hotel. A hike along the first portion of the trail will likely yield species such as Masked Mountain-tanager, Black Flowerpiercer, Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Barred Fruiteater, Agile Tit-Tyrant, and Grass-green and Golden-crowned Tanagers. The trail may be muddy and require rubber boots, but a chance to see both Rufous and Tawny Antpittas definitely makes it worth while.

After a morning of birding the first portion of the trail, those who wish to have a picnic lunch and brave the rest of the trail to try for the rare and uncommon Chestnut-bellied Cotinga can do so, but this will require a strenuous hike. Those who wish to have lunch at the hotel and visit some of the local communities can do so as well.

Lodging: Chalet Guamez

DAY 10

La Cocha Lagoon and El Encanto Andina

We will take a boat tour of the lagoon scoping the waters for Andean Gull, Slate-colored Coot, Yellow-billed Pintail, Silvery Grebe, and Yellow-billed Pintail, paying attention overhead to the possibility of seeing Cinereous Harrier.

It is possible the marshy edges of the lagoon produce species such as Sora, Virginia Rail, Subtropical Doradito, Cinereous Conebill, Plain-colored Seed-eater, and Subtropical Doradito.

We will disembark at the El Encanto Andina Reserve for lunch and chances of both Green-tailed and Black-tailed Trainbearers and Buff-winged Starfrontlet. We will use the boat ride back to the docks to search for any of the species we may have missed in the morning.

Lodging: Hotel Guamez.

DAY 11

Upper Trampoline of Diversity

We will leave the hotel very early in order to be birding at sunrise after a 1 hour drive, thus beginning our ascent down the trampoline of diversity. A day of birding along the road may bring many surprises, as few birders have explored this pristine area.

Birding a busy road that is only 1 lane along various stretches comes with its challenges, so please be prepared to deal with traffic. We will do our best to avoid certain areas that may be dangerous, but be assured that we will encounter many goodies, including the handsome and near endemic Golden-fronted Whitestart and the very local Deep-blue Flowerpiercer. One of our main targets is the photogenic and cooperative White-rimmed Brush-finch, a species that is only found in Colombia and Ecuador.

Other species to keep on the radar include Red-headed Barbet, Rufous-breasted Flycatcher, Green-and-black Fruiteater, Saffron-crowned Tanager, and Flame-faced Tanager and Short-billed Bush-tanager. We will bird our way to El Mirador and then descend down to Mocoa to settle into our downtown hotel for the next three nights.

Lodging: Hotel Suma Wasi

DAY 12

Lower Trampoline of Diversity

We will ascend from the busy town of Mocoa to El Mirador for amazing views of the Amazonian Piedmont at Sunrise. Today we will again bird a busy road, so extreme care must be taken to be alert and stay together. The day will take us along a 1,400 meter (4,600 feet) altitudinal gradient with chances to see Yellow-throated Bush-tanager and three species of Tapaculo: Long-tailed, Spillman's and Ocellated Tapaculo.

A sack lunch will allow us to bird all day in search of specialties such as Hooded Mountain-Tanager, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Green-fronted Lancebill, White-tailed Hillstar, Chestnut-bellied Thrush, and Handsome Flycatcher among many others!

Lodging: Suma Wasi



Flame-faced Tanager

Juan Jose Arango



Violaceous Jay

Christopher Calonje



Chestnut Woodpecker

Brayan Coral



DAY 13

Rumiyaco

The Rumiyaco sector lies at about 600 meters (2,000 feet) above sea level and offers great birding opportunities very close to Mocoa. We will spend the morning birding the area in search of species such as the very common Violaceous Jay and Silver-beaked Tanager. We will also devote time to one of our main targets: Plum-throated Cotinga.

Lunch in town and some time for a short siesta will have us returning to the area to seek out the rest of our targets in the area, including Glittering-throated Emerald, Lettered and Chestnut-eared Aracari, Golden-bellied Euphonia, Cream-colored Woodpecker, Chestnut Woodpecker, and Orange-fronted Plush-crown.

Lodging: Hotel Suma Wasi

DAY 14

Mocoa - Pitalito Road

An early departure from Mocoa with luggage loaded in the bus will allow for some stops on the way to San Agustin.

This is definitely the spot for beauties such as Orange-eared, Magpie and Paradise Tanagers, which are relatively common in this part of the Amazonian piedmont. The forests in this region have ecological characteristics of both the Andes and the Amazon, demonstrating high levels of diversity, for which they are considered as sites of interest for biological conservation and research. It will take luck, but one of the main targets will be the spectacularly-colored Plum-throated Cotinga. Other species of interest at San Joaquin include Plain-backed Antpitta, Ecuadorian Tyrannulet, Lined Antshrike, Yellow-throated Toucan, Chestnut-eared Aracari and Wire-crested Thorntail.

After lunch we will continue on the Mocoa-Pitalito road, making several stops along the way to stretch out and do some birding, hoping to run in to some exciting species in this seldomly explored road. Once in Pitalito, we will begin our ascent towards the town of San Agustin, crossing the Magdalena River at its narrowest width.

Lodging: Terrazas de San Agustin



DAY 15

San Agustin

A UNESCO world heritage since 1995, San Agustin presents the largest group of religious monuments and megalithic sculptures in South America and also provides nice habitat for some great birding.

The archaeological landscape hosts sculptures that resemble human figures with threatening, smiling, or somber faces. But also rather divine creatures, warriors armed with clubs, round eyes or jaguars' teeth of mythical heroes. Some seem to depict serenity and wisdom, others fear and darkness.

The Agustin culture dominated the area, but who these people were, where they came from, what the exact purpose of the gigantic sculptures was, and to what extent the culture was connected to other known cultures that lived in the area at the time, remains unknown.

The main targets in the park are the endemic Dusky-headed Brush-finch and Colombian Chachalaca, as well as the near endemic Spectacled Parrotlet and Bar-crested Antshrike. Other specialties we will seek out include Blue-browed Tanager, Olivaceous Piculet, Yellow-breasted Antwren, Olivaceous Piha

and a migratory species that would sure be a treat to see at these latitudes, Cerulean Warbler.

Lodging: Terrazas de San Agustin



Chestnut-eared Aracari

Brayan Coral

San Agustin Bird Statue

Christopher Calonje



Paradise Tanager
Brayan Coral

DAY 16

San Agustin and Pitalito - Cali Flight

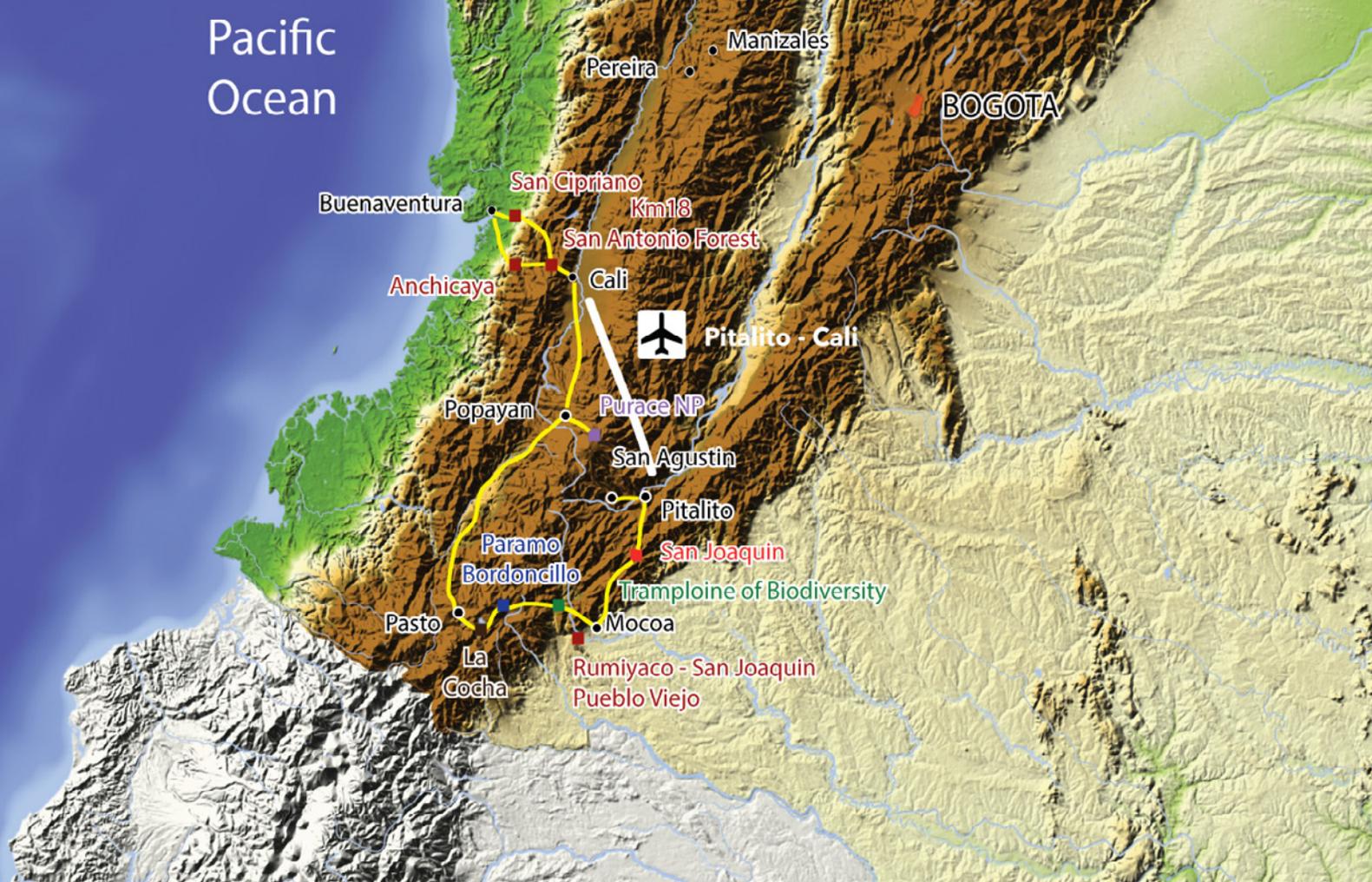
This will be a travel day to Cali, although we will be able to do some morning birding in the vicinity of San Agustin.

Lodging: Hotel Hampton by Hilton

DAY 17

Depart Cali

Pacific Ocean



TRIP INCLUDES

- All Lodging (Double Occupancy)
- Internal Flight (Pitalito - Cali)
- Bottled Water Throughout the Trip
- All Meals From Breakfast on Day 2 to Breakfast on Day 17
- Snacks Throughout the Trip
- Entrances to Parks and Reserves
- Local Guides
- Internal Terrestrial Transport From Airport Pickup to Airport Drop-off



DOES NOT INCLUDE

- Tips
- Alcoholic Beverages
- Insurance
- Airfare to Colombia
- Laundry
- Items of Personal Nature