

**Art, Birds and Natural History of
Costa Rica's South Pacific Coast & Sevegre Cloud Forest
February 10 to 19, 2017**

This trip offers an in-depth exploration into two of Costa Rica's most diverse and unique ecosystems: the humid lowland Pacific forest zone and the Talamanca montane forest zone. It is co-led by well-known nature artist Paul Harpley and ecologist James Kamstra who will help uncover the natural wonders of the forest and coast in this part of the world. In addition to learning firsthand about the wildlife and ecology, participants will have the opportunity to practice art with instruction by Paul Harpley at various Costa Rican settings. Set at a moderate pace, there will be sufficient time at locations to either practice art or look in greater depth at the natural world.



ITINERARY

Feb. 10 Arrive San Jose and transfer to La Cusinga Lodge (D)

Flight to San Jose. On arrival you are met and transferred to La Cusinga Lodge near Uvita along Costa Rica's gorgeous South Pacific Coast (approx. 4 hours). Welcome dinner. 4 nights

Feb. 11 La Cusinga Lodge (B,D)

Wake up to the forest sounds of toucans and parrots on a morning bird walk in this new environment. After a delicious breakfast of tropical fruits we have a morning workshop that introduces you to geography and history of Costa Rica. This will be followed by an introductory art workshop which will focusing on the art of seeing, and the basics of drawing nature and still life subjects.

In the afternoon you might wish to take a small walk through the rainforest and end up at the Playa Arco, a very secluded and safe beach, and for years one of the best-kept secrets in Costa Rica. Later we take a guided walk through one of the trails near the lodge for a first-hand look at the structure and characteristics of a lowland tropical rainforest.



Feb. 12 La Cusinga Lodge (B,D)

After an early morning bird walk and breakfast we engage in a presentation and discussion on tropical forest ecology focusing on Pacific Coast Wet Zone. Much of the west coast of Central America consists of dry forest but in southwestern Costa Rica (including La Cusinga) and adjacent Panama is a unique humid zone with species different from

the more extensive Caribbean lowland rainforest. On the afternoon hike we look for some of the endemic bird, mammal and reptile species that include Fiery-billed Aracari, Baird's Trogon and the Central American Squirrel Monkey. We will also search for the 1,000-year-old Ajo trees which grow in the reserve.

Art instruction will expand upon yesterday's session, to apply the artistic eye to the mediums of watercolour, painting and pencil drawing. An option for the less artistically inclined will be to swim on the beach or beach comb during the hottest part of the day.

A moth light will be set up at night to attract and view some of the myriad of insects which are otherwise impossible to see. We will also conduct a nightwalk into the forest to look for some of the nocturnal creatures.



Feb. 13 Marino Ballena National Park – La Cusinga Lodge (B,D)

After breakfast we offer a shore interactive presentation on the nearshore marine environment of the Pacific Ocean just offshore from our location. Some leisure time for art work developing skills and relaxing sketching or exploring near the lodge.

Then we visit to Marino Ballena National Park for the afternoon. This park contains the unusual Uvita Peninsula or 'Whale tail' promontory which is a rocky T-shaped peninsula. Look for signs of marine life that live in tidal pools, the wave washed rock and immediately surrounding waters. One of the few accessible coral reefs of the Pacific side of Costa Rica can be found here. There will likely be shorebirds along the rocky shoreline. At some point in our day, there will be optional art instruction applying drawing and possibly watercolour skills to landscape, using the picturesque tropical seashore setting as our model.

Feb. 14 La Cusinga to Savegre Cloud Forest (B,D)

After breakfast, head to the Central Highlands. Stop to visit the paramo ecosystem near Cerro de la Muerte at over 3400 m in elevation. Paramo consists of high elevation grassland and thicket above the treeline. The ground cover contains a variety of wildflowers including some genera familiar to the temperate zone such as lupines and blueberries as well as completely unfamiliar blooms. Look for some of the characteristic wildlife species that inhabit the paramo including Volcano Junco, Fiery-throated Hummingbird and Large-footed Finch. We might also spot the Green Spiny Lizard which scampers among the high elevation rocks. After several hours at Cerro de la Muerte we make our way to Trogon Lodge near Savegre. Dinner on arrival. 4 nights.



Feb. 15 Savegre – Paraíso Quetzal (B,L,D)

We wake up to different sounds in a very different type of forest on the morning bird walk. After breakfast, experience the difference between cloudforests and lowland rainforests and what makes them so special. Trogon lodge, at 2400 m above sea level, is located in a Cloud forest, a wet temperate rainforest rich with epiphytes including many orchids. Luxuriant moss adorns the trunks of the Costa Rican Oaks. Primitive tree ferns poke their giant fronds through the forest subcanopy. Take an interpretive stroll through the mystical mossy forest to witness the botanical features.



The forest is rich a myriad form of wildlife including insects, mammals, and amphibians, but the birds are what really stands out with over 170 species. The variety of hummingbirds and multi-coloured tanagers is impressive. Perhaps most spectacular of all is the Resplendent Quetzal a year round resident with long metallic green tail. We continue our search for other beauties like the Three-wattled Bellbird, Buffy Tuftedcheek and the Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher.

During this day we take an excursion to Paraíso Quetzal Cloud Forest where you will be immersed in exuberant vegetation and pristine habitat. This private area is an extension of 80 hectares containing a wealth of fascinating and unique flora and fauna. Lunch and dinner are included this day. Those with the inspiration and an interest in observation and documentation can apply their developing art skills at this forest area with Paul when we return from the field.

Feb. 16 Savegre – Los Quetzales National Park (B,D)

In the early morning we depart for Los Quetzales National Park – perhaps another opportunity to spot the quetzal. Although the bird is renowned for being elusive and skittish, park authorities claim that the quetzal is easier to spot here than in the cloud forests of Monteverde to the north. Not surprisingly, bird watching is productive here. Many of the birds are confined to narrow altitudinal ranges so the complement of species changes as we descend in elevation. Sloths, coyotes and pumas are also known to sidle through the park's limits.



The park's terrain varies widely from mountains to lakes, cloud forests to rainforests, rivers to streams, there is a bit of everything in this park. Most of the park lies on both sides of the Río Savegre, which originates in the Cerro de la Muerte and empties into the Pacific Ocean near Manuel Antonio. Oak and cypress trees grow at the higher altitudes, and significant portions of the park are covered in aguacatillo trees, which are a relative of the avocado. All kinds of exotic flowers dot the landscape, adding bits of color to the

overwhelmingly green terrain. With an average rainfall that varies from 80-190 inches, the topography of the park is bounteous and bursting with life.

Return to the lodge for lunch. In the afternoon we conduct an optional art workshop focusing on the beauty of the cloudforest through pleinair drawing and watercolour. There will be more chances to explore some of the other trails in the forest surrounding the lodge. In the evening we set up the moth light to attract an impressive array of insects and take a night walk into the forest to look for night creatures such as owls, mammals and the Dusky Nightjar.

Feb. 17 Savegre (B,D)

Continue to explore the upper trails near the lodge in search of wildlife and inspiration. The large centennial oaks of the forest are laden with lichens and mosses that contrast with the colorful bromeliads. Explore the trails in search of birds and wildlife. Photograph or sketch along the way! We might end up at a high waterfall.

Feb. 18 (B)

Final morning nature walk. After breakfast we depart for San Jose. Afternoon at leisure in San Jose. Overnight at the airport hotel.

Feb. 19 Depart San Jose (B)

Transfer back to San Jose for a morning flight home.

Extensions can be booked on an individual basis. (B)

TOUR COSTS

Land cost: \$ 2,275 USD per person

Single Room supplement (limited single rooms) \$ 420 USD

Early Booking Bonus of \$ 50 USD per person until June 30, 2016

Group size 12 – 16

AIR: Ask us about promotional air rates from major cities in N. America to San Jose

Delta Airlines sample :

Delta 2551 K 08FEB 1 Toronto/Atlanta 610A 852A

Delta 900 K 08FEB 1 Atlanta/San Jose 950A1252P

Delta 902 V 19FEB San Jose/Atlanta 825A 125P

Delta 5 DL5186 V 19 FEB Atlanta/Toronto 257P 514P

\$ 648 + TAX 195.83 CAD (subject to change at time of booking)



YOUR GUIDES



Paul Harpley is a well-known nature artist and naturalist. He was formerly Manager of Interpretation, Culture and Design for the Toronto Zoo where he was responsible for on-site developments including many award winning exhibits and programs. Paul now consults with zoos around the world on exhibit design. He also runs an art gallery near Lake Simcoe. A deep respect and knowledge for nature are reflected in Paul's paintings. In fact, as a master with pencil and watercolour, his skill is now at the peak of craftsmanship. Meticulous attention to accuracy through field observation and a strong sense of design distinguish his paintings and drawings from those of his contemporaries. Wildlife art has enabled Paul to combine his two great interests, science and art. In 1992, he completed a Master's degree at York University specializing in Western perceptions of nature. He has published numerous scientific papers in Canadian and American natural history journals. Paul is recognized as a widely known naturalist. Paul lives near Lake Simcoe in Ontario where he was instrumental in forming the South Lake Simcoe Naturalists' club. He's been a dedicated conservationist for years, particularly active in the Save the Rouge Valley System campaign in Toronto. Paul will escort the group providing art instruction as well as interpretation of natural history.



James Kamstra is an ecologist who has been visiting Costa Rica since 1982 and is intimately familiar with the geography and natural history of the country. He has been fascinated by many facets of nature since he was a boy particularly birds, reptiles, insects and plants. He has conducted an ecological study of the Baird's Tapir, carried out an ecological survey of the Cockscomb Basin Reserve and looked at the impact of a dam on endangered wildlife in Belize. He is an ecologist, knowledgeable about tropical ecosystems and has extensive knowledge on the flora and fauna of Central America. He has led ecotours to South and Central America including many to Belize, as well as Costa Rica, Panama, Guyana, Ecuador and Brazil. James works as an ecologist / environmental consultant examining the impacts of various developments on the natural environment. James will escort the group and share his knowledge of the natural and cultural history.

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