



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures



White-tailed Starfrontlet by Dubi Shapiro

IMPACT ADVENTURES *with* AUDUBON

ROCKJUMPER Tours for Biodiversity



Wyncote Audubon Society
Serving Philadelphia and Montgomery Counties, Pennsylvania

Colombia's Megadiverse Santa Marta Mountains

16 - 23 July 2020 (8 Days)

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TOUR OVERVIEW

Less than a 4-hour flight from Miami, with more bird species than any other country, Colombia owns a staggering total list of 1,900 species. This huge diversity includes a remarkable 74 endemics – and these are a result of the equally diverse range of habitats. The most unique of these is surely the isolated snow-capped Santa Marta Mountains. Here, in Colombia's fabulous north, the Caribbean coast rises dramatically, from the lower dry forests to towering peaks above 16,000 feet at Pico Bolívar and Pico Cristóbal Colón. Still relatively little-known, it remains debated which peak is higher; but regardless, these are the nation's highest points, amid arguably the world's highest coastal mountain range. Isolated from and older than the Andes, possessing a rich, unique geological history, these forested mountains bristle and burst with no less than 36 showy, endemic birds.

In 2016, the National Audubon Society together with partners in Colombia, such as the Calidris Association (calidris.org.co) and Patrimonio Natural (patrimonionatural.org.co) established the Northern Colombia Birding Trail. Funded in large part by USAID, this brand new trail hosts superb birding and a number of Audubon-trained local guides. Impact Adventures: Explore Perija tour, features in Northern Colombia Birding Trail also, and the two trips can be paired for a magical combination. These spots are great examples of how bird-based tourism leads to a more stable future for the area's birds, the local guides employed, and local businesses, too.

The Santa Martas are utterly unique and this trip is a prime example of how birders can make a positive impact, as they are thrilled by stunning, special birds. Many experts regard the Santa Martas as the most biodiverse place on the planet, and this Megadiverse Santa Marta Mountains tour provides access to nearly each altitudinal band of habitat in the range, giving us a chance at the lion's share of unique birds here. From the Caribbean coast – where flamingos gather and strut – to the adjacent dry forest – where Vermillion Cardinals perch prominently – to the endemic-rich heights of the Santa Martas, these 7 days teem with fascinating birds in a world-renowned area for biodiversity.



ROCKJUMPER & AUDUBON

Rockjumper is proud to partner with the National Audubon Society in support of their unrivaled, on the ground work protecting birds and the places they need while training area residents in guiding, business, and hospitality. Through Rockjumper's

Impact Adventures with Audubon, we showcase amazing nature spectacles while celebrating the efforts and expertise of local businesses and conservationists, fostering sustainable economic growth in Neotropical hotspots with high biodiversity. Support the National Audubon Society's work by joining a Rockjumper Impact Adventure today.



Wyncote Audubon Society
Serving Philadelphia and Montgomery Counties, Pennsylvania

This Megadiverse Santa Marta Mountains tour serves as an opportunity for WAS supporters and friends to travel together, and see one of the most incredible birding locations on Earth, while supporting the work of

National Audubon Society, and raising some funds for Wyncote Audubon. It is guided by Rockjumper guide George Armistead, Audubon-trained local guide(s), and also your Wyncote Audubon host, Robin Irizarry.

George Armistead is chief network officer at Rockjumper and focused on partnerships, promotion and managing the Rockjumper Bird Conservation Fund. A birder since the age of 9 years old, he has a long history of connecting people with nature through ecotourism and expedition travel. A professional wildlife guide with 20 years of experience, George has led trips to all seven continents. From 2012 to August of 2016, he developed, managed and marketed events for the American Birding Association, served on the ABA's Recording Standards and Ethics Committee, and was an instructor at ABA young birder camps.

George Armistead ▶



Robin Irizarry has served on the Wyncote Audubon Board's Education and Important Bird Area committees since 2015. He also works full-time as the Philadelphia Watershed Coordinator for the Tookany/Tacony-Frankford Watershed Partnership, helping to rally their communities around environmental conservation on the local level. When he's not out birding or leading nature walks Robin enjoys wood-carving, biking and exploring his neighborhood creek with his family.

Robin Irizarry ▶



ACTIVITIES



Bird Watching



Photography

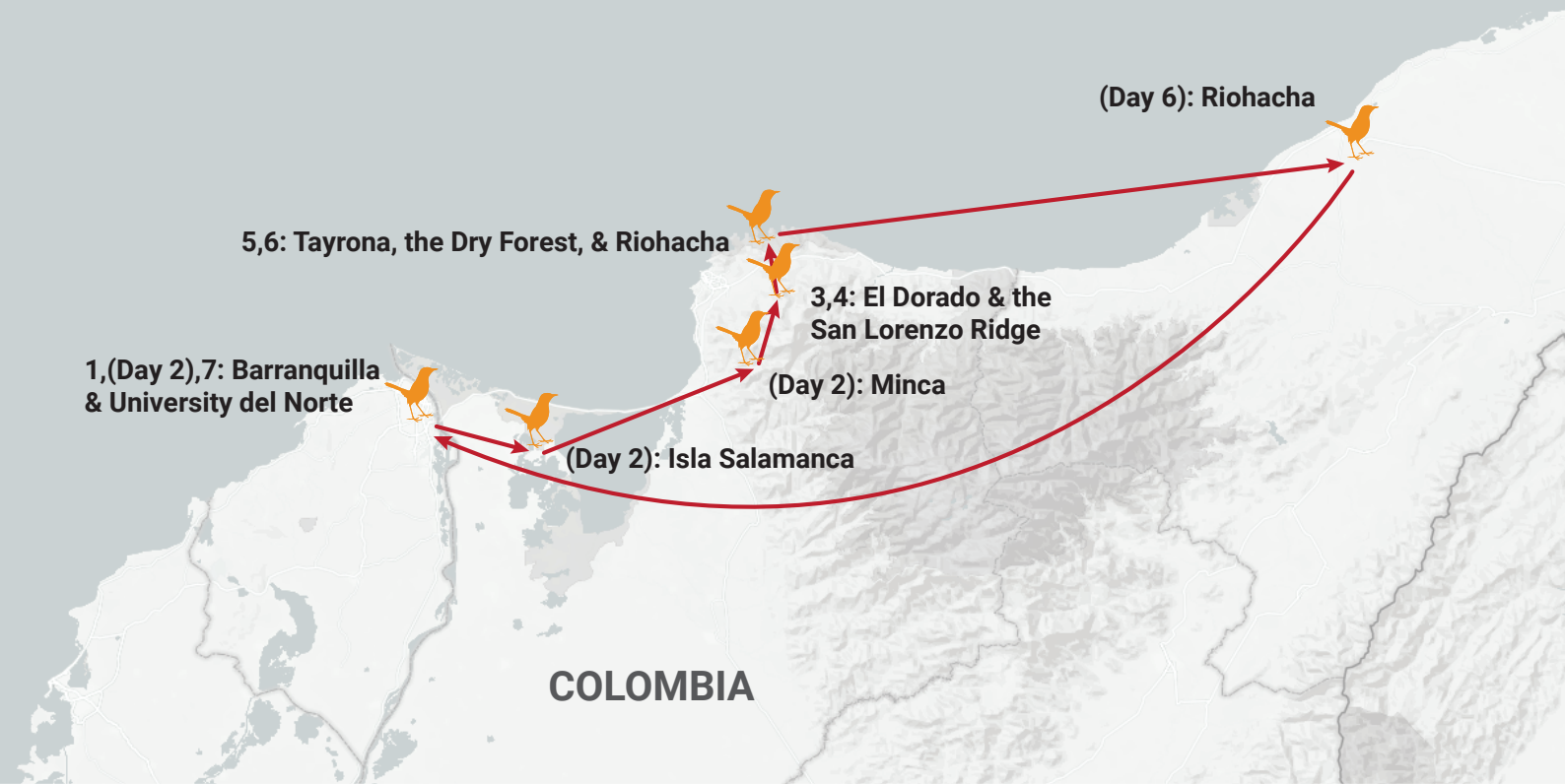


Walking/Hiking



Audubon Conservation

THE TOUR IN DETAIL



Day 1	Arrive into Barranquilla
Day 2	Univ. del Norte, Isla Salamanca/Km 4 and then drive to Minca.
Day 3	Drive to El Dorado
Day 4	El Dorado & the San Lorenzo Ridge
Day 5	Travel to Tayrona National Park
Day 6	Tayrona, the Dry Forest, & Riohacha
Day 7	Riohacha to Barranquilla
Day 8	Points Home

DAY 1 ARRIVAL INTO BARRANQUILLA.

Unless visiting Bogota or another part of Colombia before the tour begins, the recommended means of arrival is for you to book your arrival flight into Barranquilla from Miami (via Avianca, American Airlines, etc.). You will be met at the airport and transferred to the nearby hotel, where our group will gather for a welcome dinner at 6:00pm. Night in Barranquilla.

DAY 2 BARRANQUILLA TO MINCA

After breakfast we venture to the Universidad del Norte. Here, we stand a reasonable chance to find the range-restricted Chestnut-winged Chachalaca, and could encounter our first Crested Bobwhite, Russet-throated Puffbird, Black-crested Antshrike, Bicolored Wren, Yellow Oriole, and still much more.

Then we move on to Isla Salamanca National Park. Here on Colombia's Caribbean coast, the park offers access to mangrove forest fringed by deciduous woodland, and we will explore this distinctive habitat, and do our best to connect with special birds, such as Chestnut-winged Chachalaca, Golden-green Woodpecker, Bicolored Conebill, Shining-green Hummingbird, and also the Critically Endangered endemic: Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird. The latter requires luck to see, as it looks quite similar to the more widespread Sapphire-throated Hummingbird that also occurs here, in some numbers. The nearby salt flats and estuaries around the mangroves will net many new species for our tour also, hosting a huge array of wintering shorebirds, herons, egrets, gulls, terns and waterfowl.



Chestnut-winged Chachalaca by Adam Riley

Next up is the rural tourist town of Minca. Attracting tourists from all over the world, including hikers, bicyclists and birders alike, Minca's charm is undeniable. It is also conveniently located in the foothills of the famed Santa Marta Mountains. This is our first taste of what Colombians call the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, and the great birding that the Santa Martas mountains have to offer. This afternoon and evening, we search for Coppery Emerald, Rufous Nightjar, Keel-billed Toucan, Black-backed Antshrike, Pale-billed Inezia, Pale-eyed Pygmy Tyrant, Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant, Rufous-breasted and Rufous-and-white Wrens, and the boldly marked Golden-winged Sparrow. Night in Minca.

DAY 3 MINCA TO EL DORADO LODGE, SIERRA NEVADA DE SANTA MARTA



Santa Marta Toucanet by Adam Riley

The drive from Minca to El Dorado is one that no birder can forget. The road is really rough, and our pace is slow as a result, but the views are impressive and the birding grand. The "road" is almost more a river of rocks, potholes and seemingly impassable stream crossings that our drivers, in 4X4 Land Cruisers, will deftly maneuver to deliver us to the loveliest lodge of the tour, and indeed one of the most spectacular and remote places a birder may ever visit in a lifetime. It makes for quite an exciting day. With 19 accessible Santa Marta endemic bird species to search for, we begin searching through mixed flocks that often contain Scaled Piculet, Groove-billed Toucanet, and the Specious Tyrannulet.

With luck, we might cross paths with an antswarm, attracting Ruddy Woodcreeper, Gray-headed Tanager and other opportunists. There are several choice territories too for more Santa Marta specialties. En route we have good chances for the furtive Santa Marta Foliage-gleaner, the Santa Marta Antbird, Santa Marta Tapaculo, and even the lovely, little Santa Marta Blossomcrown – which, miraculously, we have managed to locate on every previous tour here to date.

Eventually we arrive at El Dorado Reserve, named for the mythical city of gold, El Dorado and it is indeed a goldmine for birders. Perched at an elevation of over 6000 feet, the lodge offers wonderful views of the Santa Martas and its forested slopes. Established in 2010 by ProAves (proaves.org), one of Colombia's most accomplished bird conservation organizations, the reserve has grown to over 2000 acres. And this is a special place not only for its endemic birds, but also because it protects a number of endangered species, including birds, plants and amphibians.



White-tipped Quetzal by Adam Riley



After getting settled in at our comfortable lodge in El Dorado, we will hold a vigil at the feeding stations and prowl a trail or two for bird species frequenting the grounds. Landscaped with native flowers, and tucked perfectly into the cloud forest amidst thousands of acres of untouched habitat, and a clear view of the Caribbean coast some 30 miles to the north, this lodge is always a favorite, and raucous Black-chested Jays often feature here, along with the exquisite and demure Blue-naped Chlorophonia. Other birds we will look for in the area include Band-tailed Guan, the near-endemic Black-fronted Wood Quail, the Santa Marta Screech Owl, the striking if tricky White-tailed Starfrontlet, rare Lazuline Sabrewing, as well as Santa Marta Woodstar, Gray-throated Leaf-tosser, Golden-breasted Fruiteater, White-tipped Quetzal, Santa Marta Toucanet, Santa Marta Antpitta, Black-hooded Thrush, endemic White-lored Warbler, and Colombia and Santa Marta Brush Finches.

DAY 4 HIGH-ELEVATION BIRDING IN THE SIERRA NEVADA DE SANTA MARTA RANGE

One of the most thrilling parts of any visit to the Santa Martas is the chance to bird the San Lorenzo Ridge. Today we depart really early, pre-dawn, and dedicate much of the day to high-elevation species endemic to the upper reaches of the Santa Marta Mountains. This is perhaps the only area we go where a majority of the birds we see are endemics. Reaching just above 8000 feet in elevation, we park in the early morning and then slowly begin birding our way back downhill. But we'll watch dawn break along the crest of the San Lorenzo, and Cerro Kennedy. Key species here can include Military Macaw (rare), the endangered endemic Santa Marta Parakeet, Rusty-capped and Streak-capped Spinetails, the spatiator subspecies of Rufous Antpitta (a certain split), Brown-rumped Tapaculo, the unpredictable Santa Marta Bush Tyrant, Santa Marta Mountain Tanager, Paramo Seedeater, Yellow-fronted Whitestart and the finely-patterned Santa Marta Warbler. Frequently, we are met with success by lunchtime, in which case, we may return to the lodge for rest, or more photo opps, and still chances for key species we might've missed the previous afternoon.

DAY 5 DESCENDING THE SANTA MARTAS, AND ON TO TAYRONA

On our final morning in the majestic Santa Martas, we shall spend some time trying to shore up any holes on our birding list, and/or enjoying the many birds around the grounds. Then we head back downslope, with maybe a birding stop or two. Keen eyes may yield sightings of White-rumped Hawk, Montane Solitary Eagle, Scaled Antpitta, Scarlet-fronted Parakeet, or even a prize mammal – such as Colombia Red Howler Monkey or Guianan Brown Capuchin. Our descent out of the Santa Martas should keep us in the company of birds the whole way, until we hit the foothills, and then we head straight on to Colombia's most popular national park, at Tayrona. Night outside Tayrona National Park.

DAY 6 LOS FLAMENCOS SANCTUARY

This morning we explore what Colombians describe as the crown jewel of their national park system, Tayrona. The park offers scenic Caribbean coastline and humid tropical forest, and there are a host of wonderful Neotropical birds, likely new for our list, that we hope to chance upon including, Blue-headed Parrot, Lineated Woodpecker, White-bellied Antbird, Lance-tailed and White-bearded Manakins, Crimson-backed Tanager, Red-legged Honeycreeper and perhaps Crane Hawk or Boat-billed Heron. We'll need to stay alert for mammals too, as we could encounter monkeys such as White-fronted Capuchin or the diminutive Cotton-top Tamarin. After our morning in Tayrona, we head on for Riohacha on the Guajira Peninsula. A coastal town, Riohacha is famous as one of the home areas of the indigenous Wayuu people.





Tayrona National Park by George L. Armistead

As elsewhere in Colombia, Audubon has been instrumental in training local guides here, and with their help we will pursue the local specialties. Just outside of town lies one of the oldest wildlife sanctuaries in the country, Los Flamencos Sanctuary. Set aside in 1977, as a reserve for the namesake American Flamingo, here tidal flats meet the edge of the Guajira Desert. We will check the tides and see what is best for birding the tidal flats, but with some luck we could see flamingos, and always there are a good variety of shorebirds, gulls, terns, and herons and ibis and the area holds good potential for finding vagrant birds. Both Kelp Gulls and Lesser Black-backed Gulls were both considered rare here not long ago, but today are regular. The unique dry forest, is shorter and sparser here than inland, and the coastal xeric scrub holds a number of new snazzy birds for us. We shall hope for sightings of White-whiskered Spinetail, Chestnut Piculet, Russet-throated Puffbird, Pileated Finch, or even the shockingly red Vermilion Cardinal. Night in Riohacha.



Vermilion Cardinal by George L. Armistead

DAY 7 DRY FOREST BIRDING, & MID-DAY FLIGHT TO BOGOTÁ

We'll spend the morning trying to connect with any birds we missed in the dry forest the previous afternoon, such as Crested Bobwhite or Glaucous Tanager, and then also hope that the tide favors us for checking the mudflats for shorebirds, and other wading birds. After morning birds here we wind our way back along the coast, birding opportunistically as we go. We'll enjoy a final night together in Barranquilla and a farewell dinner to toast the birds of Guajira Peninsula.

DAY 8 FLIGHTS HOME

After breakfast this morning, and then our transfer to the airport in Barranquilla, our tour concludes. We will wish each other well and set off for home, with great memories of birds and friends in the Megadiverse Santa Marta.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Price listed is for a minimum group size of 8 participants and a maximum of 12. It also assumes guests arrive into Barranquilla via an international flight from Miami. If you arrive into Bogota instead, we can arrange an internal flight for an additional \$200. A limited number of single supplements are available at our lodging in the Santa Martas, but should be available elsewhere.

For more info at any time, please contact Karina Villalba in Rockjumper's Conservation Tours Department at: conservationtours@rockjumperbirding.com.

Tour Price:

- \$3,550/person

Single Supplement: \$260

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 8;
- Some soft drink with meals;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Extra activities mentioned in the itinerary;
- Reserve entrance fees; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services.)
-

The tour fee does not include:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- All alcoholic and any additional beverages;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

PLEASE NOTE:

- a) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient participants, a small party supplement will have to be charged.
- b) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.
- c) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and/or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

IMPORTANT NOTES

SPECIAL NOTES:

- This tour is not especially rigorous but involves a considerable amount of time walking and on foot. Mostly we will be near our vehicle(s), should anyone wish for a break, but participants should be prepared to spend some time (often over 3 hours/day) standing and/or walking, while at a comfortable pace. A walking stick can be helpful for balance if we venture off the road and onto trails, and for time spent at feeding stations or awaiting a particular territorial bird to appear, a folding stool may be a helpful to relieve stress on one's back, knees or feet. Good trail shoes or hiking shoes with good support and good tread that allow one a good purchase on sometimes slippery surfaces are recommended. Despite being in the mountains much of the time, we are mostly walking on fairly even ground, but in places it can get slippery especially if there has been rain.
- We will be at fairly high altitude on one or two occasions, reaching perhaps over 8000 feet above sea level.
- Generally, considering the above one should, therefore, be in good health and of sound fitness to undertake this tour. If you have any physical limitations or medical conditions of any sort, please let the Rockjumper office know in advance of the tour.
- We will be birding in some remote areas well away from modern medical facilities.
- The hotels are of comfortable standard throughout.
- Transport is by small coach or minibus, or via 4x4s while in the Santa Martas. The roads away from the Santa Martas are in good condition, however, the road up into the Santa Martas is well known for being quite rough. Portions of it are in the process of being paved, but good stretches of it bumpy. But it is also good birding all along, and so we will take our time with it. Participants should be prepared to rotate seats in vehicles (at least daily), such that no one is relegated to the same seat routinely.
- Due to the nature of the topography, there is the possibility of landslides interfering with our trip, though we have minimized this risk by undertaking the tour during a drier season.
- Typically weather is pleasant, but some rain is expected (occasionally heavy), and it can be very hot in the lowlands, and quite cool at higher elevations, especially at night. Raingear is recommended, as well as a warmer layer (fleece and/or thermal layer) as it can be surprisingly cool at times. Sun protection is also a consideration when we are along the Caribbean coast.

FLIGHTS:

The main tour will start and finish in Barranquilla at Ernesto Cortissoz International Airport (IATA: BAQ). Some participants may wish to pair this trip with other travel within Colombia before and after, and then a flight from Bogota may be required. We can assist with booking internal flights in Colombia.

IMPORTANT: Rockjumper does not book international flights, but we are happy to recommend them. When booking your flights, please **DO NOT** book any international flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.

Rockjumper c/o George Armistead

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