

The Reptiles & Amphibians of Colombia

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline Itinerary

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|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| Day 1 – 2 | Arrive Bogotá, Fly Cali |
| Day 3 – 5 | San Cipriano |
| Day 5 | Yotoco |
| Day 6 – 7 | Santa Cecilia |
| Day 8 | Fly Santa Marta |
| Day 9 – 10 | Minca and Santa Marta |
| Day 11 | Santa Marta |
| Day 12 – 13 | Depart Colombia, inbound flights |

Departs

February – June

Focus

Reptiles and Amphibians

Grading

Important: please read the 'Tour Grading and Focus' section at the end of the document before booking.

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code COL06)

Highlights

- Explore Colombia's breath-taking biodiversity of reptiles and amphibians!
- See some of the world's most stunning frogs; Black-legged and Harlequin Poison Frog.
- Superb reptiles; Lansberg's Hognose Viper, Fer-de-lance, Eyelash Viper, Monkey Lizard, Rainbow Whiptail, crocodilians and tortoises.
- The best of rainforest and cloudforest herping!



Neotropical Anole, Harlequin Poison Frog, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta



Naturetrek Mingledown Barn Wolf's Lane Chawton Alton Hampshire GU34 3HJ UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Introduction

Colombia is without doubt one of the great destinations for the naturalist; a huge country covering over one million square kilometres, and still, per square kilometer, it is the most biodiverse country in the world.

The reptile- and amphibian-life in Colombia is astounding. Colombia has the second largest richness of amphibians in the world, hosting a mind-blowing 820 species of which over 390 species are endemic. Here we can find some of the most attractive frogs and toads on the planet, species such as the highly variable but ever-spectacular Harlequin Poison Frog, the highly sought-after Black-legged Poison Frog and the beautiful Condoto Stubfoot Toad. Many of the commonly found Treefrogs and Glassfrogs are also exquisite jewels of the rainforest.

A 'mega-biodiverse country', Colombia also has one of the richest diversities of reptile-life on earth, with over 600 species found here, of which an incredible 174 species are endemic. Even some of Colombia's most common reptiles are intricately beautiful, species such as Rainbow Lizard, Yellow-headed Gecko, Flat Andes Anole, Red-footed Tortoise, Mesoamerican Slider, Western Basilisk and Giant Parrot Snake. Aside from these common species, there are some fantastic reptiles to be discovered; Eyelash Viper, Common Monkey Lizard, Forest Flame Snake and a multitude of spectacular *Anolis* and *Ameiva* lizards.

Colombia's diversity of landscapes is beautiful, diverse and breathtaking, with its snow-capped mountains, cloud-filled valleys, savannas and rainforests. It will be a privilege to explore such wonderful and pristine habitats in search of the exciting herpetology contingent which inhabit them.

Not only will we enjoy Colombia as a paradise for the naturalist but throughout the tour we will enjoy incredibly friendly hospitality, delicious food and world-class coffee!



Lowland Pacific Forest © Robin Smith

Itinerary

NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1 – 2

Arrive Bogotá, Fly Cali

After arriving in Bogotá, which we expect to have a direct overnight flight option from London, we'll fly to Cali, meeting our herpetologist guide and transferring to San Cipriano. Should you wish to join the holiday from another home country, please do get in touch and we will be very pleased to assist with such arrangements. After our first delicious Colombian dinner together, we'll head out spotlighting from the lodge where we have the chance to start recording such exciting species as Chiriqui Glassfrog (*Teratohyla pulverata*), Rosenberg's Gladiator Frog (*Hypsiboas rosenbergi*) and Splendid Leaf Frog (*Cruziohyla calcarifer*).

Day 3

San Cipriano

After a Colombian coffee kickstart we'll be ready for an exciting day dedicated to herping San Cipriano, a spectacularly bio-rich location. For many, the highlights will be our efforts to find the stunning Harlequin Poison Frog (*Oophaga histrionica*).



Harlequin Poison Frog (*Oophaga histrionica*)

We'll journey through the San Cipriano Forest Reserve where we can enjoy its lush Pacific rainforest and crystal-clear rivers. Here we'll have a great chance for Hognosed Pitviper (*Porthidium nasutum*), Cope's Vine Snake (*Oxybelis brevirostris*), Chocóan Toadheaded Pitviper (*Bothrocophias myersi*), White-lipped Mud Turtle (*Kinosternon leucostomum*), Echternacht's Ameiva (*Holcosus anomalus*), Marbled Poison Frog (*Epipedobates boulengeri*), Gliding Leaf Frog (*Agalychnis spurrelli*), and New Granada Cross-banded Treefrog (*Smilisca phaeota*) amongst many others. San Cipriano is also home to the seldom-seen but highly-sought Chocoan Bushmaster (*Lachesis acrochorda*)!

Interesting species from other taxa here include the monotypic Broad-billed Sapayoa, Choco Toucan, Black-tipped Cotinga, Rose-faced Parrot and Five-coloured Barbet, as well as Moss Mimic Stick Insect, Black Witch Moth, Orange-barred Pixie, and many more.

In easy proximity of the hotel we can find highlights such as the beautiful Forest Flame Snake (*Oxyrhopus petolarius*), the endangered Cauca Poison Frog (*Andinobates bombetes*) and Cope's Parrot Snake (*Leptophis depressirostris*). With it being such a beautiful location and with so much to see, we will enjoy 2 full days exploring the habitats here in San Cipriano.

Day 5

Yotoco

After a final morning's herping and transferring from San Cipriano, we'll have the afternoon to enjoy Yotoco, a protected cloud forest reserve on the eastern slope of the western mountain range. Here we can enjoy a trail through the rainforest where we can expect a huge range of biodiversity of fauna and flora. Cauca Poison Frog, Fleischmann's Glass Frog (*Hyalinobatrachium fleischmanni*), False Coral Snake (*Erythrolamprus bizona*), Redtail Coral Snake, Cloudy Snail-eating Snake (*Sibon nebulatus*), Red-footed Tortoise (*Chelonoidis carbonarius*), Yellow-headed Gecko (*Gonatodes*



Yellow-headed Gecko (*Gonatodes albogularis*)

albogularis), Boettger's Colombian Treefrog (*Dendropsophus columbianus*), Gold Tegu (*Tupinambis teguixin*), Flat Andes Anole (*Anolis heterodermus*) are just some of the species possible here.

Polymnia Tigerwing, Red Peacock and Pale Owl-Butterfly are a selection of the wonderful butterflies we should see, while mammals and birds could include Colombian Red Howler Monkey, Red-tailed Squirrel, Multicoloured Tanager,

Colombian Chachalaca, Bar-crested Antshrike, Snail Kite, Spectacled Parrotlet, Common Potoo, and Booted Racket-tail.

Day 6 – 7

Montezuma and Santa Cecilia

We have time for further herping this morning before transferring to Montezuma lodge. From here we are perfectly based to visit Santa Cecilia where we will make exciting excursion in search of two bulls-eye colour morphs of Harlequin Poison Frog and the beautiful and sought-after Black-legged Poison Frog (*Phyllobates bicolor*).

Other species to be enjoyed here include Yellowbelly Poison Frog (*Andinobates fulguritus*), Limon Giant Glass Frog (*Sachatamia illex*), Smooth Helmeted Iguana (*Corytophanes cristatus*), Palmer's Teiid (*Echinosaura palmeri*), Rainbow Lizard (*Cnemidophorus lemniscatus*) and more than 60 other species of reptiles and amphibians!

Day 8

Fly Santa Marta

This morning we have another chance to herp Santa Cecilia before our afternoon flight to Santa Marta. Following our arrival we'll have time for a rest before heading out for either an afternoon or evening's herping.

Day 9 – 10

Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta

We have an exciting couple of days ahead of us, beginning with the coastal dry forests this morning, before later starting our ascent into the foothills and higher reaches of the Sierra Nevada de Santa

Marta mountain range, eventually reaching the wonderful El Dorado lodge – our base for the next two nights.

One of our key targets this morning is the beautifully marked Yellow-striped Poison Frog (*Dendrobates truncatus*), and we might also encounter Gage's Rainbow Lizard (*Cnemidophorus gagei*), American Crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*), Spectacled Caiman (*Caiman crocodilus*), Central American Boa (*Boa imperator*) and Magdalena River Tegu (*Tretioscincus bifasciatus*).

Moving up into the foothills we shall focus our search on species such as Lansberg's Hognose Viper (*Porthidium lansbergii*), Fer-de-lance, *Pristimantis carmelitae*, *Stenocercus erythrogaster*, Drylands Treefrog (*Boana xerophylla*), the endangered poison frog *Colostethus ruthveni*, St. Marta's Ground Snake (*Atractus sanctaemartae*), Savage's Mushroomtongue Salamander (*Bolitoglossa savagei*), and Savage's Thin-toed Frog (*Leptodactylus savagei*) amongst others. Eventually we'll reach El Dorado (the gold), the name given to the lodge thanks to spectacular sunsets which reflect off the Caribbean sea that now lies far below. Indeed there is nowhere quite like it anywhere in the world, and of course the wildlife here, which has been isolated for thousands of years in this island in the sky, is found nowhere else in the world – it promises to be an exciting next few days!

Indeed, it will be a real privilege to explore this fantastic and uniquely biodiverse region in search of reptiles and amphibians, and during this time we will make at least one early morning visit to the famous San Lorenzo ridge, hoping for clear views of the spectacular snow-capped peaks of the high Sierra – another view that lives long in the memory. Some of the unique species we'll aim to see here are the critically endangered San Lorenzo Stubfoot Toad (*Atelopus laetissimus*) and the critically endangered San Lorenzo Harlequin Toad (*Atelopus nahumae*). There's excellent habitat surrounding the lodge, so each night we can enjoy spotlighting and world-class frogging for such sought-after species as Ground Robber Frog (*Pristimantis insignitus*), Carmelita's Robber Frog (*Pristimantis carmelitae*) and the spectacular Magdalena Giant Glassfrog (*Ikakogi tayrona*). During our time here we're also sure to encounter a fine selection of endemic birds such as White-tailed Starfrontlet, Santa Marta Woodstar, Santa Marta Mountain Tanager, Santa Marta Warbler and Santa Marta Brush-finch. There's also a good chance of seeing both the Santa Marta subspecies of Grey-handed Night Monkey and Kinkajou on the lodges' fruit feeders after dark.



Ikakogi tayrona © Jaime Culebras

Day 11

Santa Marta

After exploring the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta over two days, late-morning we transfer down the mountain to our final coastal lodge which is situated on the banks of a freshwater river that

drains into the Caribbean sea just a short distance away. Here we'll enjoy relaxed afternoon and evening herping in the grounds of our lodge.

Day 12 – 13

Fly Bogotá, inbound flights

Depending on flight times, after a final morning in the field, we'll transfer in the afternoon to the airport and fly to Bogotá for onward overnight international connections. For those who wish, we can offer a mouth-watering extension option to the Chocó region of western Colombia, as outlined below.

Day 12 (Morromico extension)

Santa Marta - Medellin

For those taking the Morromico extension, today we'll fly from Santa Marta to Medellin where we overnight in a city hotel.

Day 13 – 15 (Morromico extension)

Medellin – Chocó

This morning we will make the short transfer to the airport and fly to Nuqui. From here we continue by boat to our next lodge, located on the Gulf of Tribugá, on the pacific coast of the Chocó region of western Colombia. Here we will be set in paradise!

We'll explore the pristine forest during the day and night where we can expect to find superb reptile and amphibians whilst enjoying every wonderful fauna and flora species Morromico offers. Here we have another morph of Harlequin Poison Frog to find and our best chance to see the stunning Condoto Stubfoot Toad (*Atelopus spurrelli*), which are encountered with some frequency here.

Some other amphibians here could include the lovely Kokoe Poison Frog (*Phyllobates aurotaenia*), Giant Toad (*Rhinella horribilis*), Splendid Leaf Frog (*Cruziohyla calcarifer*), Leaf-litter Toad (*Rhinella alata*), La Loma Robber Frog (*Pristimantis caryophyllaceus*) and Yellow-bellied Poison Frog (*Andinobates fulguritus*).

Some of the reptile highlights might include Chocóan Bushmaster (*Lachesis acrochorda*), Ringed Tree Boa (*Corallus annulatus*), Cope's Vine Snake (*Oxybelis brevirostris*), Smooth Helmeted Iguana



Yellow-bellied Sea Snake (*Hydrophis platurus*) © Jaime Culebras

(*Corytophanes cristatus*), Bocourt's Dwarf Iguana, Western Basilisk and the incredible Yellow-bellied Sea Snake (*Hydrophis platurus*) is seen with relative frequency as well.

The lepidoptera here include many beautiful species including Urania Swallowtail Moth, Red Peacock, White Peacock and many others.

Mammal and bird highlights might include Geoffroy's Tamarin, the

critically endangered Brown-headed Spider Monkey, Central American Agouti, Great Curassow, Baudo Guan, Blue-whiskered Tanager, Rose-faced Parrot, Crested Owl, Golden-collared Manakin, Choco Toucan, Humboldt's Sapphire and perhaps even a Harpy or Crested Eagle overhead.

Our newly constructed hardwood lodge, situated on a magnificent private beach, is powered by hydroelectrico, with en-suite rooms featuring balconies overlooking the sea. It is a simply fantastic base to enjoy the paradise surrounding us.

Rooms here are very limited and subject to availability. Please indicate your wish for this extension at the time of booking.

Tour Grading & Focus

On a typical day on our herpetology tours we'll begin searching in the field after breakfast, when the sun has warmed the substrates and landscapes, often getting into the vehicles at 9am and, after stopping for approximately one hour for lunch, we'll continue into early-evening when we will stop for a rest and dinner. Most evenings it will be possible to do excursions in search of nocturnal species, which will on average be for three hours after dinner. With an equal percentage of the target reptile and amphibian species likely to be nocturnal, these night searches are an important part of the tour but are optional, with some participants preferring to rest on some of the days. On average, 7-8miles are walked per day.

We'll focus our time in the field on building an enviable list of reptile and amphibian species seen. Whilst searching, there is no doubt we'll come across a huge variety of amazing fauna and flora, of which we'll also take time to enjoy, but reptiles and amphibians will strongly remain our focus. Sensitively checking under stones, logs and other refugia is an effective way of finding many species. Some of the target reptile or amphibian species may require longer field hours to locate and therefore this tour is suitable, and most enjoyable, for experienced herpetologists or naturalists who, aside from wishing to see the region's rarely-seen reptiles and amphibians, relish being in the field searching for and identifying the vast array of birds, mammals, butterflies, invertebrates, orchids and other wildlife which can be found sharing the wonderful habitats that we'll explore on the tour.

In summary, Naturetrek herpetology holidays are suitable, and offer tremendous value, for those of whom spending most of their holiday time in wildlife habitats and for whom seeing some of the world's superb reptiles and amphibians is the focus of their time away.

This is a traditional lodge-based wildlife tour. Whilst some of the lodges are appointed simply, each is comfortable and has en suite facilities. A certain level of fitness is required for the tour, as the terrain may be rough, steep, or slippery in parts.

Weather, Clothing & Equipment

The climate in Colombia varies enormously, depending on the region and the altitude. In the Amazon and Chocó it will be warm and humid, whilst in Santa Marta, it will be much cooler. There is a possibility of heavy rain at any time, but hopefully not to the extent that it will spoil your enjoyment. A strong waterproof torch is essential and amongst the options available a powerful head-torch will be most useful, which keeps your hands free for balancing.

What's Included

All accommodation and meals are included, starting with lunch on Day 2 and ending with lunch on Day 12. The tour cost also includes all entrance fees, daily snacks, hot chocolate, coffee and drinking water. Please note that we do not include items of a more personal nature such as other drinks, tipping, laundry and souvenirs.

Extending Your Holiday

There are a number of options available as an extension:

- A stay at Morromico Lodge
- An extension to neighbouring Ecuador

Should you wish to discuss these options the tour's manager Dan Lay will be more than happy to help. Please email dan@naturetrek.co.uk or call 01962 733051

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests, at the time of booking.

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Black-legged Poison Frog (*Phylllobates bicolor*)



Superb Colombian Rainforest we'll explore on this tour