

# SHORT COSTA RICA TOUCANS TO QUETZALS FEBRUARY 27-MARCH 7, 2010

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*Costa Rica is one of the premier birding destinations in the world and no part of this small and friendly country has more to offer than the Caribbean lowlands and nearby mountains. The sheer abundance of tropical birds in this region is stunning, not to mention their beauty and diversity, or the backdrop of spectacular scenery and lush vegetation. This compact tour, weekend through weekend inclusive, offers an action-packed introduction to Neotropical birding, yet has enough specialties to attract the well-traveled birder. Such perennial favorites as parrots, hummingbirds, trogons, toucans, and tanagers are numerous and easy to view here, while top quality birds like Great Tinamou, Crested Guan, and raptors still survive well in the region and are, in fact, quite findable. Amidst this wealth are regional specialties like the Lattice-tailed Trogon, Snowy Cotinga, Rufous-winged Woodpecker, and Black-throated and Stripe-breasted wrens. This is the richest area of the country for biodiversity—over 400 species of birds are known from the region—while the cooler mountain slopes not far above offer a different set of species, a high percentage of them endemic to these mountains. At this time of year, many of the birds are in full song as they begin their nesting season. There are almost unlimited birding opportunities here, and in order to maximize our birding time, we will stay at only two lodges for the entire week, from there ranging out to sample many habitats.*

*While in the Sarapiquí lowlands, our field trips will include two days in the tropical lowlands at the world-famous La Selva Field Station of the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS), including a chance to enter primary tropical rainforest on excellent trails, plus time to explore the more open habitats near the lodge. Two mornings will be spent in the upper tropical zone of the foothills, home to numerous little-known birds not found at elevations just above or below. Two days still higher up, in the montane forests of Cerro de la Muerte, offer yet another set of birds, those species typical of the higher temperate zone of the mountains. These cool oak-dominated forests are a stronghold for the magnificent Resplendent Quetzal, considered by many to be the most beautiful bird in the world. In general birds are not as abundant or diverse in the mountains as at lower elevations, but a high percentage of those present are unique to these elevations in Costa Rica and far western Panama, and the pleasantly cool climate makes seeking them a pleasure.*

**February 27, Day 1: Arrival in San José, Costa Rica.** You should plan your flights to arrive in San José at Juan Santamaria International Airport (airport code SJO) between 8-10:00 p.m. After clearing customs and immigration, you will be met by our ground operator and transferred to our hotel. Participants arriving at other times may either take a taxi to the hotel or arrange a private transfer through our office at an additional charge.

NIGHT: Doubletree Cariari by Hilton Hotel, San José

**February 28, Day 2: En Route to Sarapiquí.** From the heavily settled Meseta Central, our trip begins by quickly descending the Caribbean slope between Irazu and Barba Volcanos. This is one of the wettest regions of Central America, an incredibly lush and scenic wonderland of rushing water and deep valleys, much of it still covered in forest and protected in Braulio Carrillo National Park. Our goal is the Rainforest Aerial Tram in the

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lower foothills where we will get our introduction to Costa Rica's avifauna along the entry road and trails. The birds here typically roam in mixed-flocks, and it can take time and luck to encounter them in these luxuriant forests but among the species possible are some real gems including a dazzling array of tanagers and honeycreepers. Less obvious are the woodcreepers, flycatchers and wrens associated with them. Larger species like Lattice-tailed Trogon, Collared Aracari and Scarlet-rumped Cacique may slip out of the forest at any time while sunny skies bring the raptors up, perhaps including Barred and White hawks or even a hawk-eagle. In the late afternoon we will continue on to La Quinta, our headquarters for exploring the Sarapiquí lowlands.

NIGHT: La Quinta de Sarapiquí, near Puerto Viejo

**March 1-3, Days 3-5: La Selva Field Station and nearby foothills.** The Sarapiquí region, although now largely cleared and settled, harbors the richest avifauna in the country, and birds are generally conspicuous. We will bird the humid tropical lowlands for three rich days, visiting the world-famous La Selva Field Station of the Organization for Tropical Studies and nearby areas. The great diversity of habitats here includes tall lowland rainforest, second-growth of varying ages, overgrown plantations, successional thickets, riverine forest, and swampy pastures, and all are home to a wonderful variety of tropical birds. Within these habitats are numerous specialized niches. Initially we will linger along the entry road, getting acquainted with the common birds of the open country and second-growth. Flycatchers, tanagers, and seed-eating birds are abundant and conspicuous in the early morning hours. The forest edge is not far away, and we're sure to spot some spectacular large birds sitting up in the crowns of the trees. These may include Mealy and White-crowned parrots, Violaceous Trogon, Keel-billed and Chestnut-mandibled toucans, Collared Aracari, Snowy Cotinga, Montezuma Oropendola, and Yellow-tailed Oriole.

Close to the station itself are dense secondary thickets with young trees and vine-tangled forest edge, the preferred habitat for birds like Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Great and Fasciated antshrikes, Long-tailed Tyrant, White-collared Manakin, Black-throated and Plain wrens, honeycreepers, Plain-colored and Passerini's tanagers, and Black-headed and Buff-throated saltators. Hummingbirds visit the flowering shrubs, including Rufous-tailed and Blue-chested hummingbirds, and White-necked Jacobin.

Eventually we will cross the footbridge over the Sarapiquí River (watching for Amazon Kingfisher and Buff-rumped Warbler) and enter the forest, concentrating our efforts on the forest interior. Birds are less conspicuous inside the tall forest, but many of the species found here rarely or never appear at the edge. With just a little luck we should actually **see** a Great or Little tinamou. Normally tinamous are heard only, or at best glimpsed as they flush, but here they are accustomed to people on the trails and have become quite "seeable." Other special forest interior inhabitants include Semiplumbeous Hawk, Brown-hooded Parrot, Slaty-tailed and Black-throated trogons, Broad-billed and Rufous motmots, Chestnut-colored Woodpecker, Black-striped Woodcreeper, Red-capped Manakin, Stripe-breasted Wren, Orange-billed Sparrow, and Scarlet-rumped Cacique, to mention a few. La Selva is also a good place to see mammals such as coatimundi, peccary, and several species of monkeys. There is much to see and do here.

NIGHTS: La Quinta de Sarapiquí, near Puerto Viejo

**March 4, Day 6: Braulio Carillo National Park.** Today we will make a return visit to the foothill forests in Braulio Carillo National Park. These forests are home to some of the least-known birds in Central America, but the birding here isn't easy and requires time and patience. At times almost nothing is heard or seen, but when the weather suddenly changes from sun to mist, or a large mixed flock appears in our vicinity, there can be birds everywhere. The potential rewards here are great, and amidst the more widespread foothill birds we may find specialties like the Snowcap (rare), Green Thorntail, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, Lattice-tailed Trogon, Rufous-winged Woodpecker, White-ruffed Manakin, Tawny-capped Euphonia, and Olive and Tawny-crested tanagers.

After a picnic lunch, we will continue on to the cool heights of Cerro de la Muerte, a massive mountain in the heart of the country. Here we will get our introduction to the mountain avifauna at several roadside stops, before winding our way down a steep mountainside to San Gerardo de Dota and Savegre Lodge. The lodge is nestled

in a gorgeous valley by a rushing trout stream, home to Torrent Tyrannulet and American Dipper, and surrounded by flower-filled gardens, apple orchards, and beautiful montane oak forest. This is excellent habitat for the fabulous Resplendent Quetzal. They are rarely conspicuous, but here they visit the fruiting trees and sometimes even nest in holes in dead snags near the lodge.

NIGHT: Savegre Lodge, San Gerardo de Dota

**March 5-6, Days 7-8: Cerro de la Muerte.** The highlands of Costa Rica and far western Panama are the only significant mountains between Guatemala and the Colombian Andes, and because of this isolation, a surprising number of endemic birds are found here. As one goes up-slope, the percentage of species unique to this region increases, and in the highest scrub and grassy openings can be found the Volcano Hummingbird, Timberline Wren, Sooty Robin, and Volcano Junco. The dense forests and bamboo thickets just below the tops of the ridges are optimal habitat for Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Black-capped Flycatcher, Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Black-cheeked Warbler, and the unique Large-footed Finch. In the tall oak forests of the main slopes, the birds typically roam in mixed-flocks, and when a flock is located we may well find Ruddy Treerunner, Buffy Tuftedcheek, Yellow-winged Vireo, Black-and-yellow Silky-flycatcher, Flame-throated Warbler, Collared Redstart, and Sooty-capped Bush-Tanager. All of the preceding are endemic to these highlands but we should also find some familiar birds at the southern end of their range, including Red-tailed Hawk, Band-tailed Pigeon, Hairy and Acorn woodpeckers, and wintering wood warblers. Several much scarcer mountain birds also occur here, and with a little luck we may find Sulphur-winged Parakeet, Costa Rican Pygmy-Owl, Ochraceous Pewee, Wrenthrush, Peg-billed Finch, or Black-thighed Grosbeck.

In the afternoon on Day 8 we will drive back to San José, completing our wonderful week of birding in Costa Rica.

NIGHT: Savegre Lodge (Day 7)

NIGHT: Doubletree Cariari by Hilton, San José (Day 8)

**March 7, Day 9: Departure for home.** The tour ends this morning with an early transfer to the San José airport in time for flights departing between 8-10:00 a.m. Transfers for flights departing at other times can be arranged in advance at an additional charge.

**PLEASE NOTE:** This tour is designed for **very** early morning departures, with breakfast times typically at 5:00-5:30 a.m. This is important because bird activity in the tropics is always highest in the first few hours of the morning, and we want to be out in the field to take advantage of this. Most days we will return to our lodge for lunch and a “siesta” break.

**EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS:** Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour will be limited to 14 participants.

**TOUR LEADERS: David Wolf and Mimi Wolf**

**David Wolf** is a senior member of the VENT staff and one of our most experienced tour leaders. After birding the U.S. and Mexico for over a decade, an interest in the wildlife of Africa led him to Kenya in 1975, where he spent over a year studying the birds and other wildlife of the African continent. Soon after his return to Texas he began leading Rockport Wildlife Weekends for VENT, at that time a new company, and he hasn't looked back since. In addition to Africa, David has extensive birding and tour-leading experience in North America and the Neotropics, and has led over 50 previous tours to Costa Rica. He unites great birding skills with a wide-ranging interest in all aspects of natural history, which he shares readily with tour participants. David and his wife, Mimi, live on a small farm in Nacogdoches, Texas with assorted horses, cats, and dogs. They have two grown children, Matt and Elena, and are now happy grandparents.

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**Mimi Wolf** is an accomplished birder, artist, horse breeder, and mother who lives in Nacogdoches, Texas. She has illustrated a number of bird books, including Steve Hilty's *Birds of Tropical America* and Roland Wauer's *A Birder's West Indies*, and her pen-and-ink sketches have appeared in many other publications. She has also exhibited her paintings, watercolors, prints, and other art in numerous shows. She is especially proud of her home-raised Supreme Champion Pinto Arabian stallion, Oshquah, who won National Championships in 1996 and 1998. (For more information, see [www.passerinapastures.homestead.com](http://www.passerinapastures.homestead.com).) Mimi has been an active birder for over 30 years, and has traveled widely and co-led tours in Mexico, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and around the southwestern United States. She holds a B.S. from Stephen F. Austin State University.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for the tour is **\$3055** per person in double occupancy from San José, Costa Rica. This includes all meals from Breakfast on Day 2 to Breakfast on Day 9, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to San José and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$485**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

**EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES:** In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

**FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES:** In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Cancellation penalties and refunds are based on the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, the deposit less \$300 per person is refundable. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions, as well as any transfers from one tour to another. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.***

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$300.
Fewer than 120 days before departure date	No refund available.

**TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE:** A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance** as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. VENT recommends *Travel Insured International* as our preferred

insurance provider. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply** usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. Contact *Travel Insured International* prior to registration for details. Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than *Travel Insured International*, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

**Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.**

**AIR INFORMATION:** Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

**BAGGAGE:** We request participants limit their baggage to one medium-sized suitcase and one carry-on, if possible, as space in the vehicle will be limited. Luggage can be stored at our hotel in San José, if you so desire. Laundry can be done at both of the hotels at which we stay more than one night. As a precaution, we suggest you pack your travel documents, medications, toiletries, a change of clothes, and your binoculars in your carry-on bag.

**CLOTHING / CLIMATE:** As is the case for all of our tropical tours, lightweight field clothing is the norm for Costa Rica tours. Long-sleeved shirts, a hat, sunglasses, and a strong sunscreen are recommended for protection from the sun. Also, please be sure to have a pair of good **water-resistant** hiking boots or walking shoes and a second pair of lightweight shoes. Mudboots are **not** necessary. Generally, the weather will be warm to hot and humid with daytime highs of 75 to 90 degrees.

It is cool at night on Cerro de la Muerte (temperatures can be as low as the upper 40s) so a thermal top, warm sweater or jacket are essential for layering. Most days it warms up quickly once the sun is up. Trails should not be so muddy at this season as to require rubber boots; water-resistant footwear is best. Do not forget a small umbrella and poncho, as we may get caught out in mist or rain.

**DOCUMENTS:** A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Costa Rica is required. Visas are not required for entry by U.S. citizens. Non-U.S. citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions. You will be issued a tourist card by the airline on which you travel. Although no vaccinations are required for entry into Costa Rica, you may be asked to present proof of a current yellow fever vaccination if you have traveled recently in other countries within Latin America or Africa.

**EQUIPMENT:** You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc.). As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. Pack a small flashlight, and an alarm clock. A small folding umbrella is also a good idea for mist and light rain.

**HEALTH:** If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 877-FYI-TRIP (394-8747) or you can check their website at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel). Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html) (click on travel health). Anti-malarial medications are generally not necessary for the regions visited on this tour, but this can change, so please consult the CDC and your physician.

The drinking water is good everywhere that this tour goes in Costa Rica. We recommend that you bring a supply of aspirin or any other medication you think you might need during the trip. Immodium tablets are recommended for traveler's diarrhea.

**INSECT PROTECTION:** Chiggers are occasionally a problem in some areas. For prevention of bites, we recommend regular use of a repellent lotion (small plastic squeeze bottle) and a pump-style container of insect repellent that has close to 100% DEET. Topsy gel is useful in reducing irritation from stings or bites, and some cortisone creams are available without prescription. Also, "Flowers of Sulphur" powder has proven effective for deterring chiggers (ask your pharmacist).

**A Note About Chiggers:** This tour visits areas where chiggers are known to occur. Chiggers are tiny parasitic mites found in most warm weather areas of the southern United States and the world's tropics. They are especially numerous in grassy areas, where, in the immature stage, they attach themselves to other animals or humans who make contact with the grass as they pass by. Chiggers do not suck blood and the majority of the world's species do not carry disease. They do feed on bodily fluids, however, through a process in which a digestive enzyme is produced by the chigger which essentially liquefies the skin around the area where the chigger is attached. The chigger is not usually attached to the skin for more than a few hours before it either falls off or is knocked off. Our bodies respond by producing a hardened area as a defense against the chigger's digestive enzyme. Though the chigger may be long gone, it is the presence of the hardened area, and the body's natural process of reabsorbing it that typically causes intense itching, often lasting for a week or more. Chiggers like to attach themselves to areas of thin skin, like around the ankles, beltline, undergarment lines, knees, and elbows.

Chiggers can be avoided by following these procedures:

- Avoid walking, or standing in particular, in areas dominated by grass. These areas are where one is most likely to encounter chiggers.
- Tuck your pants into your socks to avoid direct skin-to-grass contact. Chiggers can find their way through clothing, but this is a standard and effective prevention technique commonly employed by many.
- Apply a cream-style insect repellent, such as "Cutters" to your body from the waist down BEFORE putting on your clothing.
- Spray your pants and socks with a spray repellent such as "Cutters" or "Off." Repellents with high concentrations of DEET (70-100%) are most effective. You do not need to apply these to you skin, only to clothing. (Be careful as DEET will damage plastics and lens coatings). Repel Permanone is an odorless aerosol insecticide that offers perhaps the best defense against chiggers. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online. It should only be applied to clothes and allowed to dry before you dress. Never apply Permanone directly to the skin. Permethrin is known to be a highly toxic chemical to insects. It is the active ingredient in Permanone, but is present in a small amount (0.5%).
- Powdered sulfur applied to waist, bottoms of pants, sock and boots is also effective at repelling chiggers. However, be warned that clothes will retain the sulfur odor for several washings.
- Shower at the end of each day in the field. Use a washcloth to vigorously rub your legs, feet, and ankles.

By following these methods, you should be able to avoid all chigger bites, as well as tick bites. If, however, you are bitten by chiggers anyway, you can reduce or eliminate the symptoms by applying benzocaine or hydrocortisone creams, calamine lotion, After Bite, or any number of anti-itch products.

**MISCELLANEOUS:**

Departure Tax – US \$26 or equivalent in Costa Rican colones (as of March, 2009; subject to change).  
Electricity – 110/220 volts (same as USA); two-pin plugs are standard.  
Language – Spanish, although English is widely spoken.  
Time – Central Standard Time

**SUGGESTED READING:** Our website, [www.ventbird.com](http://www.ventbird.com) offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from this store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You may also visit such other online stores such as [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), and for those out-of-print or hard-to-find titles, [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) or [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com) which specializes in ornithology books.

***Field Guides:***

Garrigues, Richard and Robert Dean, *The Birds of Costa Rica: A Field Guide*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007. Compact and complete, now the recommended field guide.  
Stiles, Gary and Alexander Skutch. *A Guide to the Birds of Costa Rica*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990. The first field guide specifically for Costa Rica and still very useful, especially the text..  
Ridgely, Robert S. *A Guide to the Birds of Panama*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New edition expanded to include Costa Rica and excellent for use here.

***General Introduction to the Tropics:***

Forsyth, Adrian, and Ken Miyata. *Tropical Nature*. Scribner, 1987. Paperback available. Excellent chapters, very readable and informative. Written for the layman; highly recommended.  
Forsyth, Adrian, *Portraits of the Rainforest*. With photos by Michael and Pat Fogden. Camden East, ONT: Camden House, 1990. Stunning photos and a superb text by one of the best nature writers in the business.  
Hilty, Steven. *Birds of Tropical America*. Shelburne, VT: Chapters Publishing Ltd, 1994. An excellent, easy-to-read book on the ecology of neotropical birds. **Highly recommended**  
Kricher, John C. *A Neotropical Companion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. Good introduction to the tropics.

***Further Reading:***

DeVries, Philip. *The Butterflies of Costa Rica & Their Natural History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997. Lovely field guide to butterflies; a must if this is one of your special interests.  
Emmons, Louise H. and Feer, Francois. *Neotropical Rainforest Mammals: A Field Guide*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. Alternative mammal guide.  
Janzen, Daniel H. (ed.). *Costa Rican Natural History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983. An encyclopedia that contains a wealth of information on the plants and animals of Costa Rica, especially those that have been studied in the field; also has chapters on geology and soils, agriculture, etc. Recommended as a technical reference book.  
Leenders, Twan. *A Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles of Costa Rica. A Zona Tropical Publication; 2001*.  
Perry, Donald. *Life Above the Jungle Floor*. Simon & Schuster, 1986. Out of Print, but still available. A popular book that tells much about life in the tropical rainforest, especially in the little-known canopy.  
Reid, Fiona A. *A Field Guide to the Mammals of Central America and Southeast Mexico*. Oxford University Press, 1997. Best mammal guide.  
Skutch, Alexander F. *A Bird Watcher's Adventures in Tropical America*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977. Fun reading from an eminent ornithologist resident in Costa Rica.  
Skutch, Alexander F. *A Naturalist in Costa Rica*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1971. Good general background in the tropics from a prolific and very readable author. Reprinted in 1992. Try [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com).

**TIPPING:** Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect June 3, 2009 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.