

March & April 2023 - BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS OF CENTRAL COSTA RICA 2023 - Crescentia Expeditions Costa Rica

BIRDING CENTRAL COSTA RICA SPECIFIC TARGET AREAS:

- Central Valley - Tilaran Northern Highland Cloud Forest
- Caribbean Rainforest Foothills Central
- Tarcoles Mangrove & Coastal areas
- Pacific Transitional Pacific Forest - Dry Forest Species
- Talamanca Southern Highland Montane Forest
- Common Species

934 birds on Costa Rica checklist

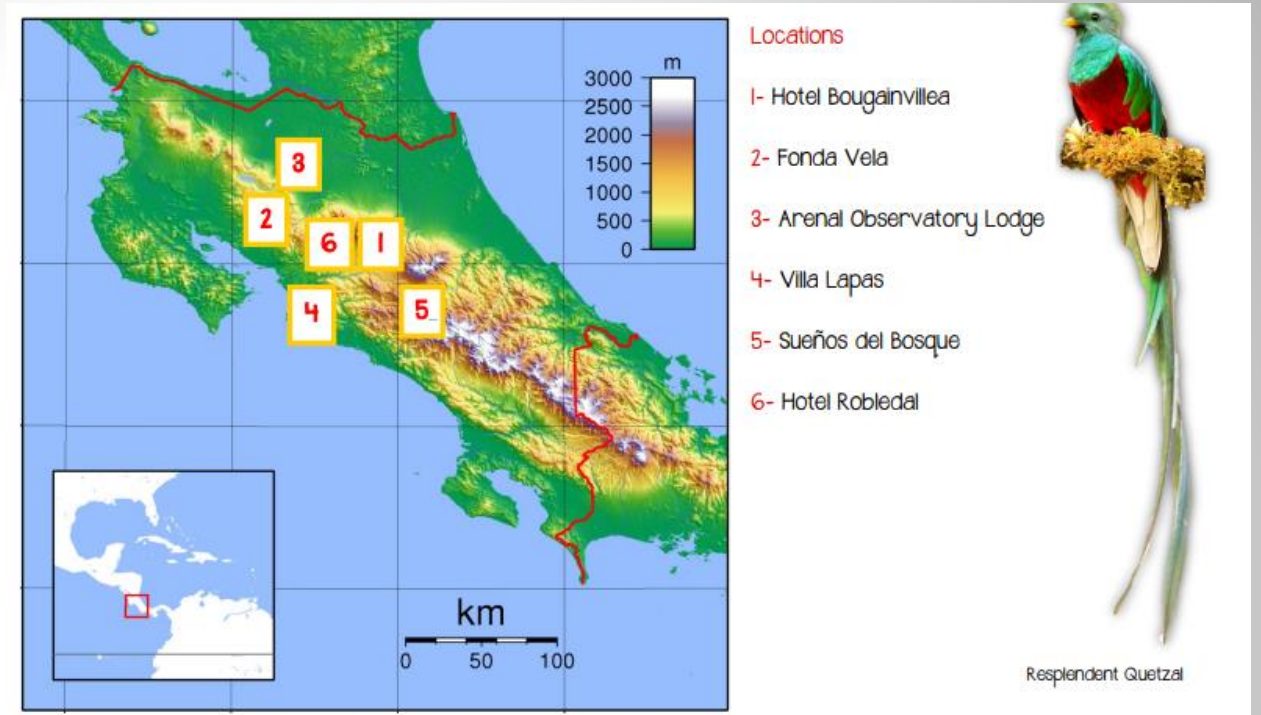
We saw or heard approx. 291 bird species and 19 others such as mammals, reptiles and amphibians

Costa Rica has one of most diverse ecosystems in world in an area size of West Virginia.

Costa Rica contains four percent of species estimated to exist on the planet, due in large part to its geographic position between North and South America, its neotropical climate, and its wide variety of habitats. Hundreds of these species are endemic to Costa Rica, meaning they exist nowhere else on earth.

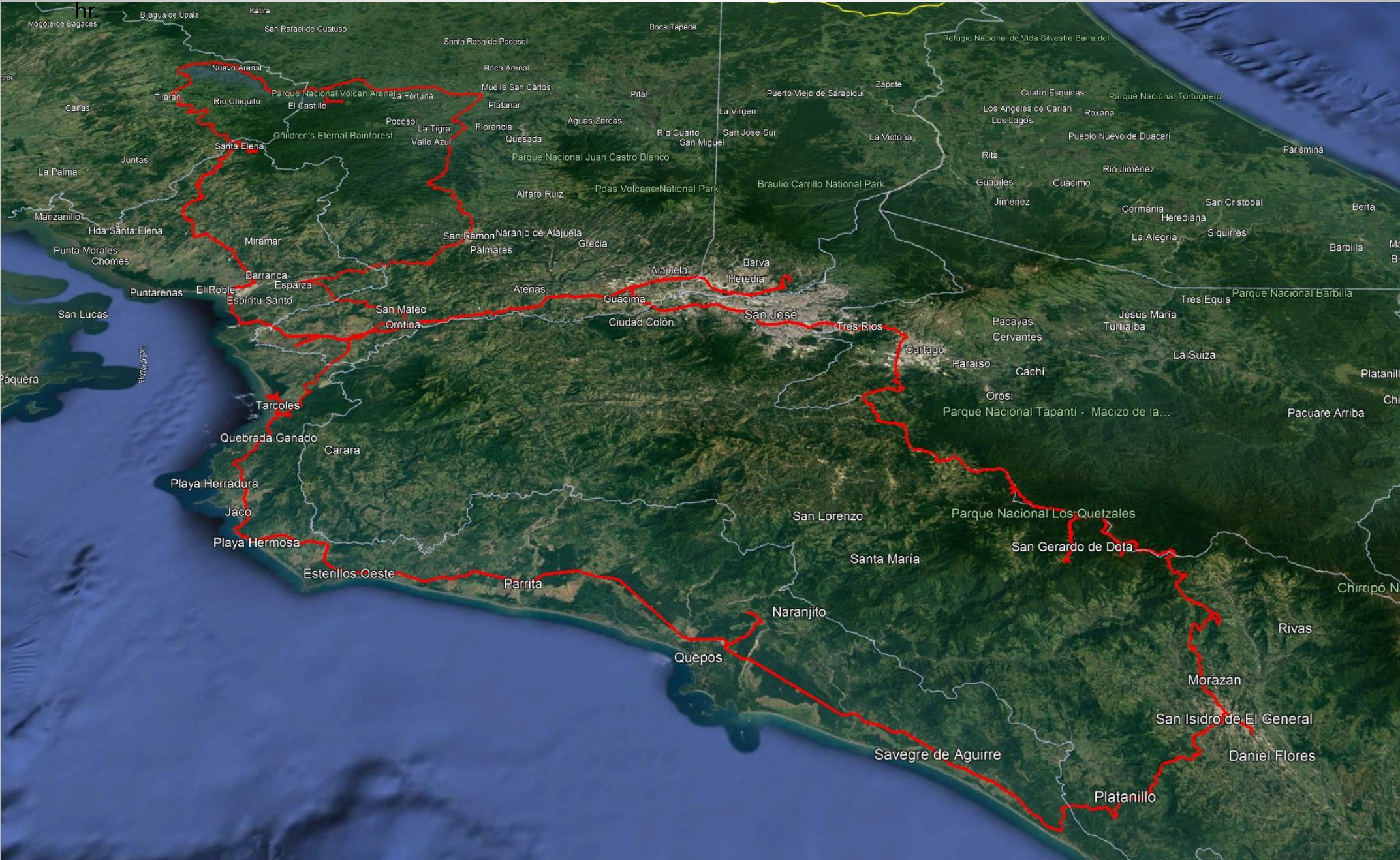
Our trip included:

- Professional Naturalist & Birding Guide services throughout the program.
- Coach transportation throughout the program
- Most all meals
- All lodging in standard occupancy starting with day 1, ending with day 10.
- All entrance fees and excursions. - Updated Costa Rica's Bird & Wildlife Check-list.
- Bottled Water.



The entire adventure and all photos are on the web at:
<https://www.kmfarm.us/>
Under Costa Rica Adventures

Our 11 day tour covered 6 specific regions of Costa Rica with a total driving miles 434 miles. Our total tour driving time was 16



Flight Down - Sunday - MAR 26 2023 Our flight was on time to Juan Santamaria International Airport and had an easy transfer to **Bougainvillea Hotel** which was appx. 9 miles and 30 minutes east of the airport.



Hotel Pool and downtown San Jose



Early Day 1 - Sunday - MAR 26 2023 -- Heredia



Bougainvillea Hotel Gardens



Early Day 2 - Monday - MAR 27 2023 -- Heredia

Rufous-naped Wren



I am amazed at the shapes of the hornet nests here.



We saw and heard this bird most every day on this trip. It is the National bird **Clay-colored thrush** of Costa Rica due to its strong and melodious song that always comes during the start of the rainy season. In addition, unlike many of the forest songsters of Costa Rica, the present bird has been familiar to the general population since the country's early history, thanks to the species' tendency to live near houses.



Mottled Owl is a common, large owl of tropical lowlands and foothills. Found in forests, woodlands, plantations, gardens, and towns. Roosts during the day at all levels in dense cover of taller trees, but at night it often hunts from low perches such as fence posts and road signs. Note the rounded head, brown eyes framed with whitish crescents on either side of the bill, and overall brown plumage that is streaked below. Varied gruff hoots can suggest a dog barking.



"Tour" First Day 1 - Tuesday - MAR 28 2023 -- Heredia

Crimson-fronted parakeet



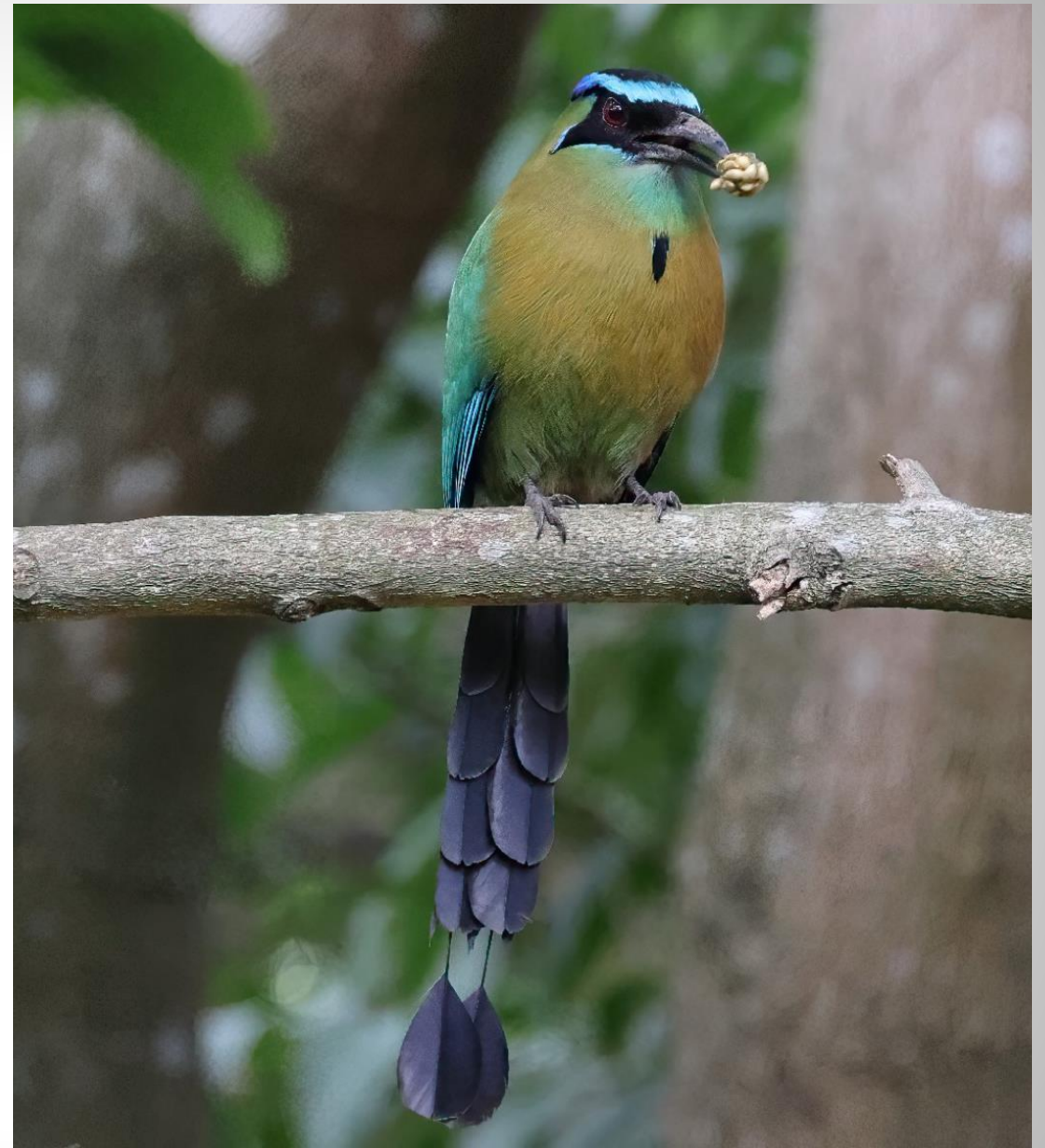
Rufous-tailed Hummingbird



The **Crested Caracara** looks like a hawk with its sharp beak and talons, behaves like a vulture, and is technically a large tropical black-and-white falcon. A common subject of folklore and legends throughout Central and South America, the Crested Caracara is sometimes called the "Mexican eagle."



We saw 3 different species of Motmot - **Lesson's Motmot**



It was strange as while we were watching the motmot came up with some food from someplace.



Blue-gray tanager - Common and widespread powder blue-gray bird of open and semi-open areas with larger trees and hedges, towns, villages, and gardens in tropical and subtropical regions. Mainly feeds at mid-upper levels in trees, eating fruit, and perches readily on phone wires. Rather plain but distinctive appearance, with beady dark eye and stout bill.

I picked up a Canon R5 camera for this trip.

The R5 is a full frame (*meaning that the image sensor is the exact same size as a 35mm film camera*) and mirrorless (*meaning that you see what you are shooting at & the camera can be lighter and smaller*)

Using the 100-500mm lens and shooting in FV (Flexible-Priority) mode and a high F-stop I had amazing results.

Costa Rica is not the easiest place to take photos as many times you and what you are after is often in shade with considerable vegetation.

At the hotel in full sun, a **Shaving Brush Tree Flower** and insects flying around it made for a interesting shot.





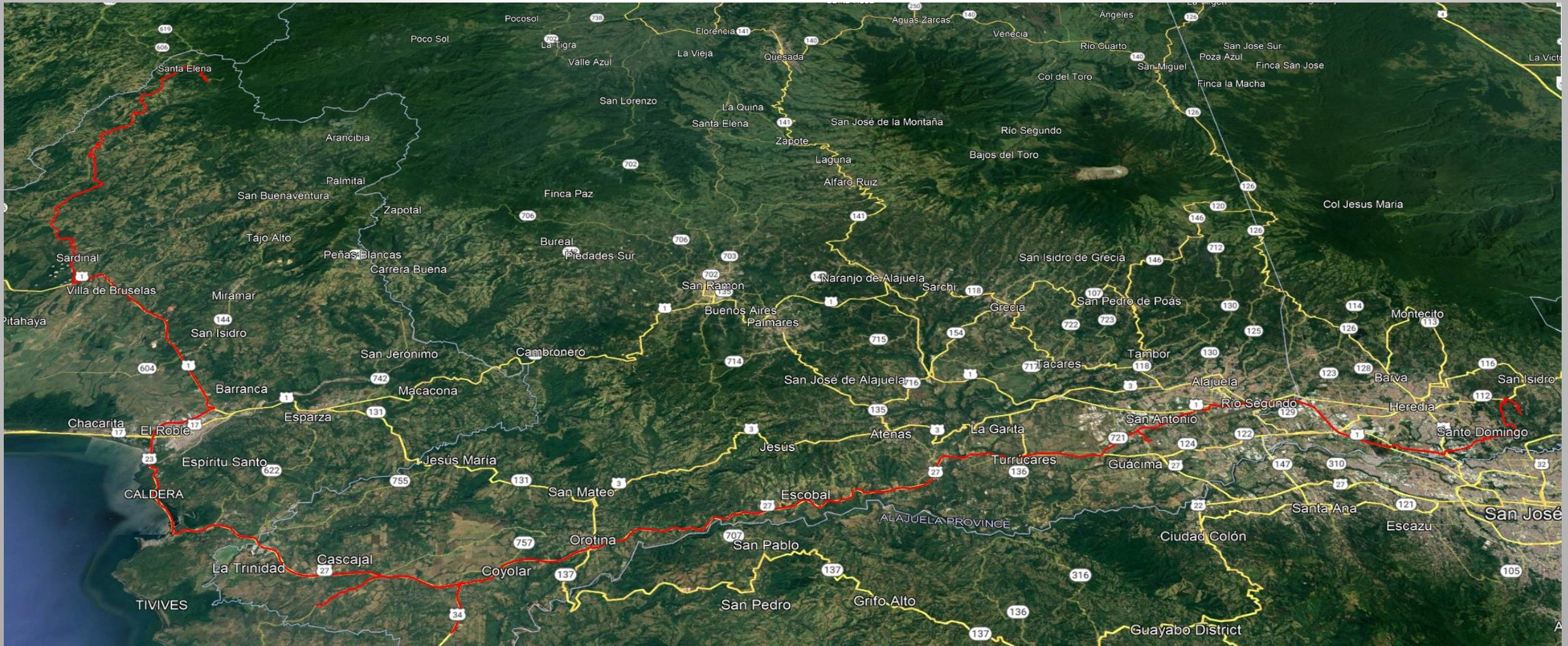
The **green iguana** also known as the American iguana is the best-known species of iguana. It is native to Central and South America.

It ate all the flowers on this shrub



Day 2 - Wednesday - MAR 29 2023 -- Heredia to Monteverde

The plan for the day was Departure after breakfast for Monteverde area, birding along Guacimo road for dry forest species like Brown-crested Flycatcher, Turquoise-browed Motmot and Double-striped Thick-Knee. Lunch will be served at a local restaurant, arriving to the lodge later in the day in time to walk the grounds hoping to catch the late afternoon activity where we might see Northern Emerald Toucanet and Golden-browed Chlorophonia among others. The elevation here is similar to the hotel at 3,800 feet.





So we left the hotel and went a few miles NE and ended up along a dead end dirt road listed on google as C. Rinconada Heredia, Santo Domingo

The elevation here is similar to the hotel at 3,800 feet.

I was impressed with some of the places we went in the bus.



Ferruginous pygmy owl - Widespread and generally common little owl of tropical lowlands, often seen and heard during the daytime. Favors open tropical woodland and edge, second growth areas with trees (including towns, even cities with wooded parks), tropical pine savannas.



Double-striped Thick-knee - Large and bizarre shorebird of lowland dry grassland and savannas, usually found in pairs or small groups. Active mainly at night



Tropical Kingbird-- One of the most common sights in Central and South America, the handsome Tropical Kingbird sits on utility lines, fences, and exposed trees seemingly everywhere.

Squirrel Cuckoo - Very striking and long-tailed bright rusty cuckoo, widespread in tropical lowlands and locally up into foothills. Occurs in a wide range of wooded and forest edge habitats. Mostly forages stealthily at mid-upper levels in trees, where can be surprisingly difficult to see.

Cinnamon Hummingbird



We checked into **Hotel Fondavela** in **Monteverde** for the next two nights. This hotel was in a number of different buildings and they grouped us all into one of them not far from the Restaurant.

The elevation here is 4700 feet.

This is in a cloud forest but we had very clear weather during our time here.



Off on another walk.

Central American Agouti - The Central American Agouti (*Dasyproctidae*) is a mammal native to Central and South America, and is a member of the rodent family and has a long, slender body with short legs and feet.



Brown-hooded parrot



Some background on where we are now in Costa Rica. We are appx. 19 miles east of the Gulf of Nicoya at an elevation of 4,700 feet. Normally this is a cloud forest but the weather here was great. The temp was in the 70's during the day and low 50's at night.

You can see the gulf and the mountains of the Nicoya Peninsula. The Pacific Ocean is 50 miles to the west. This was taken from the deck in front of our room.



The Monteverde cloud forest alone is home to hundreds of species of birds (some 400+) and more than 750 species of trees, which is as many as occur in the entire United States. And the U.S. has a landmass almost 200 times larger than Costa Rica.

Monteverde is home to the continental divide, where the rain on the eastern side drains into the Caribbean, while on the western side it drains into the Pacific. In these central mountains, hot air from the Caribbean rises and collides with cold air, condensing to create the namesake clouds of this unique forest. According to National Geographic, Monteverde is the “jewel in the crown of cloud forest reserves”.

Amazing sunset with Venus.



Back by the room. Looking west at the Nicoya Peninsula. City lights and towers.

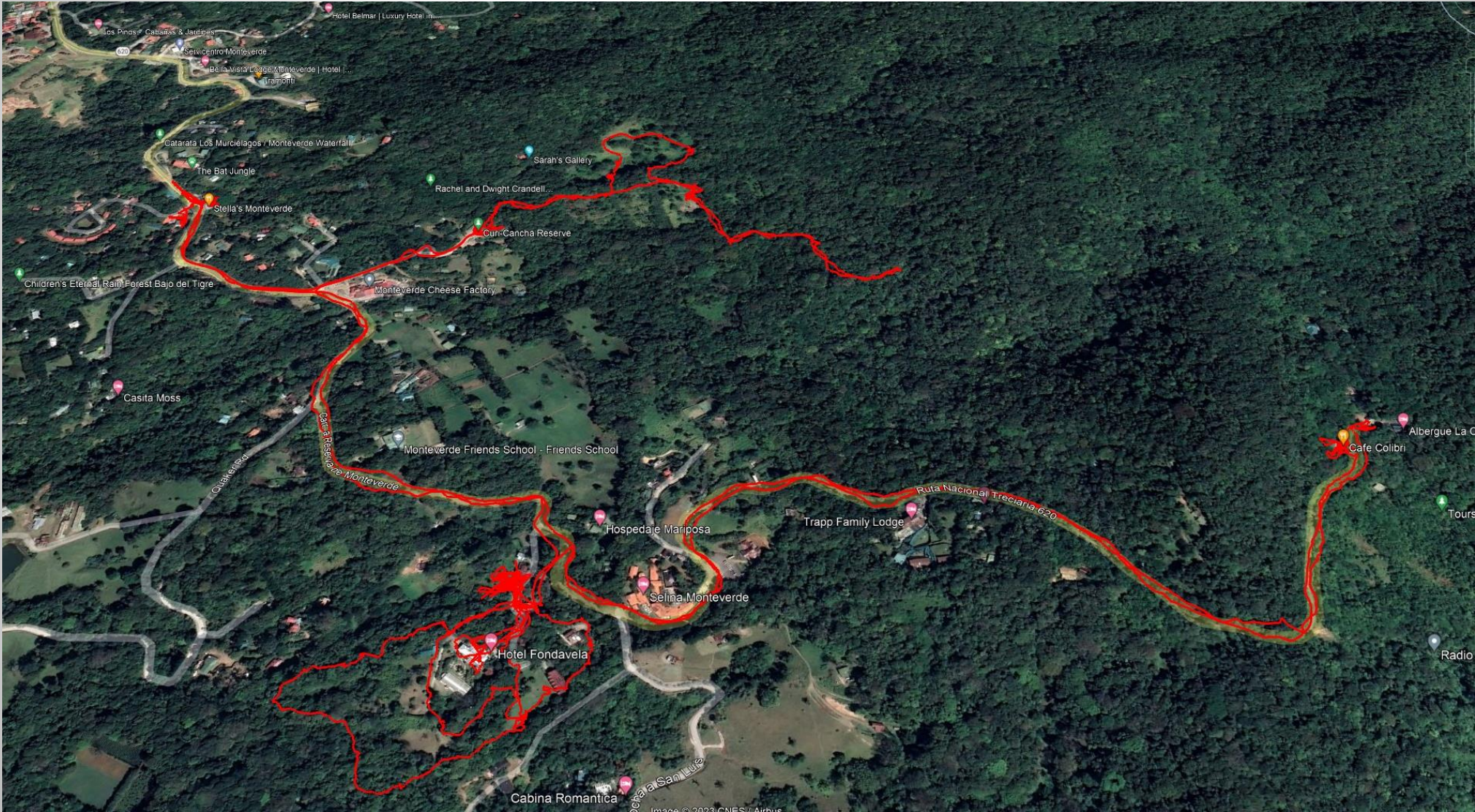


Chicken cordon bleu served on slate slabs. Was very good.



Day 3 - Thursday - MAR 30 2023 -- Monteverde

Monteverde was originally founded by Quaker families who moved from Alabama in the 1950's, seeking for a peaceful place to live and carry on with their lives. As part of their vision, they protected the cloud forest on top of the mountains, forests that later became all the reserves found in this area. We spent the day visiting 2 different reserves in search of highland specialties, being the Resplendent Quetzal perhaps the most representative of this group



Curi-Cancha Reserve Curi Cancha Wildlife Refuge is a private wildlife refuge in the central part of Costa Rica, and protects cloud forest in the Cordillera de Tilaran near Juntas. The elevation here was around 5,000 feet.



Resplendent Quetzal male showing his long tail. Quetzels are the largest trogon (Because of where they were in the tree and lighting this was not an easy subject to shoot)



Female Resplendent Quetzel



These sightings really draw a crowd



We saw three different species of Motmot including **blue-crowned motmot or turquoise browed-motmot**. They are very tolerant of people looking at them and we saw them everywhere. These are Ken's favorite birds in Costa Rica as they will let you get very close to them.

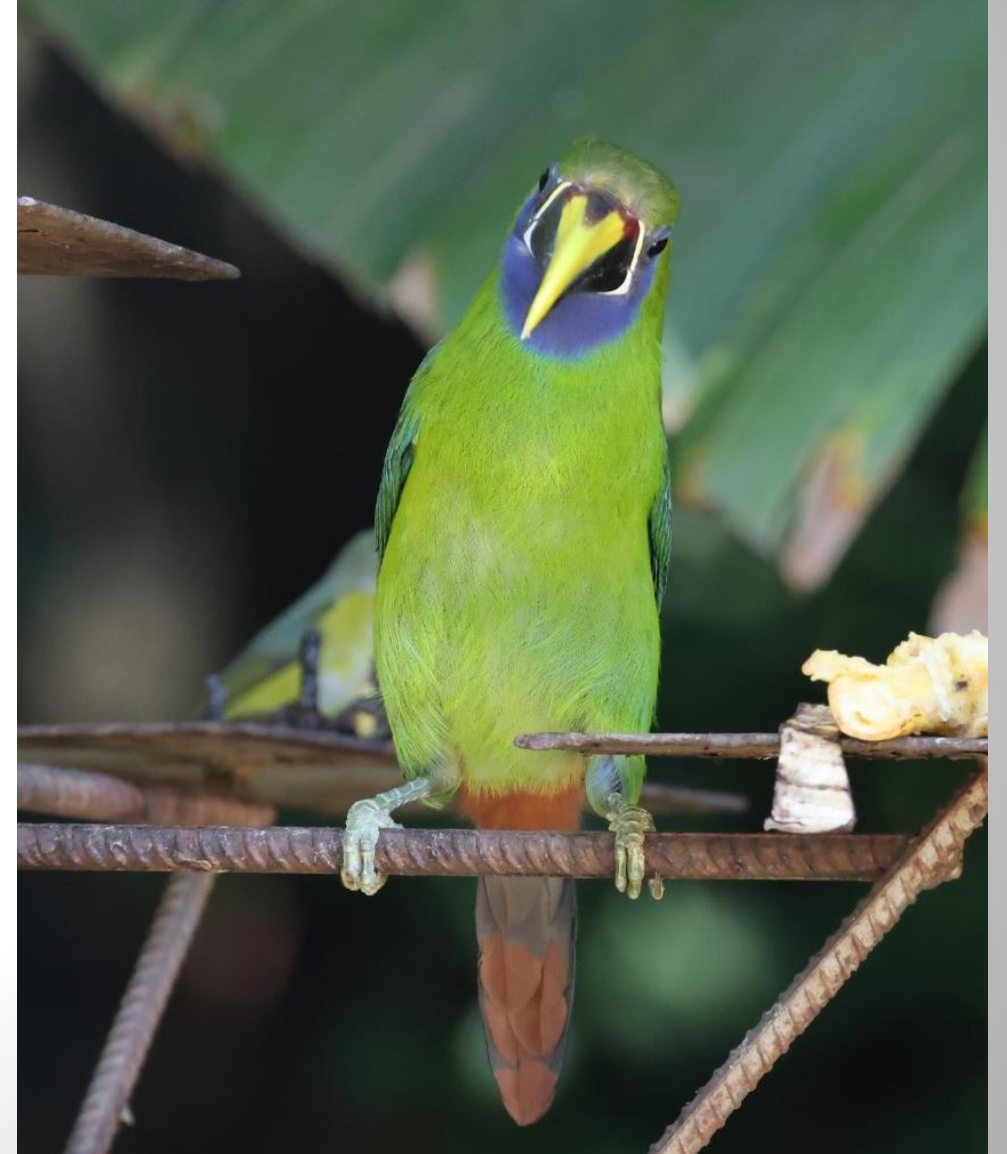


Two birders and a strangler fig. Chilly here as Ken is wearing a coat.



Now we are at Lunch at **Stella's Monteverde - Restaurant**. Like most places that we ate lunch on this trip, they had feeders at the rear of the restaurant.

Northern Emerald-Toucanet - The Emerald toucanet (*Aulacorhynchus prasinus*) is the smallest and shortest-billed toucan in Costa Rica, the only one with green body.



Yellow-throated Euphonia is a tiny finch of tropical lowlands and foothills, mainly in humid areas. Found in forest canopy, adjacent clearings with trees, gardens.



White-eared ground sparrow



We are now at the hummingbird feeders at **Cafe Colibri**. This was our highest point at Monteverde at an elevation of 5,300 feet. Still sunny and no clouds. Also, we are only 10.5 miles by air from Arenal Observatory Lodge yet tomorrow it will take half of the day to drive that distance on the roads.



Lesser Violetear



Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer



Violet Sabrewing - Very large, spectacular, and aggressive hummingbird of humid evergreen forest in highlands and foothills.

Very busy feeders here.



Back at **Hotel Fondavela**

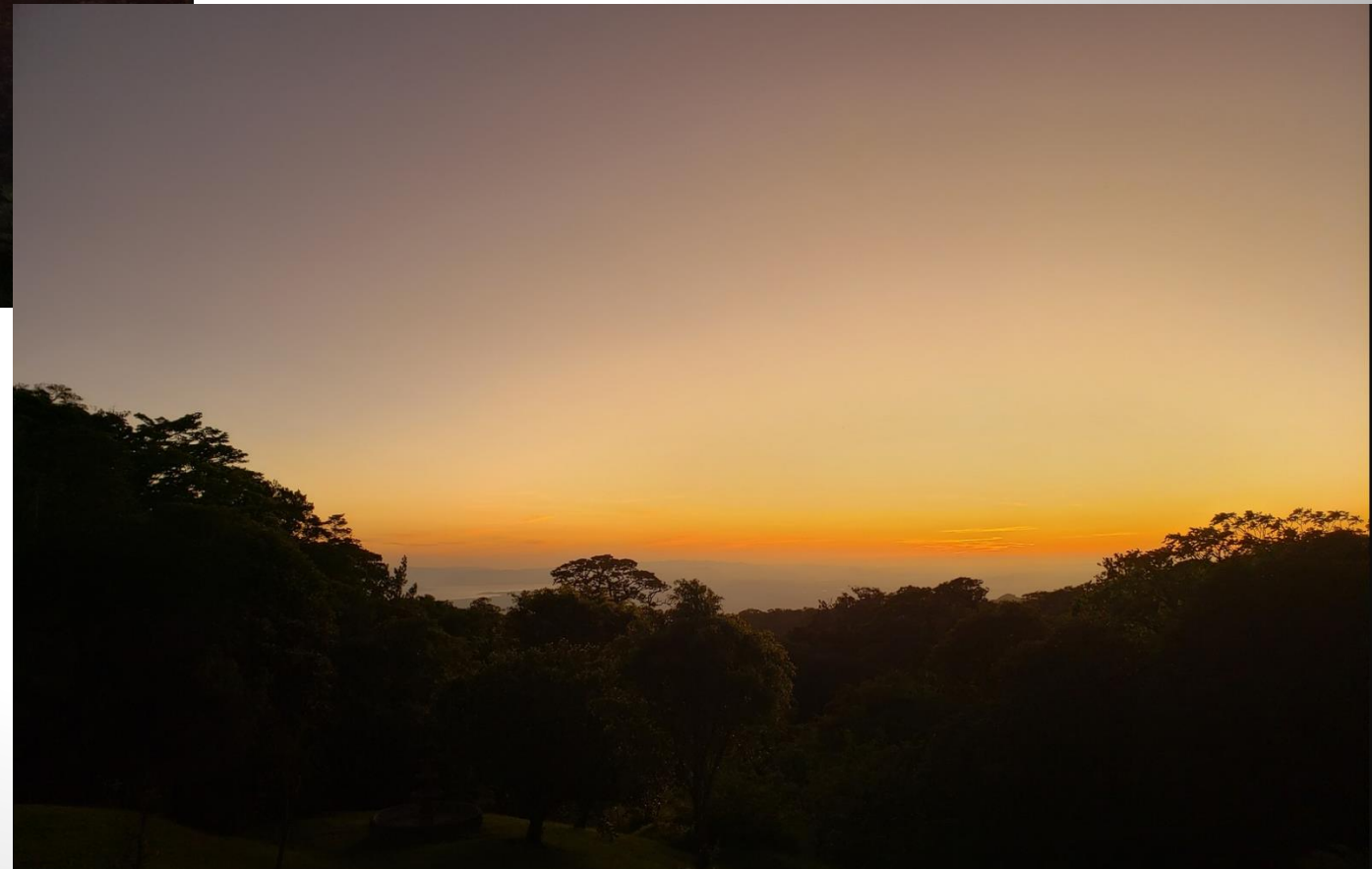
Masked tityra male is a handsome, mostly silvery gray bird of tropical and subtropical forest and adjacent semi-open areas with taller trees. Usually found at mid-upper levels of fruiting trees, sometimes in small groups. Identified readily by pinkish base to bill and pinkish 'mask' around eyes.



Northern Emerald-Toucanet is a medium-sized, grass-green toucan of humid tropical forest in foothills and highlands; also, very locally in lowlands. Usually in pairs or small groups, moving through the canopy or feeding at fruiting trees. Also known as blue-throated Toucanet and he has a black and yellow colorful bill.

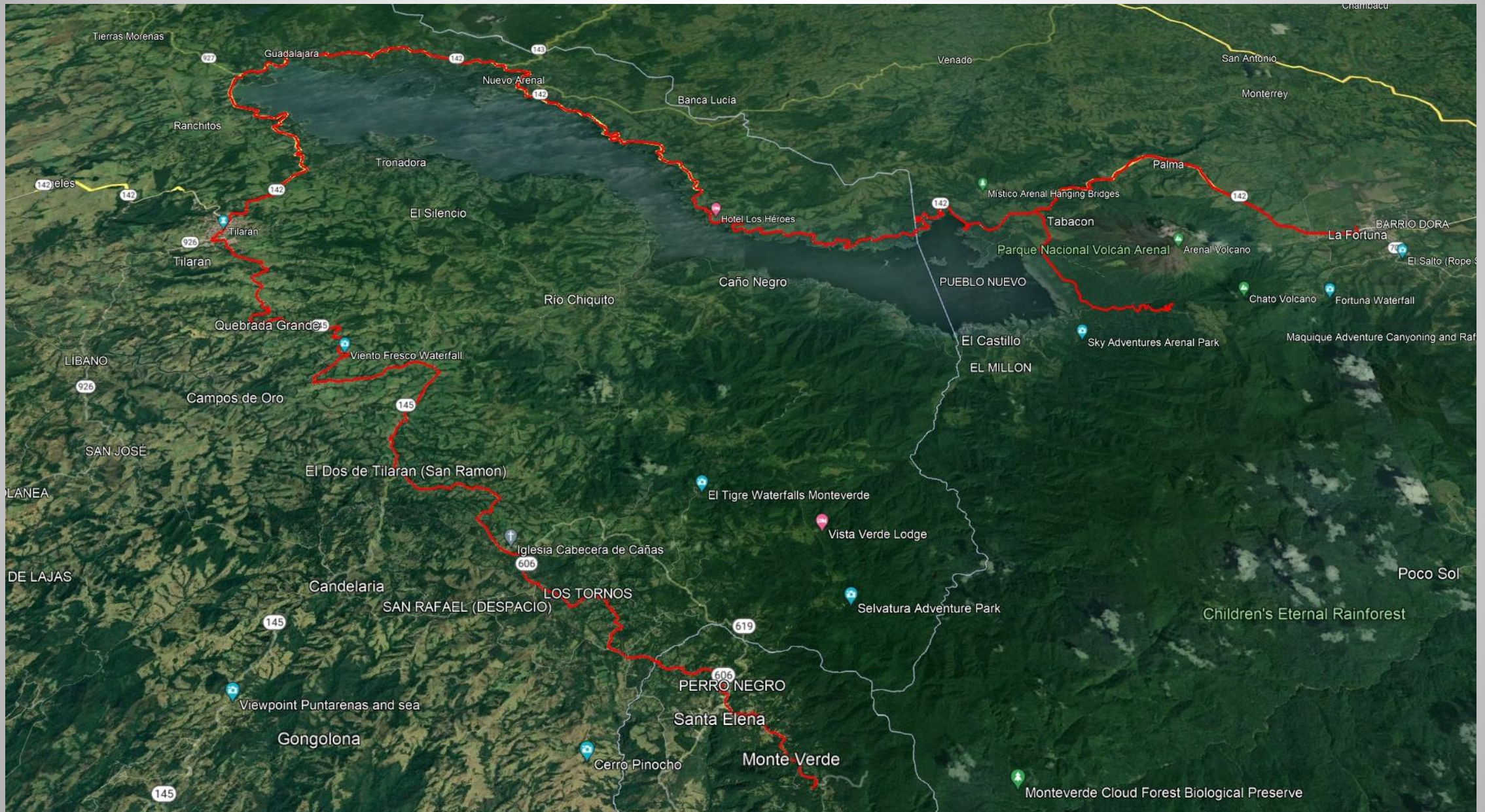


Another great sunset in Monteverde but no green flash.



Day 4 - Friday - MAR 31 2023 -- Monteverde to Arenal

Today we are driving from Monteverde to Arenal which is 66 miles and close to 3 hours. When you look at air miles is only 11.5 miles from lodge to lodge.



We stopped for a bathroom & snack break at Pali Supermarket in Tilaran. As always, I have to see if they have and FUD or ZAR. They did. And it was on sale.



In the bathroom at Pali, they had the longest handled toilet plunger I had ever seen.



Driving across the dam that creates Lake Arenal



The bus we have been using and the group watching the White-nosed coati's



Locals feeding them and the first time I had seen little coati's. Not sure what happens to the people when they run out of snacks.



Arenal Lodge

Elevation at lodge is 2,430 feet



It's trying to be a good sunset. A few from our group on the deck.

In Arenal – as in much of the country – you’ll find primary and secondary rainforest to explore. Monteverde is much higher in elevation, so instead of hot and humid rainforests you’ll find cooler cloud forests – and cloud forests at their most spectacular.



Left this trip / Right Mar-2017



The elevation of the volcano is 5,436 feet.



This was the top of the volcano in 2017. Even with venting of gasses, Arenal is classified as a dormant volcano



The **Black-and-white Owl** is very distinctive and unlikely to be confused with any other Central American Owl. It can be found in both Central and South America.



These **red-eyed tree frogs** have blue-and-yellow striped sides, orange or red feet, a flash of blue on their thighs, and big red eyes. The bright colors are a defense mechanism.



Day 5 - Saturday - APR 01 2023 -- Full day - Arenal Area

Red-legged Honeycreeper in a fig tree. The red-legged honeycreeper (*Cyanerpes cyaneus*) is a small songbird species in the tanager family (Thraupidae).



Scarlet-thighed Dacnis male - Did not see the scarlet thighs.



This is a male green honeycreeper.



We drove over to hike in the rain at **Sky Adventures Arenal Park**



Rufous-tailed Jacamar is a beautiful inhabitant of forest edges and clearings of Central and South America.

With their brilliant colors and energetic ways, jacamars resemble hummingbirds but are actually related to puffbirds, toucans, and woodpeckers.



Robber fly (Asilidae) plotting its next move.



The **Crested guan** is a very large, long-tailed game bird of tropical and subtropical forest. Often seen high in trees or flying through the forest canopy.



Chestnut-mandibled Toucans or Swainsons Toucans (*Ramphastos swainsonii*) are the second largest Toucans in the world - being only slightly smaller than the Toco Toucans (*Ramphastos toco*). Their most obvious feature is their massive bill. Chestnut-billed Toucans usually make their nests in unlined cavities high in decayed sections of dead or living trees, or occasionally in old woodpecker nests. Since their bills are not suitable for excavating holes, they must rely on existing cavities. It is a resident breeder in moist lowland forests.





The first of the bridges. 400+ feet long & 150 feet high.



Ken was joking that we were lost while Jose used a topo map and sticks to guide us out of the rain forest! We ducked under the tree to dry off a bit while he explained the ecological regions and how the mountain ranges divide the country.



Looking back at the lake from bridge number 2.



The **keel-billed toucan** (*Ramphastos sulfuratus*), also known as sulfur-breasted toucan or rainbow-billed toucan, is a colorful Latin American member of the toucan family. It is the national bird of Belize. The species is found in tropical jungles from southern Mexico to Colombia. It is an omnivorous forest bird that feeds on fruits, seeds, insects, invertebrates, lizards, snakes, and small birds and their eggs. I love these birds since even I can spot them in the wild without binoculars.



Black-and-yellow tanager



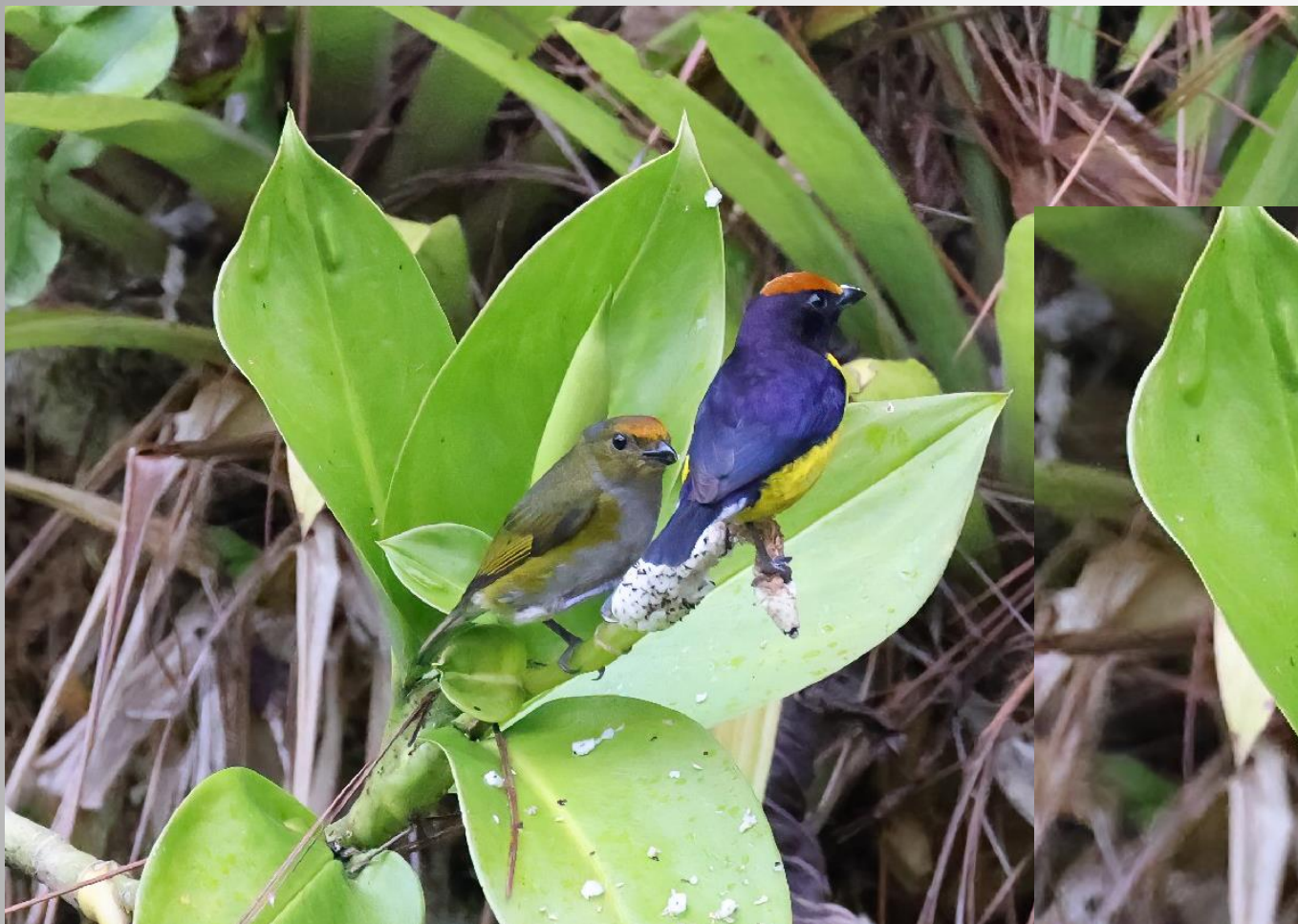
Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer is a medium-sized hummingbird, mostly green. Note red feet and bronzy rump.



Piratic Flycatcher



Tawny-capped euphonia male on right, female on left. These photos were a challenge. It was cloudy, getting dark and these birds would not stay still.



Jungle view from the room. It was so humid that we did not sit out on our deck. In fact, these rooms have no A/C they come with a dehumidifier.



The meals are very good here. Classy place. And you can learn the Spanish words from breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

I think that they installed this shelf upside down. I could not stop looking at it.



Day 6 - Sunday - APR 02 2023 -- Arenal to Tarcoles

Today is the second longest drive day. We left Arenal and stopped for a quick hike in La Fortuna at Bogarin Trail. The total distance for the day was 106 miles and 4hrs of driving.

White-collared Manakin is a chunky little bird of humid forest edge and second-growth thickets (especially with Heliconia plants) in tropical lowlands.



The **White-throated Crake** is a small marsh bird, very difficult to see as it creeps through dense marsh grasses. Far more easily heard. The only rail we saw.



We were amazed at how bad the visibility was along CR702. These were clouds not fog. We stopped for lunch at **Mi Rancho Restaurant**.

The elevation here was 3066 feet



Mi Rancho Restaurant



Silver-throated tanager



The **palm tanager** is a large gray plain tanager.



Black-cheeked Woodpecker



The **scarlet-rumped male tanager** is mainly black except for a scarlet rump, silvery bill and dark red iris.



Speckled Tanager in front.



Common chlorospingus



Crimson-collared tanager



Bay-headed Tanager is one of 23 species we saw.



Buff-throated Saltator



We arrived at **Hotel Villa Lapas Jungle Village** in the late afternoon. We are now close to the Pacific Ocean at an elevation of 200 feet and its hot.

Ken is ready for anything with his camera and a drink. I think it was a Pina Colada.



Scarlet Macaws would fly over so you had to be ready.



I think I can see why our heater did not work.



So, we went a few miles north to **Parque Nacional Carara** - National park for a hike.

We had been here before as it's a safe place to park and walk.



Slaty-tailed Trogon



Slaty-tailed Trogon



Male **Black-throated Trogon**



Female **Black-throated trogon**



While **Common basilisks** are most known for their ability to run on water, they are also excellent climbers and swimmers and can stay underwater for up to half an hour. They are called Jesus Christ lizards for this ability to run on water.



Nice day. Only 103.6 heat index. A day ago, I was wearing a jacket and cold.



Collared Forest Falcon - The Collared Forest Falcon has a varied diet. It feeds on large lizards, snakes, rodents, birds (up to the size of guans and ibises), and large insects.

It hunts by ambush from a concealed perch, by flying from perch to perch, by running along large branches, or even running on the ground with amazing speed and agility. It hunts at dawn and dusk. It also may follow army ant swarms to capture invertebrates flushed by the ants.

It nests in cavities, as shown here.



We all were watching something.



White-whiskered Puffbird - Plump brown bird of shady understories in humid evergreen forest of tropical lowlands. Found singly or in pairs, perched quietly at low to middle levels. Often sits still for long periods and is easily overlooked.



Like other toucans, the **fiery-billed aracari** is brightly marked and has a large bill.





So, we drove up to an area that we have hiked in a few times. It was a dangerous area with almost certain car break-ins unless you paid for protection. Also, high chance of being robbed along the trail. This trail is located on the east side of the road just south of the Tarcoles.



Because we are at sea level, a high risk of crocodiles in this area.



Orange-collared manakin



Black-hooded antshrike. It is found in Costa Rica and Panama. Its natural habitats are subtropical or tropical moist lowland forests.



The **Mantled Howler Monkeys** are recognized for their fascinating vocalizations (which can be heard almost 2.5 miles away)



Cocoa trees start bearing fruit when they are about five years old. They are prolific flower producers, growing anywhere between 5,000 and 15,000 blossoms every year. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of these blossoms develop into mature cacao pods.



We made it. Almost back to the road



We returned to **Hotel Villa Lapas Jungle Village** to a very good buffet and open bar. I could have stayed here for more days. Good food, booze, cell service so it covered all the needs. Plus we now had hot water.

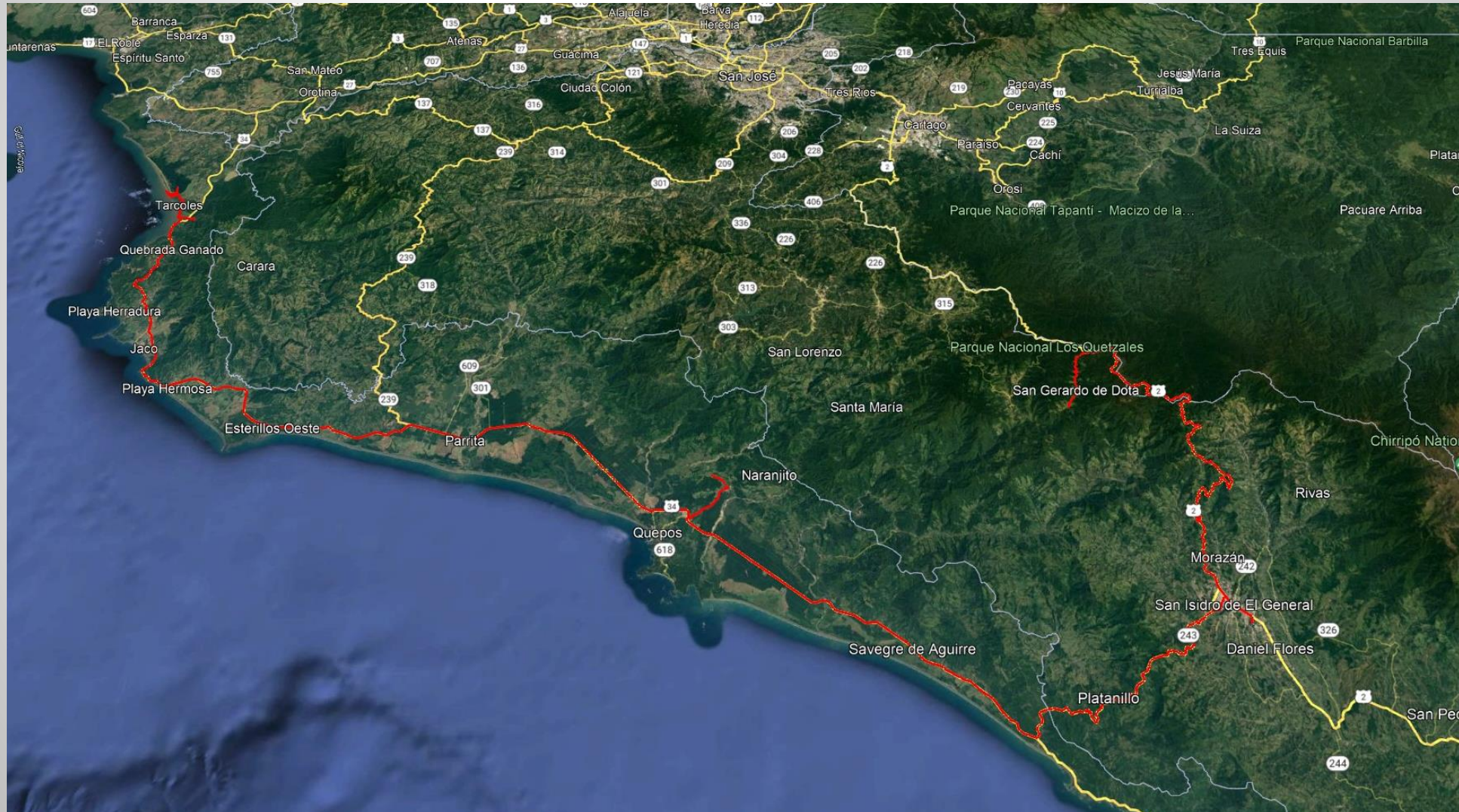
The lush gardens right outside our room



Day 8 - Tuesday - APR 04 2023 -- Tarcoles to Savegre

Morning boat tour of the Tarcoles River. This river is one of the most important resting areas for many migratory species, particularly shore birds, and of great importance for resident ones like Southern Lapwing, Mangrove Vireo and Roseate Spoonbill. Then we will continue our drive towards the Savegre river valley. The hotel is located at 7500 ft. above sea level and it is surrounded by impressive Montane oak forests and lush gardens.

Looking at our GPS track for the day we had over 5 hrs. of driving and covered appx. 150 miles. Today is our longest driving day.



Breakfast at **Hotel Villa Lapas Jungle Village** and my kitty showed up. This was a smart cat as it quickly remembered me from dinner the night before.



Pineapple growing around the Tarcoles River.
Tour building.



Getting on the ship for our three-hour tour



Amazon Kingfisher female.



Magnificent Frigatebirds flying above us.



These **Magnificent Frigatebirds** are Ken's favorite because when we see them, we know we are in tropical or subtropical waters. Males are all-black with a scarlet throat pouch that is inflated like a balloon in the breeding season. Although the feathers are black, the scapular feathers produce a purple iridescence when they reflect sunlight. It is a kleptoparasite, pecking at other seabirds to force them to disgorge their meals. After forcing the other seabird to regurgitate its meal, the magnificent frigatebird will dive and catch the prey before it hits the surface of the water.



Common Black Hawks are creative hunters. In shallow water, they may wade in and flutter their wings to startle fish and other prey. Then they use the wings to "herd" prey into shallower water, where it is easier to capture.



Saw a few **crocodiles** on the beach and in the water.



Back in 2013 we were amazed and how many crocodiles we saw although they fed them at that time.



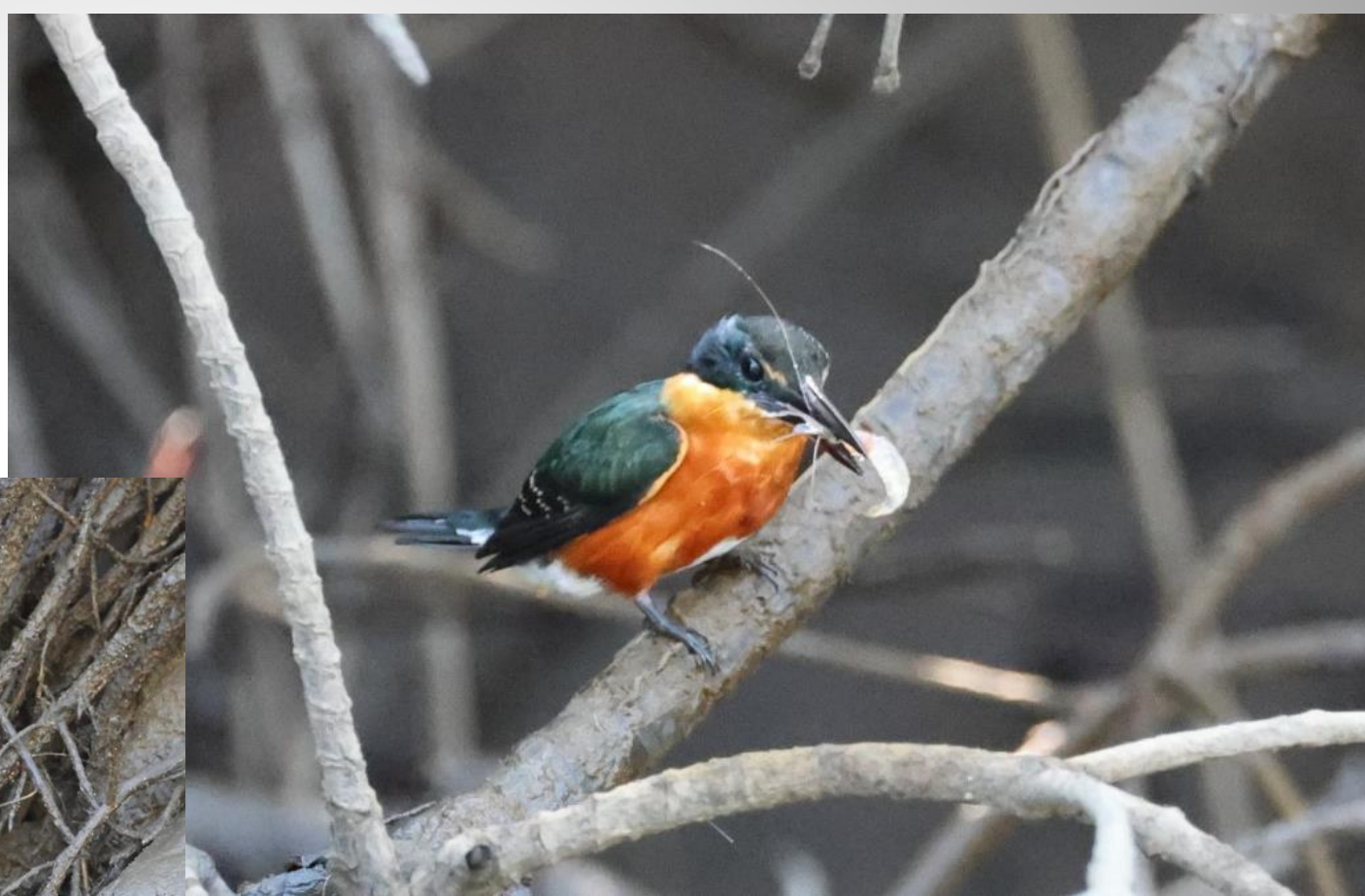
Passing along the canals in the mangroves.



We found a **Green Kingfisher** in this mangrove forest.



American Pygmy Kingfisher - We saw 5 kingfisher species, mostly on our Tarcoles River boat tour. I think this is the American Pygmy Kingfisher. Note the food in his mouth?
Mary was maybe 3 feet away from him as our boat moved slowly along the tidal creek.



Crab-eating Raccoon

So we left the Tarcoles River and went a few miles to **Tarcoles Beach** - Costa Rica is located in the canton of Garabito in Puntarenas, is a beautiful and quiet beach of gray sands and blue waters near the Tarcoles River boat tour we just did. The beach is surrounded by lush natural beauty that includes forests, mangroves and lagoons that serve as nesting area for many birds, including the spectacular Scarlet Macaw (*Ara macao*) and the unique Roseate Spoonbill (*Platalea ajaja*), among many others. However, due to its proximity to the mouth of the Tarcoles River, bathing in the area is dangerous, since crocodiles go from the river to the sea in this area.



Scarlet macaw eating tropical almond tree fruit



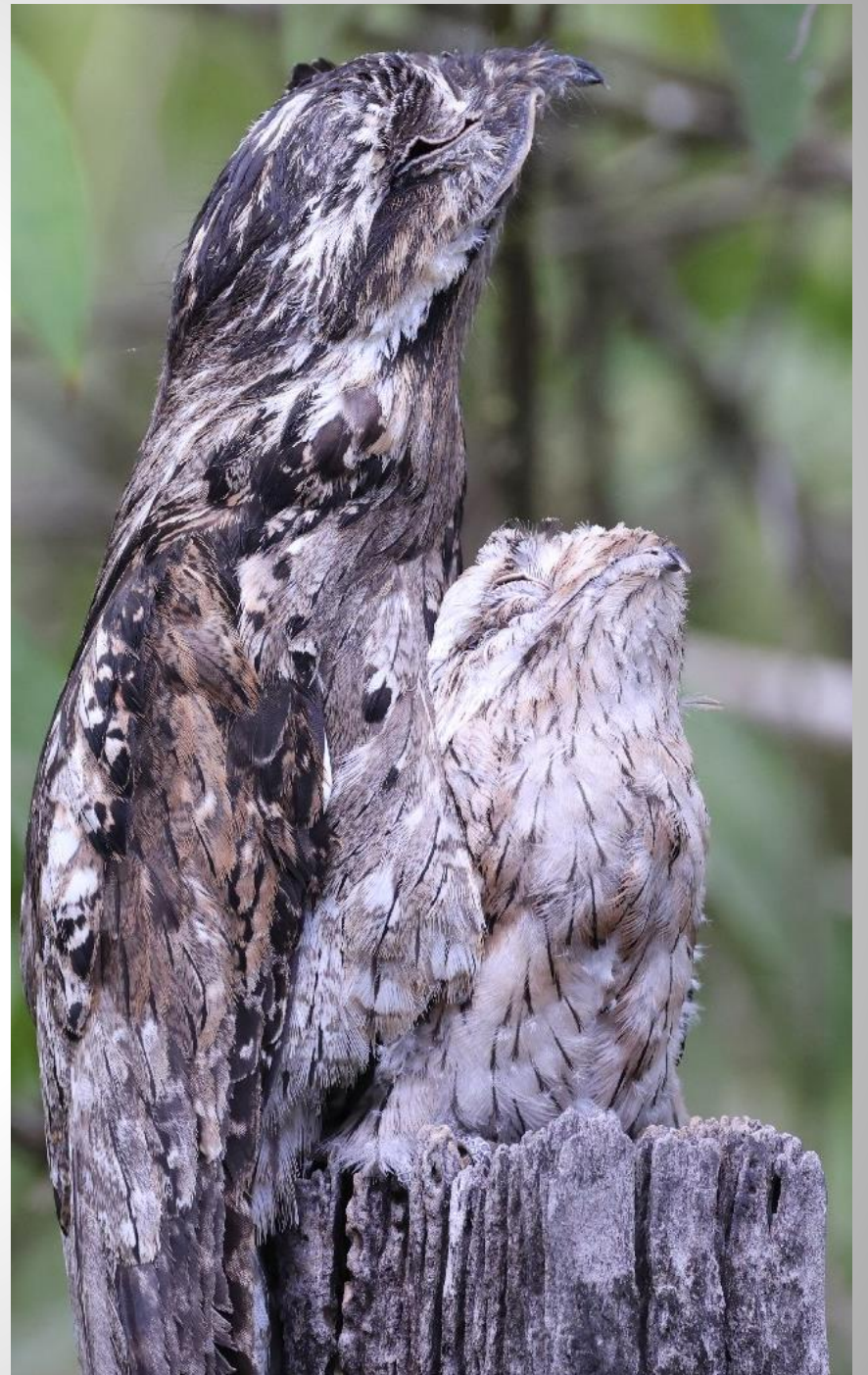
So we traveled south along CR34 and near **Quepos** we went inland a few miles. At first, I was wondering why we were going this way but it was worth the detour. The elevation here was less than 1000 feet.

The **Common Potoo** is a nocturnal bird of Central and South America, known for its camouflage plumage and upright perching. Here is adult with young standing on post. This bird can remain completely still for long periods and is so beautifully camouflaged by its cryptic plumage that it becomes almost completely invisible. This is one of Mary & Ken's favorite sightings.



Once you find it, this must be one of the easiest birds to photograph. It does not move and occasionally opens its eyes to look at any activity. I took over 100 photos and only saved four.

The most open the eyes became while we were here.



While we were looking at the Potoo we saw a **King Vulture**. The King Vulture is uncommon, large, and spectacular bird of lowland tropical forest, mainly in wilder areas and not around human habitation. Most often seen soaring overhead in mid-late morning, often high up with kettles of Black Vultures; rarely seen perched. It was very far away and really pushed the limits of the Canon R5 at 500 mm.



In the parking lot at Restaurante Los Pilonos, we saw a Great Wall Wingle 7 designed and made in China. It's generally a copy of a F150. Rated at ZERO stars. These cars have a terrible reputation of reliability over the long term. Plenty of things seem to go wrong with them (almost certainly thanks to them being built down to a price) and parts supply seems a bit sketchy at times, too. The fit and finish really did not look bad. This was the first time I had ever seen one of these as they are not available in the US.



We stopped for a bathroom & food break at Supermarket Coopeagri in San Luis.

This place had everything. Many types of Fud and Zar



This could possibly be the unhealthiest food on the planet. Chocolate covered donut ice-cream on a stick. Looking back, now, I wish I had tried one.

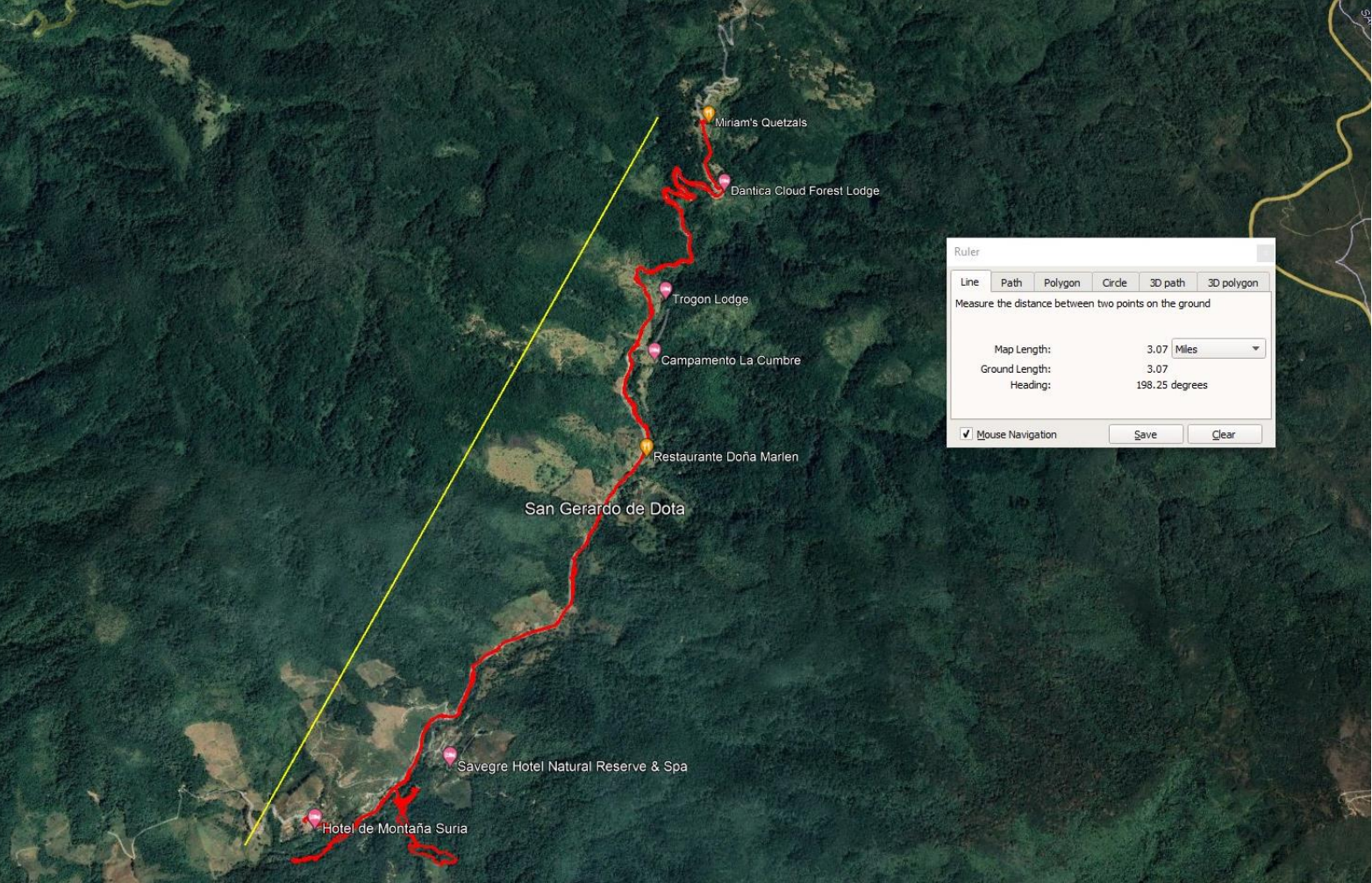


We are now at 10,170 feet. We have come up over 8000 feet in the 24 miles since San Luis the bus started to overheat. We pulled into **La Georgina - Restaurant** right as it was closing. The owner was very nice and let us all use the restrooms and most of us bought snacks and sodas. It took 45 minutes or so for the bus to cool down to a safe temp.



Day 9 - Wednesday - APR 05 2023 -- Savegre

Looking at our GPS track for the day we had a very easy day. We traveled appx. 6 miles.



Like I said, no AC needed here. Ken warming up with the small room heater.



Pair of baby **Silver Throated Tanagers** at our hotel in Savegre Vally at elevation 7500 feet. Bernie ID'ed these for us.





The **resplendent quetzal** building a nest. Male left / Female Right.





Collared Redstart

Out for our morning hike in the cloud forest. Very wet & very lush.





"The golden fruit of the Andes," **naranjilla plants** are herbaceous shrubs with a spreading habit that are commonly found throughout Central and South America.

We drove up to **Miriam's Quetzals - Restaurant** which is at the 8,800-foot level in the valley.

Acorn woodpecker



Darlene trying to get a hummingbird to land on her finger.



Large-footed Finch



Flame-colored tanager male



Costa Rican hairy woodpecker we think after considerable research.



Maybe a **Fiery-throated Hummingbird?**



Sooty-capped chlorospingus



Slaty Flowerpiercer - Flowerpiercers have a unique upturned bill with a sharp hook at the tip; they use it to pierce the bases of flowers to extract nectar.



At Cerro de la Muerte, our highest elevation (11,400 feet) we saw kettles of broad-wings and **Swainson's hawks**.

I counted over 230+ hawks in this single shot



Zoomed in near the center



On a clear day which is not common here, you can see the Pacific Ocean. I took a bunch of shots and this one was the best. You can see a cruise ship off Quepos and the hilly area that forms Manuel Antonio National Park. This is close to 30 miles away. Just for reference we are appx. 54 miles away from the Caribbean Sea just north of Limon. Our view east was blocked by hills.



Cerro de la Muerte, our highest elevation (11,400 feet) The roads up here were much better than I would have figured.

Navigation and sensor data overlay:

- Position : Lat/Lon (WGS84)
9°33'13.024" N
83°45'24.044" W
- Speed (mph): **0**
- Altitude (ft): **11455**
- UTC Time: **15:13:15**
- Local Time: **09:13:15**
- 3D Fix: **09:13**
- Compass and map icons



We stopped for lunch at **Paraiso Quetzal Lodge** - Lodge KM 70, Ruta 2 Sur San Jose, San Gerardo de Dota.

Black-thighed Grosbeak amongst the bromeliads.



Fiery-throated Hummingbird



The **long-tailed silky-flycatcher** (*Ptiliogonys caudatus*) is a passerine bird which occurs only in the mountains of Costa Rica and western Panama.



Volcano Hummingbird female & male.



Golden-browed chlorophonia



Blue-crowned Chlorophonia



Slaty Finch



Black-billed Nightingale Thrush



We made it to our **Hotel Robledal** near the airport. Nice room with A/C and a good shower. But we liked Bougainvillea Hotel better.



Interesting exotic wildlife here.



Hoffmann's woodpecker (*Melanerpes hoffmannii*) is a resident breeding bird from southern Honduras south to Costa Rica. It is a common species on the Pacific slopes, locally as high as 7,050 ft. It is expanding on the Caribbean slope, aided by deforestation.

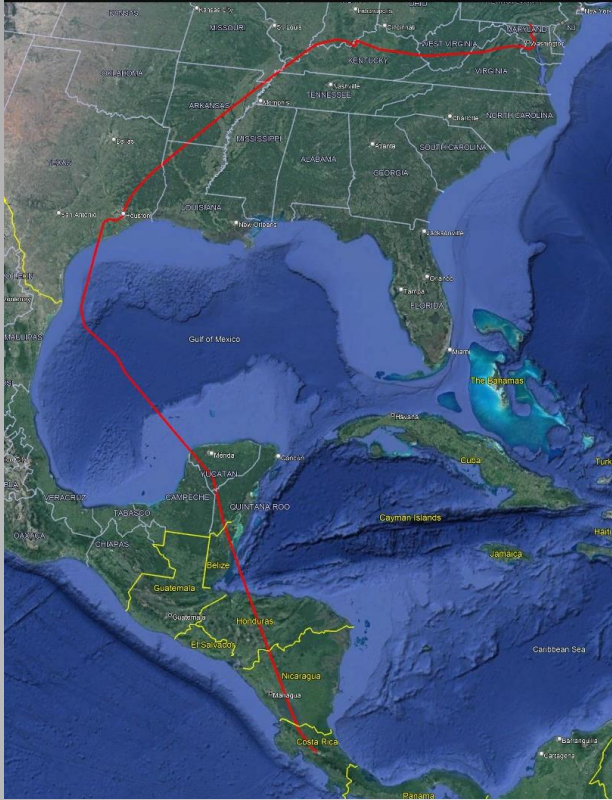


Our last sunset in Costa Rica.



Unlike our easy non-stop BWI to San Jose ride down our ride home was a bit longer. We had our first plane change in Houston Texas and a very short layover. Then we had a stop in Louisville, TN where we remained on the plane.

Departing San Jose we went north west across Nicaragua. This allowed those who were sitting on the west side of the plane to see the volcanos. The first one we could see was Reserva Natural Complejo Volcanico Momotombo. Momotombo is a active stratovolcano in Nicaragua, located near the city of Leon. It stands on the shores of Lake Managua. The elevation is 4,255 feet. The volcano is appx. 60 miles west of our flight path. I had to enhance this photo and you can see the lake shoreline in front of the volcano.



Our Group Photo taken at Quetzels Paradise Lodge.



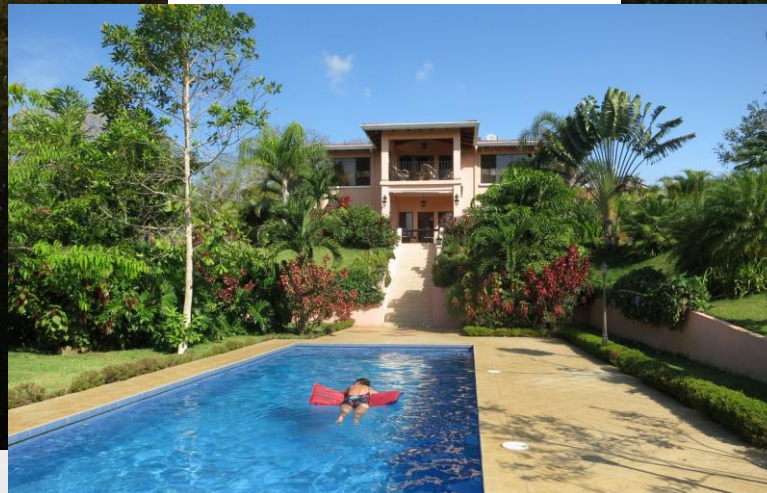
After considerable research over the last 10 years our favorite town in Costa Rica is **Atenas**. Its located about 45 minutes west of the city of San Jose and a half-hour from the international airport in Alajuela. Although it is close to urban areas, Atenas itself couldn't be more different. The town is surrounded by rolling green hills, speckled with rows of coffee plants and sugarcane. Sitting in the central town park you quickly get the feeling that you are back in the 1950's in America.

The central part of the town generally has everything you would need. Close to the RT27 highway you can be at the Pacific beaches in about an hour.

Located at a pleasant, mosquito-free altitude ranging from 2,280 to 4,000 feet and with maximum temperatures reaching the low-to-mid-80s F and minimums rarely below 65 F, most homes do not require heat or air conditioning.

Atenas has a strong expat community (estimated 2,500 full or part-time) of mostly retired foreigners.

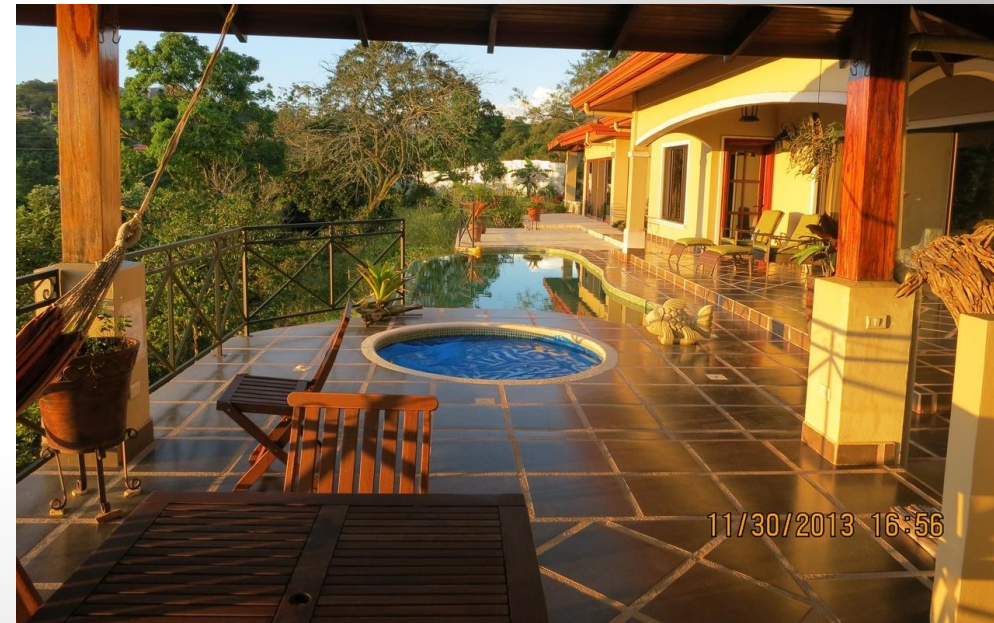
This was our first house we rented in the spring of 2013. The elevation here was 2,500 feet and the weather was great.



Our second visit in 2013 was in the fall. At this time we were considering relocating to CR and retiring early. We rented a house on the west side of Atenas but at a higher elevation of 3,200 feet. Wow what a difference this made. This was an amazing house with a infinity pool.

We could see the Pacific Ocean but the clouds would roll in at dark and our amazing view would go away. We only had a few clear nights when you could see the stars & cities.

When it was clear it was a bird watching paradise.



The 2nd homes higher elevation brought more bugs. Every night we would look for the “Bug of the Night”

We had:

- Tarantula(s)
- Solifugae
- Huntsman spider (size of your hand)
- Scorpions
- Tailless whip scorpions

Would love to say they stayed out of the house but....



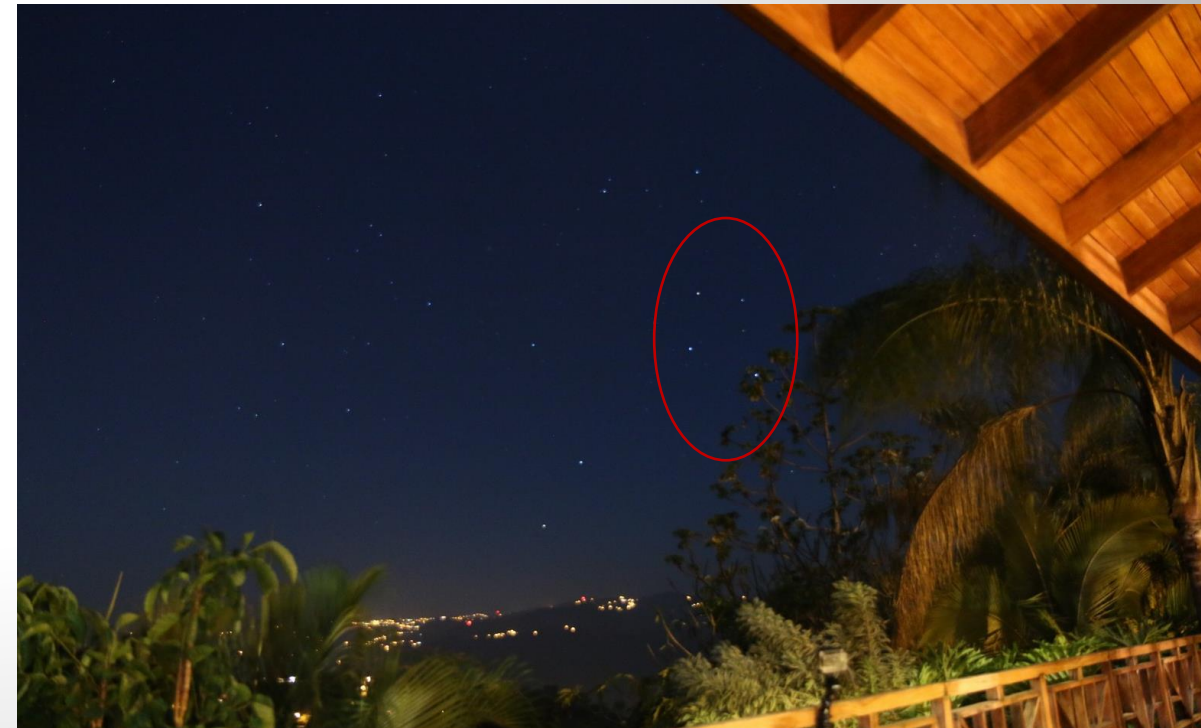
Our third visit in 2017 was in the spring. We rented a house on the southwest side of Atenas but at a middle elevation of 2,800 feet. We were out of the clouds and our view was to the south. We did not like this house as much as the first two as it was a basic house

Less bugs here

We still had fun exploring the area and watching the variety of birds that passed thru the valley



Black-crowned tityra



Southern Cross



In 2017 we spent a couple of nights at the JW Marriot Guanacaste Amazing pool and a 10+ foot difference in tides. Located in the NW part of Costa Rica.

Good location for day trips to see the volcanoes of Nicaragua.



Braulio Carrillo National Park is a National Park in Heredia Province and San Jose Province



This sloth was at an abandoned farm south of Limon. We visited this area on two cruises.

