



# Wild Globe Travel Consultancy

*Tailored Wildlife, Wilderness and Adventure Travel Across the Globe.*

14 Greenfield Road, Eastbourne,  
East Sussex BN21 1JJ, UK

Tel: +44 (0)1323 731865  
Mob: +44 (0)7821 640118

Email: [jason.woolgar@btinternet.com](mailto:jason.woolgar@btinternet.com)  
Website: [www.wildglobetours.com](http://www.wildglobetours.com)



## COSTA RICA

**Date - December 2013**

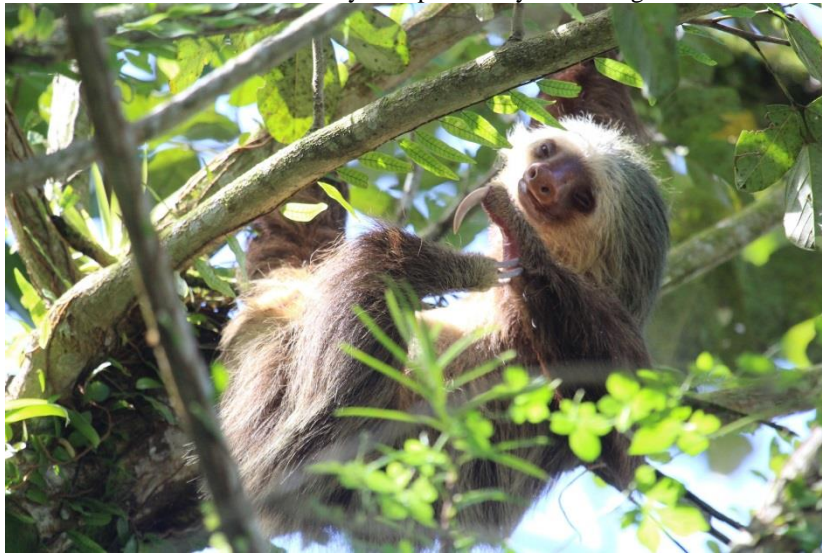
**Duration - 22 Days**

### **Destinations**

San Jose - Braulio Carrillo National Park - La Selva Biological Station - Tirimbina Rainforest Lodge - Arenal Volcano - Monteverde - Manuel Antonio - Damas Mangrove - Drake Bay - Corcovado National Park - Sirena Biological Station

## Trip Overview

A dual purpose trip, partly to try several new guides and partly to act as a tour guide for someone who had not visited Costa Rica previously. Both parts of an extremely smooth trip went well, as the guides were generally excellent and my guest encountered a great deal of wonderful wildlife. One of our main targets was the pygmy or silky anteater, as I had never seen this animal in the wild and we were both excited about the very real possibility of finding such a rare creature. Sloths were of course fairly high on the agenda and my guest was also keen to find northern tamandua, another type of cute anteater, kinkajou, a small nocturnal carnivore related to the raccoon, and baird's tapir, the largest land mammal in Central and South America. Fortunately, we had superb sightings of all of these and many more mammals, as well as a rich variety of the exotic reptiles, amphibians and birds for which Costa Rica is justly famed. After a brief stop at the Braulio Carrillo National Park, our tour began in earnest at La Selva Biological Station, a renowned research centre set within a large area of mainly primary rainforest. As elsewhere in this type of habitat, the dense vegetation can make it difficult to spot animals, but on this occasion we had extraordinarily good fortune, seeing grison and tayra within about half an hour of each other on only our second day. Although they were only fleeting sightings, they were both in the open in good daylight and seeing these



generally elusive mustelids rather set the tone for the rest of the tour, certainly in terms of finding all of the animals that we were hoping to see. Although we had seen sloths high in the canopy within the actual reserve, our first great sighting came when we left for a boat trip on the Sarapiquí River, during which we spent several minutes with a very relaxed neotropical otter and saw a large group of howler monkeys. As we disembarked and were discussing how fortunate we had been with the otter, I spotted a two-toed sloth in a small tree within a few metres of the dock. We watched this endearing animal munch leaves and shuffle along the branches for over an hour, until it suddenly ran out of energy and promptly fell fast asleep. Collared peccary, a spotted paca, spider monkeys and several strawberry poison frogs were all additional highlights at La Selva and when we moved on to Tirimbina Rainforest Lodge, another research station within a few kilometres of La Selva, we already had the feeling that this was going to be a special trip. Tirimbina was actually very tough during the day and our only real success involved primates, squirrels and sloths, but largely through a scope at considerable distance. At night, however, the picture changed completely, as there is a bridge that links the guest accommodation with the main reserve and several nocturnal species use it to cross from one side to another in search of food, with us perched expectantly at one end with spotlights and cameras at the ready. This is by far the easiest form of spotlighting imaginable and in just a few minutes we had seen black-eared opossum, Central American woolly opossum, a pair of Mexican hairy dwarf porcupines and a brown-throated sloth, the first that we had viewed clearly to date. We had another first at Tirimbina in the form of a very large tarantula and, given that the centre is famous for its bat research, we spent a fair amount of time looking for Honduran white bats, which we found in their usual communal bundle beneath large, carefully folded leaves. The only real surprise at Tirimbina was not seeing a kinkajou in the trees around the bridge, as they are usually common and I had expected to see several. Fortunately, this was rectified when we moved on to Monteverde and one of the most remarkable night walks I have ever experienced. Beginning at the hummingbird gallery near the Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Reserve and moving on to a local farm, in the space of one hour and ten minutes we encountered bushy-tailed olingo, two Mexican porcupines, two hooded skunks, well beyond their accepted range, black-eared opossum, several two-toed sloths, at least four kinkajous, two of which had young, a nine-banded armadillo, a grey fox and two species of snake. The olingo was not a complete surprise, as they have taken to raiding the hummingbird feeders and were one of our mains targets for the area. That said, they are never guaranteed and I certainly did not expect to see so many animals so quickly, as we barely had time to gather our thoughts between sightings and at one stage had four different nocturnal mammals vying for our attention. Our drive into Monteverde had already been productive, as we stopped to photograph the arresting views around the Arenal Volcano and lake, as well as a large group of entertaining coatis, some of which were posing for pictures in the middle of the road, while others attempted to separate the drivers of several cars from any food they were carrying. Monteverde itself was fairly busy over the holiday period, as there are a number of popular reserves in the area and many of them were full of birders searching desperately for the resplendent quetzal, a gorgeous member of the trogon family and one of the principal objectives for all bird watchers visiting Costa Rica. Fortunately I know a number of far quieter locations and we spent



Christmas Day in the company of agoutis, coatis, northern raccoons and a very cute Mexican porcupine, that had chosen to sleep in a sparse tree and was easily seen in the bright afternoon sun. We actually had a quetzal fly directly past us at one stage, but we did not look specifically, as the quetzal is just one of hundreds of stunning birds found all over the country and we had already made the decision that it made more sense to stop for whatever we encountered, instead of concentrating our efforts on one species. We were



rewarded, at various locations over the course of the trip, with a colourful array of scarlet macaws, toucans, trogons, tanagers and more types of dazzling hummingbird than we could easily remember. Our next destination, Manuel Antonio, was also crowded, as its exquisite beaches and warm Pacific waters attract a large number of both international tourists and local visitors. Of course even more descend at this time of year, but the vast majority spend their time on the beaches or in the tiny national park, the two actually combine at one lovely setting, and we were therefore able to escape the crowds, as our next priority was not at Manuel Antonio itself, but within the Damas Mangrove, which lies a few kilometres beyond town. This was one section of the trip that I was slightly uncertain about, as I desperately wanted to find a pygmy anteater and, although she did appear to be keen, I was not sure how happy my guest would be to spend hours searching for a small, orange ball of fur that was very unlikely to move. I need not have worried, as the boat ride to the mangroves is exceptionally scenic and we saw a large number of waterbirds, crocodiles and iguanas, against a wonderful backdrop of deep blue sky and shimmering mountains. We were also very lucky with the anteater, as our experienced guide found one in a tree within less than two hours and I was able to take a first ever look at an animal that had eluded me for years. As predicted, the anteater was fast asleep and doing precisely nothing, which is not a problem with some animals, but is more so with this particular species, as it sleeps with its head tucked in and its face totally obscured. Believing that you have never really seen an animal until you have looked into its eyes, I suggested, a little hesitantly, that we go back at dusk in kayaks to try and see it awake. Fortunately, the suggestion was greeted with enthusiasm and we spent an entertaining couple of hours wading through muddy water in the dark, attempting to remain upright and to keep our equipment dry, as we fixed our spotlights on a barely active and still slightly groggy anteater. We would have needed to wait much

longer to see it foraging, but we got some nice pictures of it peering down sleepily at us and decided to return the next evening in a larger boat, to look for a few of the opossum species that are also common here. We were very fortunate with these as well, as we actually returned twice and on both nights encountered woolly opossum, grey four-eyed opossum and water opossum, which I had only ever seen once prior to this visit. Crab-eating raccoons were also abundant at night here and when we did venture into the Manuel Antonio National Park, we saw several more, as well as their northern raccoon cousins, a large number of both species of sloth, white-tailed deer and our first Central American squirrel monkeys. From Manuel Antonio we moved on to Drake Bay, partly because it is the gateway to Corcovado National Park and partly because I wanted to try a small camp that I had been told about by a local guide. Although we thoroughly enjoyed the tranquil setting and the camp itself was nestled in an extremely beautiful section of forest, with a river to walk along and a number of inviting swimming holes, the wildlife was elusive and we encountered little over the best part of three days. With hindsight our time would have been better spent at a superb lodge I know on the Osa Peninsula and that is the option I will recommend for future tours. Happily, after a few quiet days, I knew that I



had saved the best for last, as Corcovado National Park, specifically the Sirena Biological Station, is my favourite destination in Costa Rica and never disappoints, either in terms of wildlife or the fabulous natural settings in which a diverse array of animals can be observed. This trip was no exception and Sirena delivered another catalogue of dramatic encounters, including gentle tapirs walking and swimming within two metres of us, an otter fishing as her two hungry pups waited impatiently on the riverbank, our only red brocket deer of the trip and one of my best ever sightings of a tayra, which we spent at least fifteen frantic minutes with, as it darted

rapidly from tree to tree and we attempted to keep up. We had a brief view of a bull shark as it slipped back into the ocean from one of the river channels, as well as pelicans fishing along the beach and vibrant scarlet macaws feeding in the palm trees. Herds of peccaries and all four primate species were routinely observed and we were even fortunate enough to enjoy a riveting half an hour with a



foraging northern tamandua, the one animal that had eluded us to date and that I was beginning to fret slightly about. Given all of these and many other exciting experiences, it was a great shame that the only real disappointment of the trip should occur here, for although I do not visit Costa Rica expecting to find cats, I always spend time looking in the most suitable areas and we should certainly have seen a puma at Sirena. It would have actually been difficult not to, as a puma had killed a sloth and baby the previous evening, but had only taken the young. I therefore knew that it would return at some stage the next night and that if we staked out the carcass for long enough, it would only be a matter of time before the puma appeared. Sadly, and utterly inexplicably given the habitat and resident species, the regulations do not permit spotlighting at Sirena and we were only allowed to sit within sight of the carcass until dusk. Sure enough, when we returned

early the next morning, the unfortunate sloth had been removed and we had lost the rare opportunity of watching a majestic cat carry off its prey. It was an unfortunate way to end, but the trip itself had been a marvellous success, with 35 mammal species, including all of our main targets, and a host of other wonderful sightings and experiences.

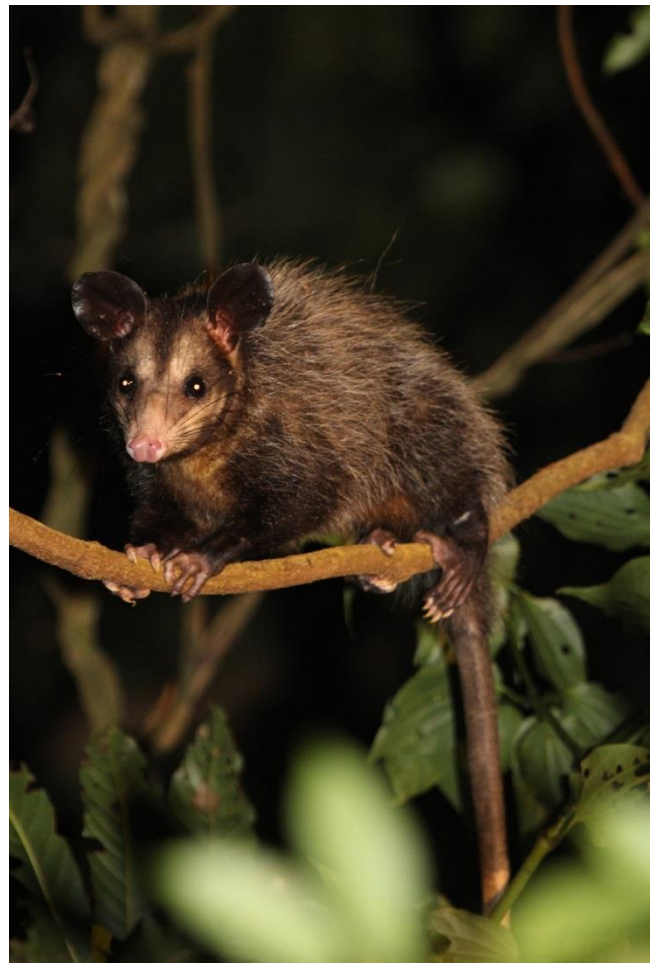
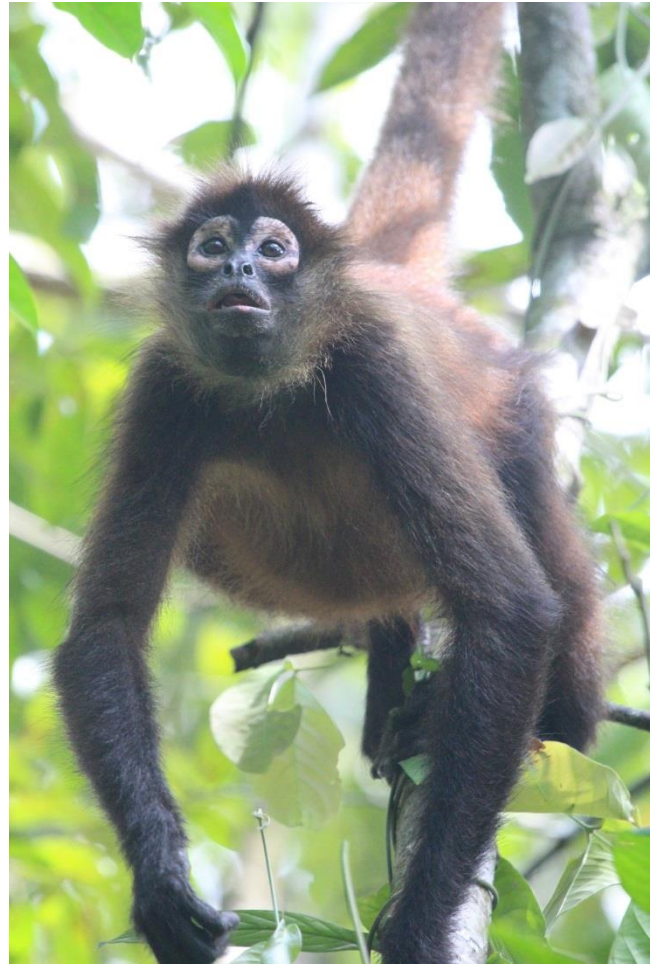


No.	Species	Scientific Name	Notes
1	Grey Fox	<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>	A pair at Monteverde for prolonged periods.
2	Greater Grison	<i>Galictis vittata</i>	One at La Selva running across a path.
3	Tayra	<i>Eira barbara</i>	Brief sighting at La Selva, extended sighting at Sirena.
4	Neotropical Otter	<i>Lontra longicaudis</i>	Two swimming near La Selva and mother with two pups at Sirena.
5	Hooded Skunk	<i>Mephitis macroura</i>	Several at one location in Monteverde.
6	Crab-eating Raccoon	<i>Procyon cancrivorus</i>	More than twenty at Manual Antonio NP.
7	Northern Raccoon	<i>Procyon lotor</i>	One at Monteverde and at least two at Manual Antonio.
8	White-nosed Coati	<i>Nasua narica</i>	Less common than usual, with most seen on the drive to Monteverde and others around the reserves in that area.

9	Kinkajou	<i>Potos flavus</i>	Several at Monteverde, including young.
10	Bushy-tailed Olingo	<i>Bassaricyon gabbii</i>	One individual for about 20 minutes at the hummingbird gallery in Monteverde.
11	Northern Tamandua	<i>Tamandua mexicana</i>	One prolonged sighting at Sirena.
12	Pygmy Anteater	<i>Cyclopes didactylus</i>	Same individual by day and night at Damas Mangrove.
13	Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth	<i>Choloepus hoffmanni</i>	Seen at every major destination visited.
14	Brown-throated Sloth	<i>Bradypus variegatus</i>	Common everywhere excluding Monteverde.
15	Baird's Tapir	<i>Tapirus bairdii</i>	Seven individuals at Sirena, including extended close sightings and swimming.
16	Red Brocket Deer	<i>Mazama americana</i>	One individual near the airstrip at Sirena.
17	White-tailed Deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	Lone deer eating at the edge of the path at Manuel Antonio.
18	Collared Peccary	<i>Pecari tajacu</i>	Large numbers at La Selva, near Arenal and at Sirena.
19	Mantled Howler Monkey	<i>Alouatta palliata</i>	Common and encountered at every major destination.
20	Central American Spider Monkey	<i>Ateles geoffroyi</i>	Brief views at La Selva, extended views at Sirena.
21	Central American Squirrel Monkey	<i>Saimiri oerstedii</i>	Several extended sightings at Manuel Antonio and Sirena.
22	White-throated Capuchin	<i>Cebus capucinus</i>	Seen at every major destination excluding Monteverde.
23	Black-eared Opossum	<i>Didelphis marsupialis</i>	Prolonged sightings at Tirimbina, Monteverde and Manuel Antonio.
24	Central American Woolly Opossum	<i>Caluromys derbianus</i>	Several individuals at Tirimbina and Damas Mangrove.
25	Grey Four-eyed Opossum	<i>Philander opossum</i>	Two good views at Manuel Antonio.
26	Water Opossum	<i>Chironectes minimus</i>	Two individuals on consecutive nights at Damas Mangrove.
27	Nine-banded Armadillo	<i>Dasypus novemcinctus</i>	Brief views at La Selva and Monteverde at night.
28	Tapeti or Brazilian Rabbit	<i>Sylvilagus brasiliensis</i>	One at Monteverde on a night walk.
29	Mexican Hairy Dwarf Porcupine	<i>Sphiggurus mexicanus</i>	Several at Tirimbina and Monteverde.
30	Deppe's Squirrel	<i>Sciurus deppei</i>	Two at Monteverde, identified by guide.
31	Red-tailed Squirrel	<i>Sciurus granatensis</i>	Several at Monteverde and Sirena.
32	Variegated Squirrel	<i>Sciurus variegatoides</i>	Common at most destinations.
33	Central American Agouti	<i>Dasypsecta punctata</i>	At least two or three at every location visited.
34	Spotted Paca	<i>Cuniculus paca</i>	One on a night walk at La Selva.
35	Tome's Spiny Rat	<i>Proechimys semispinosus</i>	Brief sighting at night at La Selva.









14 Greenfield Road, Eastbourne,  
East Sussex BN21 1JJ, UK

Tel: +44 (0)1323 731865  
Mob: +44 (0)7821 640118

Email: [jason.woolgar@btinternet.com](mailto:jason.woolgar@btinternet.com)  
Website: [www.wildglobetours.com](http://www.wildglobetours.com)

