

CLOSER

THE OUTDOOR AND BIRDING MAGAZINE FROM
SWAROVSKI OPTIK

UG
AN
DA

THE PEARL
OF AFRICA

**ONE BRAND
ONE COMMUNITY
BUILDING BRIDGES**

THE ESSENCE OF US ALL
LOVE OF NATURE

HEAL
THY

NATURE



SWAROVSKI
OPTIK



LEGAL NOTICE

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“WE CAN LOVE OURSELVES BY LOVING THE EARTH”

— Wangari Maathai



Dear readers,

Have you ever had experiences like these? Those special moments when distant objects feel vibrantly close? When perception is heightened and the observer becomes one with nature?

A sight that truly touches the heart is worth so much more than a thousand fleeting glimpses. It's these moments that enrich our lives, move us deeply, and give us strength. Let's share these precious instants of true connection with nature! The photos and stories in this magazine impressively illustrate the beauty of our planet.

We strongly believe that nature represents an immense source of strength for everyone. It boosts all aspects of health. Body, soul, and mind find peace, gather strength, and replenish energy. We rediscover a sense of harmony on a physical, mental, and emotional level. This gift awaits us on every forest walk, stroll in the park, or hike over fields and meadows... Wherever we are, Mother Nature has so many benefits to offer us.

So surely it is in our best interest to preserve these treasures? An intact and pristine environment allows us to fully appreciate its beauty and to

draw strength from it. The more people recognize that protection of nature, biodiversity, and the climate is a win-win situation for everyone, the more nature lovers will also commit to this cause.

Our aim as a company is to preserve the environment, to protect nature, and to maintain biodiversity. We would be delighted if we could inspire many more people to do the same. Not only for the love of nature, but also for the love of our fellow humans and – not least – ourselves.

Carina Schiestl-Swarovski

CARINA SCHIESTL-SWAROVSKI
Chairwoman of the Executive Board
SWAROVSKI OPTIK.
SEE THE UNSEEN.



ONE BRAND
ONE COMMUNITY
BUILDING BRIDGES
The essence of us all

54



44 **6 MUST-SEE DESTINATIONS**
for every nature lover

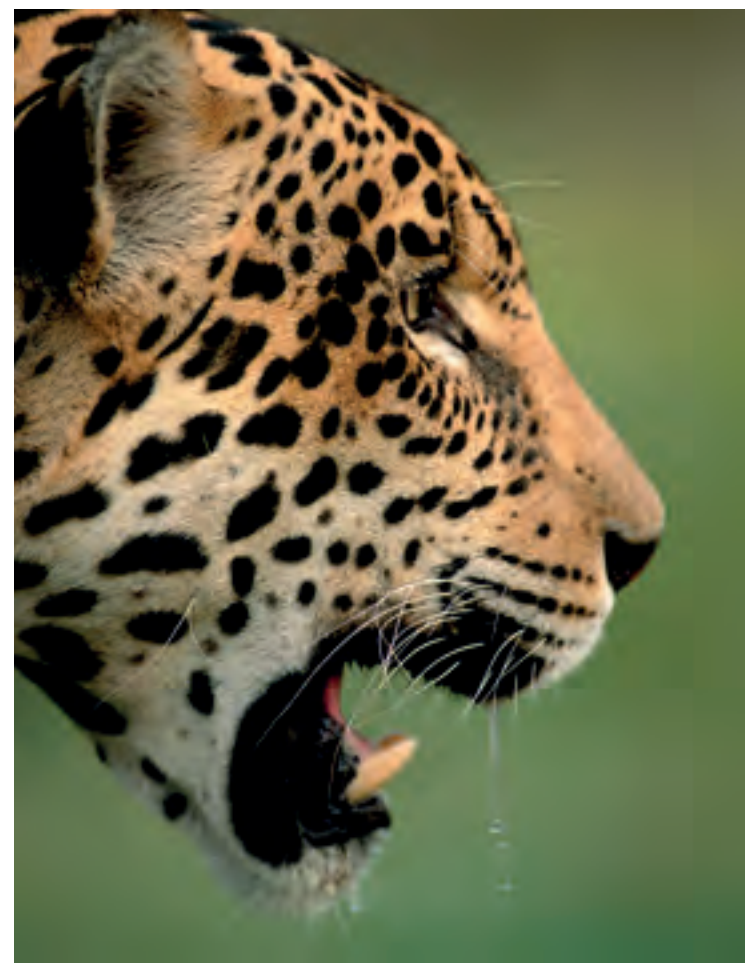


16 **IT'S A WOMEN'S BIRDING WORLD**
Harriet Kemigisha and her colleagues bring us insights into Uganda's natural treasures

62 **COLOMBIA**
One of the most biodiverse countries



26 **THE PURE SPIRIT OF INVENTION**
The fascinating story of the NL Pure innovation



CONTENTS

05 EDITORIAL

IN FOCUS

16 **IT'S A WOMEN'S BIRDING WORLD**
Harriet Kemigisha and her colleagues bring us insights into Uganda's natural treasures

62 **COLOMBIA**
One of the most biodiverse countries

IMPULSE

08 **A CLOSER LOOK**
Pumas in Chile

22 **BRINGING YOU CLOSER TO UGANDAN WILDLIFE**
Meet some inspiring women birding guides

38 **IS IT THE RIGHT DIRECTION?**
Searching for orientation

INSIGHT

26 **THE PURE SPIRIT OF INVENTION**
The fascinating story of the NL Pure innovation

44 **6 MUST-SEE DESTINATIONS**
for every nature lover

54 **ONE BRAND, ONE COMMUNITY, BUILDING BRIDGES**
The essence of us all

LIFESTYLE

24 **HOTSPOTS FOR WILDLIFE**
7 must-visit places for travelers

32 **HEALTHY NATURE**
The healing powers of our environment

70 **ANDES TO AMAZON**
The essential Colombian hotspots

LOOKING AHEAD

74 **SEE YOU THERE!**
Always there for you



PUMA
(PUMA CONCOLOR)

Photo: Ingo Arndt, ingoarndt.com
Location: Patagonia



PUMA
(PUMA CONCOLOR)

Photo: Ingo Arndt, ingoarndt.com
Location: Patagonia



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(PUMA CONCOLOR)

Photo: Ingo Arndt, ingoarndt.com
Location: Patagonia



PUMA
(PUMA CONCOLOR)

Photo: Ingo Arndt, ingoarndt.com
Location: Patagonia



Shoebill (*Balaeniceps rex*)

It's a WOMEN'S birding WORLD



Harriet Kemigisha
champions wildlife
guiding in Uganda.
Meet her and some
of her fellow female
bird guides.

UGANDA — the pearl of Africa



18

Uganda – a mecca for wildlife watchers and bird lovers alike. Spread over an area of more than 240,000 square kilometers (93,000+ square miles) in altitudes of 600 to 5,100+ meters (2,000 to 16,750+ feet) above sea level, a colorful multitude of different animals roam the savannas, rainforests, swamps, and lakes. Over 1,000 bird species have been recorded on Ugandan territory. A place so rich in biodiversity, it attracts visitors from around the world.



Harriet Kemigisha and her fellow guides from the Uganda Women Birders Club show this natural splendor to international guests. Their knowledge, passion, welcoming smile, and ability to get people excited about wildlife and conservation pushes tourism and the wildlife-watching sector forward, thus creating revenue for their families and communities.

CLOSER talked to Harriet Kemigisha about wildlife tourism as an important source of income and incentive for conservation.

HOW DID YOU GET INTO BIRDING AND WILDLIFE WATCHING – HOW DID IT ALL BEGIN?

I started birding and wildlife watching when I was little, growing up near Kibale National Park. I was inspired by Wilson Malcolm, who started a bird observatory in Kibale National Park and by Herbert Byaruhanga, the president of the Uganda Bird Guides Club, who started guide training in Uganda focusing on empowering women in tourism and conservation.

WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT UGANDA AS A BIRDING AND WILDLIFE-WATCHING DESTINATION?

Uganda – the pearl of Africa – a name that Ugandans are confidently proud of. The country holds an incredible natural abundance that comes from being in the transition zones. It also has a wide range of habitats, from savannas to rainforests, swamps to lakes. Uganda has a great altitudinal range, spanning the 5,100+ meters (16,750+ feet) of the Rwenzori Mountains to the lowlands of Lake Albert at 600 meters (2,000 feet) above sea level. Because of this high diversity, Uganda is ranked the richest country in birdlife in Africa, boasting over 1,000 different species, and has the highest density of primates.



19

Harriet *KEMIGISHA*

Born in 1982, Harriet Kemigisha grew up in the small village of Bigodi near Kibale National Park. Her grandfather taught her to understand the forest. He opened her eyes, ears, and heart to the wonders and wisdom of nature.

Today, Harriet works as the director and lead guide at Harrier Tours Ltd. Her specialties are the birds and primates of Uganda and Rwanda. She is passionate about introducing young children to nature and supports various education and women empowerment projects. Her network of dedicated wildlife guides spreads over Uganda, Kenya, and Rwanda.

On her outdoor adventures, Harriet gets closer to nature with the ATS 80 HD with 25–50x eyepiece. When it comes to binoculars, she either goes for the NL Pure 8x32 or her long-time favorite, the EL 8.5x42.



harriet.kemigisha



WHERE IS YOUR FAVORITE BIRDING SPOT?

My favorite birding spot is Semuliki Valley National Park. This park is an extension of the Ituri Forest of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). As the DRC is not safe and therefore inaccessible, we only have a chance to see the Congo species in this lowland forest of Semuliki. This is the only place in Uganda where I go and expect to add something new to the Uganda list or to see very rare animals.

In December 2020, I re-discovered a species of red colobus monkey, the Semuliki red colobus (*Piliocolobus semlikiensis*). That species had not been recorded in Uganda in this forest for a long time. Plus, I keep adding new bird species to our Uganda list.

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT WOMEN IN THE BIRDING AND WILDLIFE-WATCHING INDUSTRY?

I think that this is a great opportunity that can transform society, not only in terms of tourism but conservation as well. Birding is so demanding that once women concentrate on it, they become a source of information for society and their families. When a woman becomes successful, it means that the entire family and society will have success. I have done a lot for my family and community. I have contributed to schools, churches, and conservation organizations, opening roads where they never existed for farmers to be able to transport their produce to the market. And we women are the most reliable agents for conservation. I think that tourism and conservation have a bright future with many women getting involved, because we have a strong voice when it comes to preserving natural resources.



Red-tailed Monkey (*Cercopithecus ascanus*)

HARRIER Tours

In 2009, Harriet Kemigisha founded Harrier Tours. The professional tour company based in Uganda specializes in birding and mammal-watching tours. Their mission is to empower women in conservation and guiding. The team of dedicated nature lovers from all parts of the country were all trained by the Uganda Safari Guides Association. They love to bring people closer to Uganda's diverse fauna. The name of the company pays tribute to Harriet's favorite bird of prey: the Harrier.

 harriertours / harriertours.com



WHAT WOULD BE YOUR GREATEST WISH?

My greatest wish in birding and wildlife watching is to have many young children and young adults involved in watching birds and wildlife as well as in conservation. I have seen almost all the birds of Uganda. So, my next plan is to start nocturnal mammal watching because there is still so much to discover.

HOW DO YOU EMPOWER MORE PEOPLE TO BECOME ACTIVE IN CONSERVATION AND GUIDING?

So far, we have many women involved in conservation work, guiding, and driving. There are also young female birders coming up. My tour company, Harrier Tours, works with a women's project in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park that I have personally supported: RIDE 4 A WOMAN. Today, it is one of the most successful programs in the country, helping women struggling at home with issues associated with HIV, domestic violence, and poverty. We support them by staying with our guests in their beautiful facility. Additionally, visitors have the possibility to buy their colorful fabric products or woven objects. Many of my fellow guides who see what I am doing (like turning my house into a lodge, the Kibale Forest Lodge, which brings employment and income to my family) are inspired by my entrepreneurship and take these ideas back to their communities. That is one of the nice things about being a guide: you meet different people with lots of ideas on how to develop and improve the service. The most important thing I like to teach my students or other guides is to be passionate, knowledgeable, and trustworthy. That has been my key to success.

WHAT DOES SUSTAINABILITY MEAN TO YOU?

To me, sustainability means passing on the knowledge and experience that I have gained to other female birders in Uganda and abroad. It means being able to train and provide other necessary support to young birders so that the love and skill for birding, wildlife in general, and conservation can continue to prevail. I also look after the habitat (forests, savannas, lakes, swamps, etc.), because species need to survive for birding and wildlife watching to continue through generations. The other important part of sustainability is economic viability. There are many incentives coming from birding and wildlife tourism. When we welcome guests who love birds and wildlife, guides can earn a decent income from their profession and, thus, continue to love nature and protect it.

HOW DO PRODUCTS BY SWAROVSKI OPTIK SUPPORT YOUR BIRDING PASSION?

SWAROVSKI OPTIK has the best vision. When you're looking at birds with any SWAROVSKI OPTIK device, you feel like you want to keep going because the views are 100% clear. They show you precious details of a bird, so you never get bored when you go out birding time and time again. 🍷

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND FOR SHARING YOUR STORY.

Harriet is not only a professional guide and fierce conservation advocate, but she also understands that we are stronger together. She strives to bring female guides from Uganda, Kenya, and Rwanda together to learn from each other, support one another and, thus, boost the tourism industry in the entire region.



Bringing you closer to UGANDAN WILDLIFE

MEET SOME OF THE INSPIRING
WOMEN WHO BRING PEOPLE
CLOSER TO UGANDAN WILDLIFE

In Uganda, wildlife guiding is a profession that attracts people from all walks of life. Interestingly, in contrast to a lot of other countries, in Uganda more women than men excel in this field. They share their profound understanding of nature and wildlife with all visitors, inspiring them to take a closer look. Thanks to their efforts, the local population gains valuable income from tourism, thus nature and species conservation become a priority for everybody.

Judith MIREMBE


BORN: 1991

PROFESSION: Wildlife guide, conservationist,
Chairperson of the Uganda Women Birders


WHAT NATURE MEANS TO JUDITH: Nature and wildlife are not only beautiful, but they are the reasons I am living. They purify the air I breathe. Nature and wildlife are part of the ecosystem in which I live and in one way or another influence my surroundings. Above all, nature, birding, and wildlife are a source of learning and livelihood to me. They are also a hobby I enjoy doing as they relieve me from stress and comfort me anytime, any day. Nature, wildlife, and birding provide a platform for me to make friends and build a network all over the globe and travel to places I have never been to.

FAVORITE SPOT FOR BIRDING: Mabamba Swamp

BEST BIRDING EXPERIENCE: In 2013, I was being trained to become a guide in Murchison Falls National Park. During this trip, a client gave me my first pair of binoculars as a gift. This day is still vivid in my memories. However, any day watching birds and wildlife is exciting.

 judith.mirembe.7



 nanyombi.proscovia

Prossy NANYOMBI

BORN: 1989

PROFESSION: Wildlife guide

PROSSY'S PATCH: Mpanga Forest, a generally flat natural forest reserve with over 300 species of birds

FAVORITE SPOT FOR BIRDING: Bwindi Impenetrable Forest

BEST BIRDING EXPERIENCE: We once went looking for the Green-breasted Pitta (*Pitta reichenowi*) at 6:00 am and did not hear it call. We then resorted to looking for other birds, but to our surprise the bird showed up at 11:00 am. It was the first recorded sighting for this bird at that time.

Uganda WOMEN Birders

Founded in 2013, the club aims to increase the participation of Uganda's women in nature guiding, so that they may benefit from the income generated through sustainable tourism. Among other aims, the members of Uganda Women Birders strive to:

- mentor young women to become nature guides with a focus on birding,
- teach young children about nature conservation,
- enhance awareness about conservation, and
- increase the public's appreciation for nature.

Today, the club has more than 50 members and looks to build an international network of female professionals in the tourism industry, including women from Kenya and Rwanda.

www.ugandawomenbirders.org

Abia ATUKWATSE


BORN: 1993

PROFESSION: Wildlife guide


WHAT NATURE MEANS TO ABIA: Nature, birding, and wildlife mean life to me. They entertain my soul but also sustain life as biological indicators.

FAVORITE SPOT FOR BIRDING: Bwindi Impenetrable Forest

BEST BIRDING EXPERIENCE: I have had several special experiences but one memorable one stands out: when we walked through a flooded place with water above the waist for 8 kilometers (5 miles) in search of the Fox's Weaver (*Ploceus spekeoides*). It was tough but so worth it because it is Uganda's only endemic species. I would not hesitate to do it again anytime.

 abia.atukwatse



 veron.lavigiv

Veronica NAKAFFEERO

BORN: 1993

PROFESSION: Wildlife guide

VERONICA'S PATCH: Lutembe Bay – this wetland of international importance provides a habitat for both savanna birds and waterbirds. Join the fun and watch waders and grassland birds from one location.

FAVORITE SPOT FOR BIRDING: Kidepo Valley National Park – a rugged savanna with beautiful wildlife and birds coming in also from Sudan and Kenya. Look out for Buffalo Weavers (*Bubalornis niger*), African Crane (*Crax egregria*), White-crested Turaco (*Tauraco leucolophus*), Kori Bustards (*Ardeotis kori*), Buff-crested Bustards (*Lophotis gindiana*), White-bellied Bustards (*Eupodotis senegalensis*), Red-fronted Barbet (*Tricholaema diademata*), and Purple Grenadier (*Uraeginthus ianthinogaster*).

BEST BIRDING EXPERIENCE: Every time I see a bird or animal, this moment becomes extraordinary to me. I consider all of these to be the best moments of my life.



HOT SPOTS for Wildlife

1

BUDONGO FOREST

Over 500 species of forest and savanna birds, including many species known primarily from West Africa. Good opportunities to look for chimpanzees.

2

SEMULIKI NATIONAL PARK

Part of the great Congo Basin lowland tropical forest with myriad species associated with this unique biogeographic zone.



24



Patas Monkey (*Erythrocebus patas*)



3

KIBALE NATIONAL PARK

13 species of primates (including chimpanzees!) make Kibale a wonder for primatologists, while birders scour the undergrowth for the elusive Green-breasted Pitta (*Pitta reichenowi*).

4

QUEEN ELIZABETH NATIONAL PARK

Famous for its African Skimmers (*Rynchops flavirostris*) and tree-climbing lions, this is one of the foremost birding and wildlife destinations on the continent.

5

BWINDI IMPENETRABLE NATIONAL PARK

Mountain gorillas are the absolute stars here, and the great diversity of Albertine Rift endemic bird species will keep the birder very happy.



Lion cub (*Panthera leo*)

6

MABAMBA SWAMP

Arguably the best place in the world to see the prehistoric Shoebill (*Balaeniceps rex*).



Blue-headed Tree Agama

7

KIDEPO VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

A quiet park set in stunning landscapes of semi-arid open savannas and rocky outcrops. It is famous for its incredible diversity of raptors, including 13 eagle species.



Green-breasted Pitta (*Pitta reichenowi*)



25

THE PURE SPIRIT OF INVENTION



A VAGUE IDEA IN 2009 LED TO A LONG, INTENSIVE, AND EXCITING DEVELOPMENT PROCESS, CULMINATING IN THE 'BIRTH' OF THE CURRENT NL PURE SERIES. CLOSER LOOKS BACK WITH THE TWO PEOPLE BEHIND THE PROJECT, DALE FORBES AND PETER ÖTTL, AND PRESENTS A FASCINATING INNOVATION STORY.





#FOR THE LOVE OF NATURE

We develop sustainable, durable products – for the love of nature.

THE COMPANY'S TRUST WAS A CONTINUOUS SOURCE OF MOTIVATION, BECAUSE WE DIDN'T NECESSARILY NEED TO FURTHER DEVELOP THE EL – WE COULD APPROACH IT ALL COMPLETELY DIFFERENTLY.

KICK-OFF

2009. The EL SWAROVISION had just been announced and wildlife watchers were eagerly anticipating the highly innovative technology. And the EL series was in fact welcomed euphorically all over the world as these binoculars ideally met birdwatchers' needs. And for SWAROVSKI OPTIK, they became an exemplary success story. But the innovation wheel never stops turning and, that same year, our product management began to reflect on 'the next big thing' after the EL series. Different experts from a wide range of departments were called upon and given free rein to redesign, rethink, and redevelop.

Dale Forbes, Head of Strategic Business Development: "The best ideas always came from people who contributed their very diverse experiences and views. We began brainstorming even in 2009. Our aim was to top the EL binoculars – although it was very clear this would be no easy task. But, even after the first meetings, ergonomics emerged as the key area. Secondly, we decided to move the focusing wheel to the bottom rather than the top. We continued to work on these two ideas – how to improve handling and ergonomics. The company's trust was a continuous source of motivation, because we didn't necessarily need to further develop the EL – we could approach it all completely differently."

A NEW PATH

Dale Forbes: "In the fall of 2014, we held a series of workshops that we all remember even today. We invited along people including an osteopath and a physiotherapist, both experienced binocular users, and spent hours bombarding them with questions, such as:

- What is a natural position?
- Where should the shoulders be?
- What about the elbows?
- How do the straps need to sit to be able to carry binoculars for long periods?
- Where are the pain points?
- Can you use your thumb to focus – or other fingers, or does it always need to be the index finger?

This opened up new and completely different approaches. Of course, it wasn't possible to incorporate all the ideas, but it was still fascinating to learn more about how the body works. We needed to understand the 'pressure points,' i.e., where the weight of the binoculars should lie. The answer is precisely between the thumb and the palm. But the most fascinating insight was the fact that the natural shape of the arm is angled slightly outward rather than straight. And the hand is never in a perfectly round shape as this is tiring. An oval shape is the most naturally relaxed position for the human hand. We were then able to incorporate this valuable knowledge in the design."



SPARKING IDEAS

Peter Öttl, Development Engineer: "As an engineer, I always linked ergonomics to weight and the question of just how slim we can make the housing. In one of these workshops in 2014, we had a real flash of inspiration: looking at a sketch, I realized the prisms needed to be rotated in order to make the waist of the binoculars slimmer, easier to grasp, and significantly more ergonomic. This was a major milestone. The next challenge was the reinvention of the focus shaft, an element that called for absolute precision. We had to create a rotational movement that would cause the focus shaft to move a set of lenses around 7–9 mm back and forth while ensuring that the movement in both channels was absolutely synchronized. For this right-left precision, we're talking about hundredths of a millimeter that need to move together – if they're even the tiniest bit out of sync the image simply won't work. Unfortunately, a classic, straight focus shaft would not work and so we had to devise a diagonal drive system. As well as creating an even more direct connection between the rotational wheel and lenses, this also brought another advantage: if the focus shafts ran diagonally to each other, this would automatically expand the ergonomic wraparound grip. My aim was to remove even the smallest gap to make the binoculars lighter and easier to handle. Thanks to all these innovative approaches, we not only managed to save weight, but also invented the 'wasp waist,' which gives the NL Pure its distinctive look and feel. SWAROVSKI OPTIK has now, of course, applied for a patent for the drive. And last but not least, the forehead rest with three support points allows longer and more comfortable observation."

**WE ONLY WORK
PERFECTLY AS A TEAM
– AND WITH INPUT
FROM THE MANY
PEOPLE OUTSIDE
THE COMPANY WHO
LOVE WATCHING
NATURE THROUGH
BINOCULARS OR
A SPOTTING SCOPE
JUST AS MUCH
AS WE DO.**

FAR-SIGHTED VISION

Dale Forbes: "As well as the ergonomics, we wanted to set new standards for optics too. We set ourselves the challenge of creating the widest field of view to date with barely discernible edges. We are particularly pleased that as well as 8x and 10x magnification, we have also achieved 12x magnification with the NL Pure. The combination of perfect ergonomics and the newly developed forehead rest now allows shake-free observing even with 12x magnification. And thanks to the amazingly wide field of view, there are no restrictions even at high magnification – all of which make the NL Pure such a success!"

TEAMWORK THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Peter Öttl: "The development of the NL Pure was an evolutionary process; one thing simply led to another. In the optics department, design, production – all over the company, we were continuously working on how and where we could make further improvements. We only work perfectly as a team – and with input from the many people outside the company who love watching nature through binoculars or a spotting scope just as much as we do." 🐦

Rather than rounded, the natural hand position is always oval, so the shape of the NL Pure allows effortless observation.



The difference between the EL and the NL Pure binocular series is based on three main parameters: 1. the prisms have been relocated to allow 2. the push rods to be positioned diagonally. For even more ergonomic handling, the designers 3. moved the focusing wheel lower down.



HEALTHY

NATURE

NATURE IS GOOD FOR US. ITS MANY POSITIVE EFFECTS ON HUMAN WELL-BEING HAVE BEEN PROVEN IN NUMEROUS STUDIES, WITH THESE BENEFITS PARTICULARLY APPARENT IN AREAS OF HIGH BIODIVERSITY.

Getting out in nature is quite simply good for us. Breathing in the clean, fresh air, listening to the birds tweeting, and taking in the colors and scenery – all these things make us happy and have a positive effect on our well-being. As the renowned German naturopath Sebastian Kneipp put it: “Nature is the best pharmacy.” In general, people who have access to green spaces tend to be healthier and have a reduced risk of dying prematurely. Nature on your doorstep is a real motivation to be more active. And it’s widely known that physical activity can help to avoid cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and strokes.

HEALTH IN THE AIR

As well as being very relaxing, a forest stroll also boosts our immune system. This is due to terpenes, substances used by plants to communicate with each other and fend off enemies.

Japanese researchers have discovered that when we go “forest bathing,” these same messengers activate the body’s natural killer cells, which ward off disease. So, breath by breath, the forest enhances our well-being.



PRESCRIBED BY DOCTORS

The Shetland Islands in Scotland are facing various health challenges. More and more inhabitants are suffering from conditions such as diabetes, anxiety, and depression. As part of their treatment, the health authorities are aiming to encourage people to spend more time outdoors in this spectacular natural setting. The ten medical practices on the islands are working closely with the British Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), which is producing a seasonal calendar designed to inspire islanders to take up birdwatching.



PRICELESS NATURE

Nature offers huge benefits for our health. Scientists from Griffith University in Brisbane calculated that national parks and nature conservation areas around the world help to save 5.4 trillion euros (\$6.3 trillion) in health costs each year through prevention of mental health conditions.

BIRDS BRING JOY

A healthy environment with great biodiversity has particularly positive effects on both physical and mental health. Numerous studies have shown the connection between biodiversity and well-being. To verify these assertions, scientists are increasingly considering the number of birds in the surrounding area, as these winged creatures are ideal indicators of biological diversity.

In a European study, researchers at the German Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research (iDiv), the Senckenberg Society for Natural Research, and Kiel University found that more bird species in an area increased life satisfaction to a similar extent as a pay rise. It therefore follows that the happiest Europeans are those who can experience many different species of birds each day or who live in natural, varied, and biodiverse landscapes.

The world belongs to those
who can see beauty.

#FOR THE LOVE OF NATURE



THE HEALING POWER OF NATURE

Convalescing patients recover faster after an operation and need less pain relief if they spend time outdoors in green settings. This applies even if they can simply look out over a green space from their hospital window.





EASING OF STRESS

An outdoor lifestyle has been proven to reduce stress. For example, a hike in a forest reduces the level of the stress hormone cortisol in the blood, which in turn has a positive effect on pulse and blood pressure. Our bodies regenerate in a relaxed state. This also strengthens the immune response. Interestingly, simply looking at a forest – in comparison to a city – also reduces cortisol concentration.

MORE GREENERY, LESS RUMINATING

Contact with nature plays an essential role in preventing and managing mental health conditions. It alleviates negative feelings such as anxiety and rage. Even a one-and-a-half hour walk in nature reduces the tendency to dwell on problems, a particular issue for people suffering from depression. A walk in a forest can also provide relief for sleep disorders.

We benefit immensely from time out to enjoy and contemplate nature. It is therefore in our own interest to preserve these landscapes and habitats for the good of our health. ●

WE ARE LESS ALONE OUTDOORS

In urban areas in particular, green spaces are important meeting places that play a major role in social interactions. We now know that people with lots of social contacts tend to live longer and suffer less frequently from depression and later dementia.

People on low incomes with access to few free alternatives benefit most from green spaces. The positive effects of nature for functioning social integration should also not be overlooked: experiencing nature with others is an inclusive experience for disadvantaged or marginalized groups, such as individuals with a migrant background.





Searching
for orientation



IS IT THE
RIGHT

DIRECTION?

"To get lost is to learn
to find the way."

– From Swahili



"Go right" or "head south".

"Chronological orientation," on the other hand, refers to time contexts, such as the date or part of the day. For example, "before it gets dark." From a spiritual perspective, faith can provide direction for life. Consider, for example, our lost person hoping for divine intervention. Scientific, biological, political, artistic, moral, ethical, or philosophical components can also play a role.

It is possible to have, give, seek, or find direction. CLOSER considers an aspect that people tend to contemplate mainly when they lose their way.

Or gave them some valuable advice:

"Don't wait until it gets dark, that's when it's dangerous!"

Even this little imaginary scenario illustrates the many different levels of "orientation." We usually tend to think of "spatial orientation," i.e. the ability to get our bearings in a space and progress accordingly, for example "head south."

The person sends a quick prayer up to heaven, which always helps them in this kind of tricky situation, checks their watch and the position of the sun in the sky, and then sets out toward the south.

To answer these questions, people spend their entire life – consciously or unconsciously – striving to understand, research, and describe themselves and everything around them. But to quote Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832): "People make mistakes as long as they strive." We need direction to survive.

→ An example:

Imagine that someone is trying to find their way in an expanse of flat terrain, with no landmarks to guide them. They are feeling slightly lost and disorientated.

Think how much more quickly they would reach their destination if someone described the route to them

People are born. But how do they then find their way in the world? What gives them security, the assurance that they won't stray from the path, both literally and figuratively? → → → → → → →



ANIMAL ORIENTATION

A lot of animals, such as bears, elephants, eels, and domestic pets like dogs and cats, have a clear advantage when it comes to olfactory orientation. As demonstrated by the thousands of miles that many animals walk, swim, or fly without getting lost. Migratory birds, in particular, demonstrate their amazing navigational prowess each year. While their tools are surprisingly similar, their skills are far superior to those of humans. Different species of birds also navigate in different ways: Starlings and many other related

species use the sun for direction, while the night-flying Indigo Bunting uses the moon. The earth's magnetic field, perceived by animals using a magnetic sense, is especially important. Animals use this for accurate navigation, registering both its direction and strength and storing this information in a kind of "internal magnetic field map," which they can refer to like a compass on their flight routes. However, the precise location of this magnetic sense in birds is not yet clear.

Seeking direction

As well as scientific "hard facts," factors that cannot be objectively quantified or measured play a very important role too. While from a purely practical perspective, direction involves a simple "left or right," at the other end of the scale, still "left or right," inevitably leads to one of the big questions of our existence: what is our direction in life? Religion, philosophy, and ethics contemplate this question. Self-help books and advice programs also attempt to guide our path and the direction we should follow.

Finding direction

"Direction to help us find our way in the world and in nature" is an essential consideration in the development of new SWAROVSKI OPTIK products too. When observing birds and other wildlife, our senses provide orientation, supported by high-precision long-range optics. For instance, the dG, the first long-range optical device with a digital identification functionality, can assist in identifying different animal species. The NL Pure binoculars with SWAROVISION technology or the 115-mm objective module for spotting scopes show even tiny details in the distance and thus provide important clues as to the type of animal.

Orientation is always a dynamic process. It can sometimes be very easy to suddenly lose your bearings. With the big questions in life in particular, direction is never entirely certain. Orientation is an issue that stays with us throughout our entire life.

A COMPREHENSIVE PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATION OF THIS SUBJECT IS OFFERED IN WERNER STEGMAIER'S PHILOSOPHY OF ORIENTIERUNG (PHILOSOPHY OF ORIENTATION), DE GRUYTER 2008.



A GREAT WAY TO DISCOVER THE
WORLD AROUND US AND ITS WILDLIFE
IN A RELAXED AND WELCOMING
WAY IS TO TRAVEL WITH EXPERIENCED
AND KNOWLEDGEABLE GUIDES.
ENJOY ACCESS TO PREMIUM
SWAROVSKI OPTIK EQUIPMENT WHILE
LEARNING ABOUT YOUR SPECTACULAR
SURROUNDINGS THROUGH ONE
OF OUR TRAVEL PARTNERS.

MUST-SEE DESTINA TIONS




FOR EVERY NATURE LOVER

Photo: Hapag Lloyd

ABOUT ANDBEYOND

andBeyond is a pioneering, experiential travel company that offers forward-thinking, global travelers an exclusive experience of the world as it should be; a world that is in balance with itself.

andBeyond owns and operates 29 extraordinary lodges and camps in iconic safari, scenic, and island destinations in Africa and South America.

 [andBeyond.com](https://andbeyond.com)



46

NEPAL

Starting from the cultural, religious, and political hub of the Kathmandu Valley, known as the City of Temples, spend your time learning about the unique culture and heritage of the local villagers and craftspeople, and visit tranquil, serene temples and sacred Buddhist sites. Explore the majestic natural lush locations of Chitwan National Park on an unforgettable jungle safari in search of unique wildlife including tigers, rhino, and deer.



BEST TIME TO TRAVEL:
Nov–Mar

PHYSICAL DIFFICULTY:
Moderate

CLIMATE: Warm (20–30°C/68–86°F) and humid in the south, cool (8–22°C/46–71°F) and crisp in the northern mountains

ACCOMMODATION:
High-end hotels and lodges

PHOTOGRAPHY: Nepal is among the best Asian

destinations for bird and wildlife photography, and you will have plenty of opportunities to capture special moments

SOUTH AFRICA

The iconic andBeyond Phinda Private Game Reserve encompasses an impressive 28,555 hectares (70,560 acres) of protected wildlife land in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Phinda is home to a magnificent variety of wildlife, including the Big Five, but is best known for its large population of cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) and black rhino (*Diceros bicornis*). The sand forest is home to the shy reedbuck (*Nesotragus moschatus*) and the rare red forest duiker (*Cephalophus natalensis*), two tiny antelope that are seldom encountered elsewhere.



47

“EVERY OBSERVATION BECOMES A REVELATION, EVERY MOMENT AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE. LET’S ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE DEEPLY MOVED BY OUR EXPERIENCES AND FEEL THAT WE ARE AT ONE WITH THE WORLD AROUND US. THEN WE FEEL A SENSE OF LOVE FOR ALL LIVING CREATURES, WHICH INSTINCTIVELY MAKES US SEEK TO PROTECT NATURE AND PRESERVE BIODIVERSITY.”

BEST TIME TO TRAVEL:
Sep–Mar

PHYSICAL DIFFICULTY:
Relaxed

CLIMATE: Moderate mornings and warmer afternoons (12–30°C/53–86°F) are the order of the day; cooler in the mountains

ACCOMMODATION:
Phinda Mountain Lodge

PHOTOGRAPHY:
South Africa is an amazing destination for bird and wildlife photography

TROPICAL BIRDING

is an international tour operator specializing in birding, nature, and nature photography tours. They have been in business since 2001 and ran over 150 tours in 2019, and the list of incredible destinations and types of trips in over 70 countries is growing. All trips are led by expert guides who are passionate birders, naturalists, and expert photographers.

 introductorybirdtours.com



JAMAICA

If a visit to Jamaica sounds like an excellent vacation, that's because it is! Besides beautiful beaches, lovely food (think jerk chicken) and a fantastic culture, you will be able to explore the island looking for some exceptional wildlife. The gardens host a variety of birds, including spectacular endemics like the Red-billed Streamertail (*Trochilus polytmus*) and Black-billed Streamertail (*Trochilus scitulus*), Jamaican Mango (*Anthracothonax mango*), or Crested Quail-Dove (*Geotrygon versicolor*). You will also leave impressed by the native wildlife. There are minuscule insects, large reptiles, and land crabs (*Gecarcinidae*). Jamaica is a world of diverse animals and a natural paradise.

Jamaican Tody (*Todus todus*)



BEST TIME TO TRAVEL:
Oct-Apr

PHYSICAL DIFFICULTY:
Relaxed to moderate

CLIMATE: Warm
(21–30°C/70–86°F)
and humid throughout,
cooler in the mountains

ACCOMMODATION:
Good to excellent, with
all amenities throughout,
including Wi-Fi

PHOTOGRAPHY: Jamaica
is a good destination
for bird photography

BEST TIME TO TRAVEL:
May-Aug

PHYSICAL DIFFICULTY:
Moderate

CLIMATE: Warm
(16–32°C/60–89°F) and
dry, cooler overnight

ACCOMMODATION:
Good to excellent, with
all amenities throughout,
including Wi-Fi

PHOTOGRAPHY: Arizona
is an amazing destination
for bird and wildlife
photography. There are
many photo opportunities
at the feeders



Greater Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*)



Striped Skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*)

ARIZONA

Arizona is truly on the beaten track; out-of-state and foreign birders and photographers alike have been streaming into the state for decades. For good reason! The southeastern corner of the state offers a delectable set of enticing birds, many of which reach their northern limits here. Treats like Elegant Trogon (*Trogon elegans*), Spotted Owls (*Strix occidentalis*) and Elf Owls (*Micrathene whitneyi*), Montezuma Quail (*Cyrtonyx montezumae*), and many more. Did you know that four species of skunks can be found in Arizona? Striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), hooded skunk (*Mephitis macroura*), hog-nosed skunk (*Conepatus*), and spotted skunk (*Spilogale*). Each of the four species can be found in Arizona's state parks although the striped variety is the most common.



HANSEATIC NATURE AND HANSEATIC SPIRIT EXPEDITION SHIPS

SMALL, HIGHLY MODERN SHIPS ON SPECTACULAR ROUTES

Penetrating more deeply into regions, opening closed doors to new knowledge, and getting up close with the wonders of nature.

On spectacular routes both near and far, travelers can experience intense moments of adventure with respect for sensitive natural environments – in an intimate atmosphere in groups of no more than 230 passionate explorers.

🌐 hl-cruises.de



WEST AND EAST GREENLAND

Carved out over millennia, inhabited by Vikings and Inuit peoples: Greenland's breathtaking west coast offers striking scenery of impressive glacier landscapes and glistening icebergs. With a little luck, there might even be chance to spot some musk oxen at Arsuk Fjord. The remote east coast fascinates with its mighty mountains and almost endless fjords. In Tasiilaq, there is a good chance of seeing some whales. Greenland is also home to polar bears, Arctic foxes, mountain hares, eagles, and the rare Arctic wolf.



BEST TIME TO TRAVEL:
Jul-Sep

PHYSICAL DIFFICULTY:
Relaxed to moderate

CLIMATE: Average temperature of -20°C (-4°F) in February in Upernavik and up to 10°C (50°F) in some towns in summer.

ACCOMMODATION:
The cabins are equipped with everything you could need: large windows, wall heating, Nordic walking

poles, rubber boots, and expedition parkas

Photo: Hapag Lloyd



Photo: Hapag Lloyd

ICELAND

Iceland – an untamed world of bubbling volcanoes, mighty glaciers, and thunderous waterfalls. There are few places on earth where you can feel the elemental forces quite so clearly – mystical, beautiful landscapes, deep fjords, and fascinating wildlife. In summer, there is a good chance of spotting humpback whales and fin whales on their return after winter. Not to mention countless seals. Millions of Atlantic Puffins (*Fratercula arctica*), Guillemots (*Uria*), and other auks nest on the steep cliffs of Látrabjarg.

Atlantic Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*)



BEST TIME TO TRAVEL:
Jun-Aug

PHYSICAL DIFFICULTY:
Relaxed to moderate

CLIMATE: Average temperature in summer between 10°C (50°F) and 15°C (59°F).

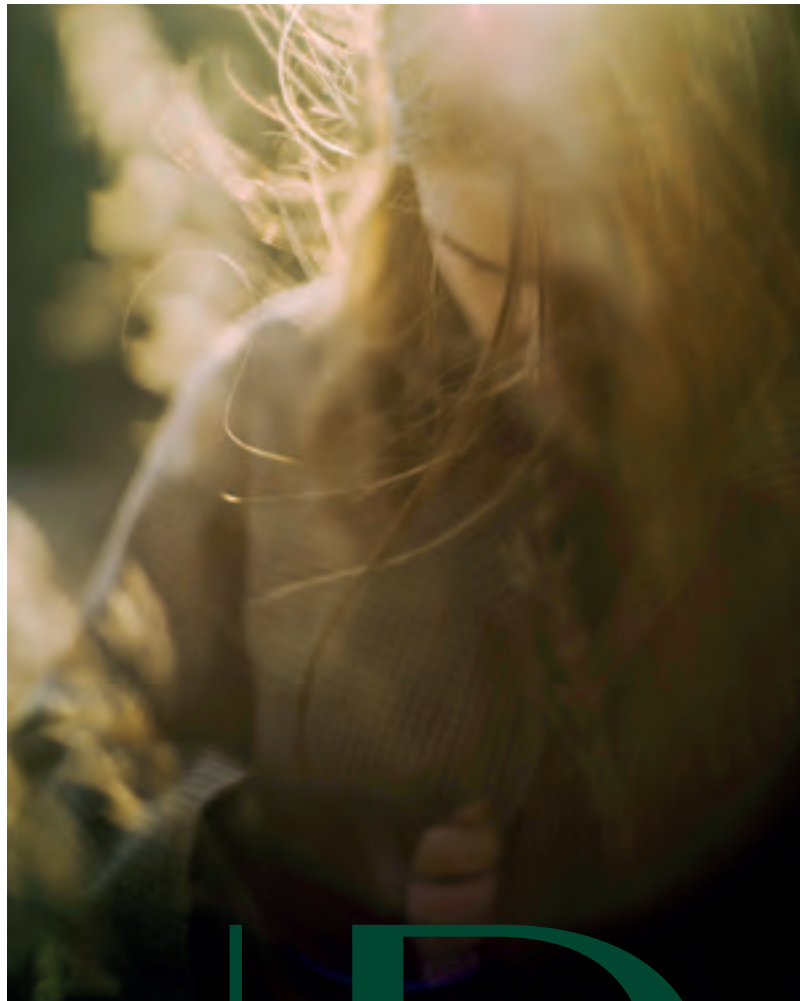
ACCOMMODATION:
The cabins are equipped with everything you could need: large windows, wall heating, Nordic walking

poles, rubber boots, and expedition parkas

THE CL CURIO ARE THE
LIGHTEST AND MOST
COMPACT BINOCULARS IN
THEIR PRODUCT RANGE,
DESIGNED BY AWARD-
WINNING DESIGNER MARC
NEWSON – EXPECT
THE UNEXPECTED.

LOVE OF NATURE

THE
ESSENCE
OF
US ALL



ONE BRAND
ONE COMMUNITY
BUILDING BRIDGES



“WE MUST
TAKE CARE OF
THIS WORLD
TOGETHER.”

DALAI LAMA



NATURE IS OUR INSPIRATION

WHEN LIFE BECOMES WRENCHINGLY UNCERTAIN, HISTORY TELLS US HUMAN INSTINCT IS TO RETREAT TO THE NATURAL WORLD.

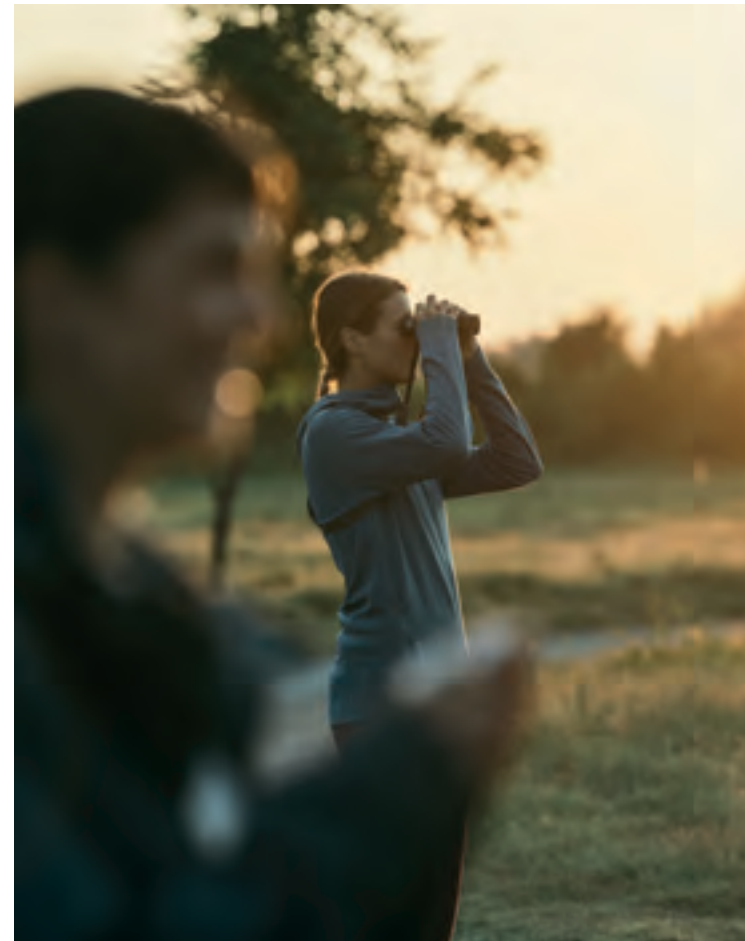
Challenging times, like the last two years, inspire people to look toward simpler ways of life. Part of this is that people spend more time outdoors and discover the appreciation of nature as a new source to gain strength from and discover new perspectives. Experiencing and discovering nature has established itself as a strong trend.

At SWAROVSKI OPTIK, the love of nature has always been at the heart of our business. Our purpose is to inspire people to love and care for nature. What we want is for people to discover the world's beauty with our premium long-range optics and be able to enjoy those precious moments.

Having started with a strong customer base in hunting, SWAROVSKI OPTIK has evolved over the last decades. Today, we are active in three target groups: hunting, birding, and outdoor. All of them are of equal value to us and they have one crucial thing in common: a deep passion for nature.

Although the individual approach and motivation for their passion may vary, we appreciate and celebrate these different branches of the same tree. Based on the current trend, we would like to focus on the common ground uniting hunters, birders, and outdoor enthusiasts: the wish to cherish and protect nature.

In everything we do, we aim to foster this close relationship between human beings and nature. Here are some examples of how we try to bring people closer to nature and help them SEE THE UNSEEN.



BRINGING TOGETHER A COMMUNITY OF NATURE LOVERS – SWAROVSKI OPTIK CAMPEX LE CASELLACCE

SWAROVSKI OPTIK's mission is to inspire people to love and care for nature by bringing them closer to the preciousness of the moment. At our new Italian office, this motto was put into practice in the year 2020.

Nestled cozily on top of a hill in Italy's Emilia Romagna region, the location boasts an amazing view of the surrounding landscape. The traditional *agriturismo* farmhouse not only offers an amazing panoramic terrace and restaurant, but is now also home to the SWAROVSKI OPTIK showroom with lounge area, the SWAROVSKI OPTIK store, a shooting range, and office facilities.



58

SHARING THE FASCINATION FOR THE BEAUTIFUL AND HIDDEN

THANKS TO THE MANY ACTIVITIES THE PLACE OFFERS, ALL VISITORS WILL FIND SOMETHING FUN TO DO:

- take a walk or hike on the nature trail to learn more about the fauna and flora on site,
- observe the local wildlife from the panoramic terrace,
- join one of the guided tours with our expert naturalists,
- take your camera and photograph the vivid wildlife you will encounter,
- try out different rifle scopes at the shooting range,
- or go horseback riding at one of the nearby stables to explore the area,
- in winter, seize your chance to ski at Sestola (only 25 minutes away), the favorite resort of the famous Italian skier, Alberto Tomba.



SWAROVSKI OPTIK's new Italian office occupies a scenic location in the heart of the beautiful landscapes of Emilia Romagna.



FOR MORE INSPIRATION
ON OUR LOVE OF NATURE,
VISIT THE STORIES SECTION
ON OUR WEBSITE.
#fortheloveofnature



59

THE MOBILE EXPERIENCE – HIGH-PRECISION LONG-RANGE OPTICS ON THE ROAD:

How do you understand the value of binoculars? That's right, by looking through them and experiencing precious moments. You need to see for yourself how it feels to get so close to nature without disturbing the animals. It is an amazing sensation that uplifts the soul and allows you to immerse yourself in the present moment. In our words, you SEE THE UNSEEN.

But how do we share this experience with as many people as possible? We knew that it was time for us to engage directly with people and venture with our binoculars and spotting scopes into their natural habitat: the great outdoors.

Thus, the Mobile Experience (MEX) was created. A vehicle that brings optical gear to the places where wildlife observation is happening. So that you can see for yourself what all the fuss is about. With the Mobile Experience, SWAROVSKI OPTIK developed a unique mobile brand experience. The MEX's aim is to get closer to customers and enable as many people as possible to immerse themselves in the world of SWAROVSKI OPTIK and try out high-quality products. The Mobile Experience is therefore a fantastic opportunity to thoroughly test our binoculars and spotting scopes right away with expert guidance.

In 2018, we started in Central Europe and brought the first MEX to North America in 2019. Since then, we have managed to organize or attend over 500 events. Even in 2021, we were able to continue this path adding another 20 Mobile Experience set-ups, ranging from small bike versions through to trailers and event cars.



NATURE IS ALL AROUND

AN INSIGHT INTO THE SWAROVSKI OPTIK SITE



SWAROVSKI OPTIK moved from Wattens to Absam (both in Tyrol, Austria) almost three-quarters of a century ago. The local community grew alongside the company, and production now mostly takes place in the heart of a residential area. Space is precious, so we ensure our construction projects are very compact and always strive to consider our neighbors. This also applied to our most recent infrastructure project, representing an investment of 27 million euros, which was successfully completed in the fall of 2020.

NEW PRODUCTION BUILDING

To continue to meet strong demand for high-quality binoculars, spotting scopes, and rifle scopes in the future, the company has invested in a new production building, housing a cutting-edge anodization plant for aluminum surface finishing, facilities for optical component production and device assembly, as well as a technical center.

NEW PRODUCTION BUILDING IN FIGURES

- CONSTRUCTION TIME: 2 YEARS, 3 MONTHS
- INVESTMENT: 27 MILLION EUROS
- SURFACE AREA: APPROX. 1,400 M² (15,000 FT²)
- CUBIC CONTENT: 31,000 M³ (10,900 FT³)
- NET AREA: APPROX. 5,650 M² (60,800 FT²)

MORE SPACE FOR ADMINISTRATION

A second new building accommodates 60 workspaces in a bright, healthy, and very pleasant atmosphere. The interior design strongly reflects the company's guiding principle "for the love of nature."

A SUSTAINABLE AND NATURAL INDOOR ENVIRONMENT

One objective was therefore to incorporate "as much nature as possible" directly in the workplace. The architects achieved this with large wooden window facades, allowing an open view of the green surroundings and majestic Tyrolean Alps. Nature is also apparent in the materials used in the offices, selected with painstaking care. Local woods, clay, or hemp were used to create a healthy indoor climate and to structure the open workspaces both physically and acoustically.



ARE YOU INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT MORE DETAILS ABOUT OUR COMPANY? THEN VISIT THE "ABOUT US" SECTION ON OUR WEBSITE. THERE YOU WILL FIND A LOT MORE EXCITING INFORMATION.

COCON BLA

FINDING HOPE AND
A FUTURE IN ECOTOURISM
IN ONE OF THE WORLD'S
MOST BIODIVERSE
COUNTRIES



“NOW, INSTEAD OF ASKING ME WHAT I’M DOING, PEOPLE ASK WHAT BIRDS I’VE SEEN.”

Carlos Mario Wagner,
founder of the Colombia Birdfair in Cali

There’s no country on earth with more bird species than Colombia. The South American nation is home to nearly 2,000 species, around 20% of all bird species on the planet. From towering Andean peaks to the verdant Amazon rainforest, the sparkling waters of the Caribbean, to the untamed jungles of the Pacific coast, Colombia boasts a staggering range of habitats and ecosystems to explore. It’s a paradise for birds and birders alike.

Yet, Colombia wasn’t always the most accessible destination for bird lovers. While international birders dreamed of ticking Gold-ringed Tanager (*Bangsia aureocincta*), Buffy Helmetcrest (*Oxypogon stuebelii*), Santa Marta Parakeet (*Pyrrhura viridicata*), and more off their lists, native birders suffered the same frustrations. For decades, conflict denied them access to the most biodiverse corners of their own country and birding remained a niche pursuit enjoyed by biologists and researchers. Colombia may have been the land of birds, but it was far from being the land of birders.

That began to change in the last decade. Vast swathes of Colombia that had been off-limits to civilians started to open up, and birders could plan adventures in the Amazon, Eastern Plains, and Pacific jungles. Birding became synonymous with exploration and adventure, and a new generation of talented young birders came of age in a country that suddenly seemed full of possibilities. Birding in Colombia is an exciting new movement, fueled by a sense of joy and discovery.

Carlos Mario Wagner has played a massive part in the development of Colombian birding culture. As the founder of the Colombia Birdfair in Cali, he’s seen birding grow from an outsider pastime to one of the country’s fastest-growing hobbies. “When I first started to go birding 15 years ago, I would come out of the forest with binoculars, and people would look at me with suspicion. Now, instead of asking me what I’m doing, people ask what birds I’ve seen.”



Buffy Helmetcrest (*Oxypogon stuebelii*)



The Colombia Birdfair has gone from a niche convention to one of the most important dates in Colombia’s cultural calendar. In the past couple of years, bird fairs have sprung up around the country; these days, you could practically schedule a visit to a different bird festival every weekend for a year, something that would have been unthinkable just ten years ago.

Seeing foreigners’ enthusiasm to come and watch birds in their country has also become a source of pride for Colombians, long used to seeing their country stigmatized in international media. Many people see birds and biodiversity as a way of shifting that perspective and bringing more positive attention to Colombia.

eBird’s Global Big Day was an important catalyst for this national pride. Colombia has topped the charts every year since 2017, registering an astonishing 1,598 species in 2019. That’s almost 15% of all the bird species on earth, seen in one country, in just one day. Perhaps more importantly, participants from Colombia collectively submitted the third-highest number of checklists on the day; a testament to how much birding has gained in importance to Colombians in just a few years.

The national tourist board – ProColombia – has also enthusiastically backed birding and ecotourism, funding ambitious documentaries about Colombian birds and positioning biodiversity squarely at the center of their campaigns. International travelers landing in Bogotá’s El Dorado airport are now met with walls of photos of Colombian birds, frogs, and butterflies. The cultural interchange generated between international birders and local enthusiasts has helped fuel the fires of the Colombian birding culture. Birding tourism has also generated new sources of income in rural communities.

Michelle Tapasco and her family are an example of the impact of birding in rural Colombia. They operate Montezuma Lodge in the Western Andes, where over 600 species of birds have been recorded. Michelle always dreamed of being able to live sustainably in the mountains with her daughters, and birding tourism has helped her realize her dream: “Birding has given us the means to live without having to leave the countryside for the city, and it has allowed us to conserve the biodiversity around us. It’s become our life’s work.” Her daughters grew up around visiting birders and were inspired to study biology, forestry, and environmental engineering and work in birding tourism. One of them is now a top bird guide in the region.



Professional guide José Luis Pushaina tells a similar story from the desert peninsula of La Guajira on Colombia's Caribbean coast. He discovered birding eight years ago when he met Colombian guides bringing foreign birders to spot regional endemics like Vermilion Cardinal (*Cardinalis phoeniceus*) and Buffy Hummingbird (*Leucippus fallax*).

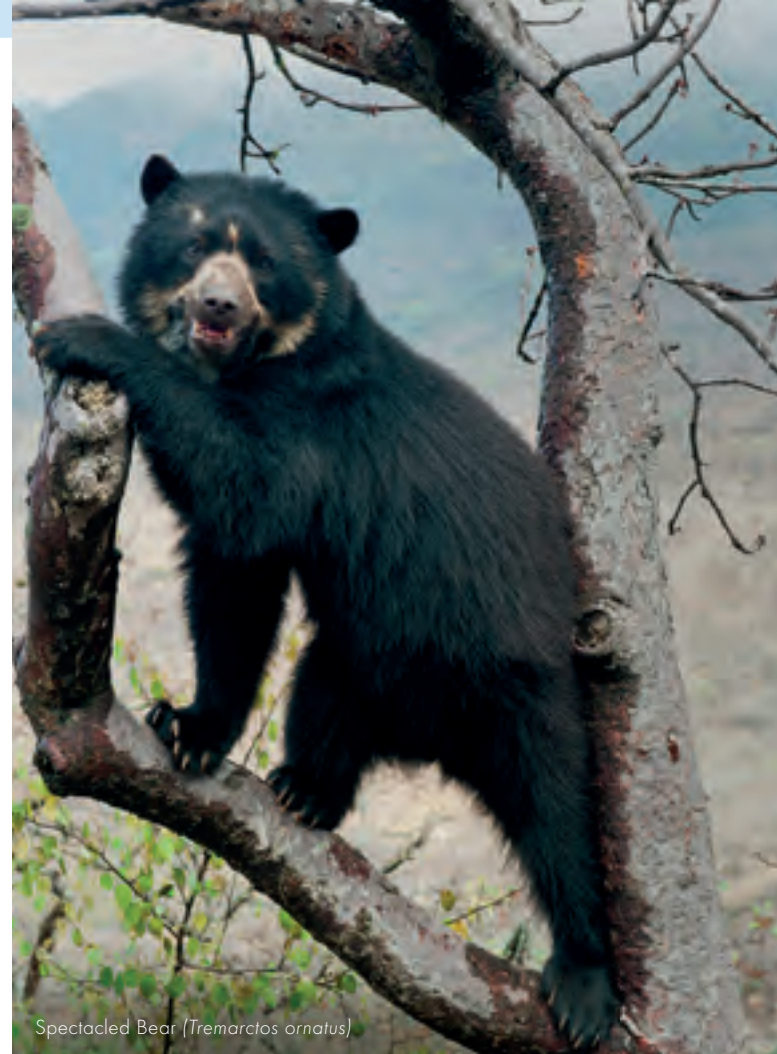
He's in no doubt that birding has changed his life and the lives of his Wayuu Indigenous community: "Birding tourism has been such an important tool to benefit the community. Everyone here who has participated in birding tourism has seen their living conditions improve in some way or another. It's changed a lot of people's lives." In a region like La Guajira, which suffers from high poverty rates, birding's economic impact has been invaluable.

Yet, while birding may form the initial spark of interest in Colombia for many international visitors, they soon learn that the country offers so much more than 2,000 bird species. By area, Colombia is the world's most biodiverse country. There are more species of orchids here than anywhere else on earth. The country occupies second place in plants, amphibians, butterflies, and freshwater fish, third place in palm trees and reptiles, and fourth place in mammal diversity. Almost 10% of the planet's biodiversity is found in Colombia's forests, mountains, rivers, plains, and oceans.

As ecotourism in Colombia has grown, it has begun to broaden its horizons beyond birding. More and more people visit Colombia to spot poison arrow frogs, jaguars, spectacled bears, humpback whales, Orinoco caiman, and anaconda. The ecotourism boom is also aiding conservation efforts for many of Colombia's most vulnerable species.

Laura Miranda is the Director of the Cunaguaro Foundation, a conservation and ecotourism operation in the Eastern Plains region. She points to the giant otter as an example of a species that has benefited from ecotourism: "Some people used to persecute the otters because they thought that they were a nuisance for eating all the fish. Now, they understand that they are one of the species that tourists are most excited to see, and the entire community supports their conservation. That's all thanks to tourism."

Yet, it's not just biodiversity that makes Colombia stand out. The Land of 2,000 Birds is also known as the Land of a Thousand Rhythms due to the incredible diversity of music and dance. Colombia is globally renowned for the quality of its coffee, its growing gastronomic culture, world-class cycling routes, handcrafted Indigenous products, and the friendliness of its people.

Spectacled Bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*)

"BIRDING TOURISM HAS CHANGED A LOT OF PEOPLE'S LIVES."

José Luis Pushaina,
Wayuu and professional guide

Black-billed Mountain Toucan (*Andigena nigrirostris*)

Increasingly, tour companies in Colombia are realizing the potential of combining birding and ecotourism with music, dance, coffee, and gastronomy. For instance, in the Coffee Region, you can take a morning birding walk followed by a guided tour of a coffee plantation and a lesson from an expert barista. In La Guajira, visitors can spot American Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) and Roseate Spoonbills (*Platalea ajaja*) in the cool light of dawn, and then visit a Wayuu Indigenous reservation to enjoy a traditional dance and learn the secrets behind weaving their artisanal "mochila" bags. Travelers to the Pacific coast can enjoy a whale-watching excursion followed by a menu of fresh local seafood and artisanal cocktails. They may even find time to spot a Sapayoa (*Sapayoa aenigma*) or Baudó Oropendola (*Psarocolius cassini*) while they're at it. Birds might be the initial inspiration for many visitors to Colombia, but they soon realize that there's so much more to do and see. Nature Colombia is one of the agencies that have expanded their reach beyond birding in recent years. The company's Commercial Director Luisa Fernanda Conto explains how demand has changed over the years: "When we started 15 years ago, 95% of our clients were hardcore birders. Nowadays, we get far more visitors who are interested not just in birds, but in a more complete experience."

In response to this shift, Nature Colombia now offers tours including a 12-day poison frog expedition and their newly launched Female Birders Flocking to Colombia tour. The latter is exclusively for female birders and supports Colombian women working in tourism. Nowadays, their tours always include activities that highlight the best of Colombian culture alongside birding.

Luis Urueña, the founder of Manakin Nature Tours, also sees bird tourism as a gateway to a more complete Colombian experience. In his opinion, "Ornithological tourism is about so much more than just coming to see birds; it's about being able to interact with communities, learn about culture, discover the gastronomy, and spend time with the people."

Birding and ecotourism in Colombia offer visitors the unique opportunity to explore one of the world's most biodiverse countries and be part of an inspiring new birding culture that is creating lasting and meaningful change. Nowhere on earth is the life-changing social and conservation impact of ecotourism more evident than Colombia, and there's never been a more exciting time to plan a trip to the land of birds, music, coffee, cycling, orchids, frogs, and just about everything else you can imagine. 🌿





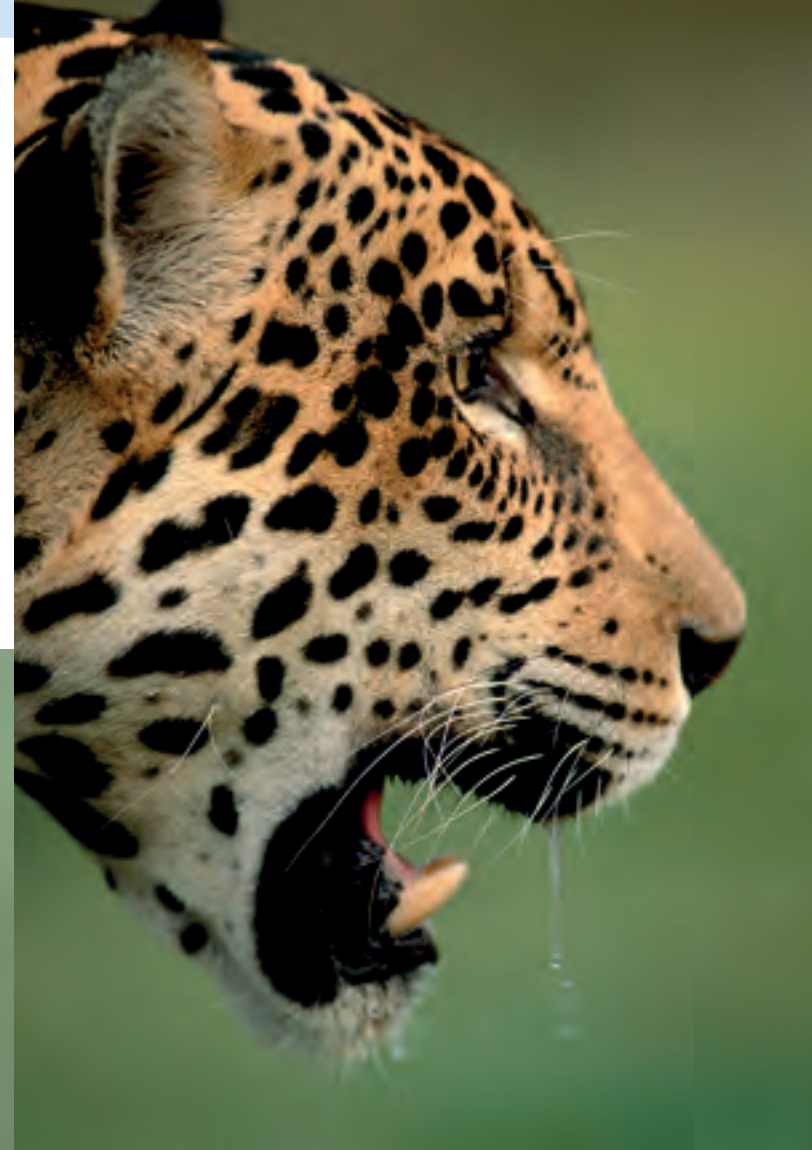
Velvet-purple Coronet (*Boissonneaua jardini*)

“ALMOST 10%
OF THE PLANET’S
BIODIVERSITY
IS FOUND IN
COLOMBIA’S
FORESTS,
MOUNTAINS,
RIVERS, PLAINS,
AND OCEANS.”

Rufous-throated Tanager (*Ixothraupis rufigula*)

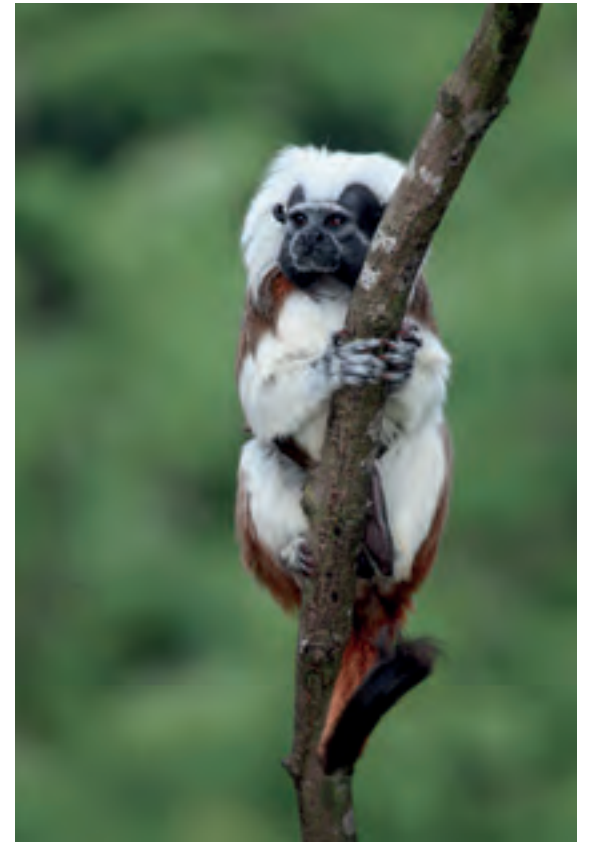


Rainbow-bearded Thornbill (*Chalcostigma herrani*)



Jaguar (*Panthera onca*)

Red-banded Poison Frog (*Oophaga lehmanni*)
© Nature Colombia



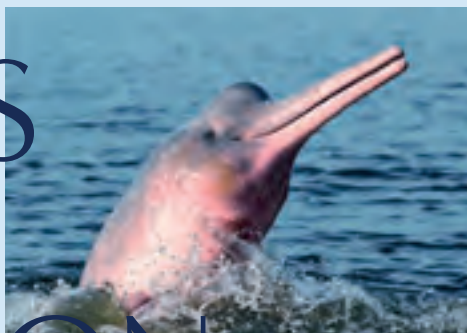
Cotton-top Tamarin (*Saguinus oedipus*)



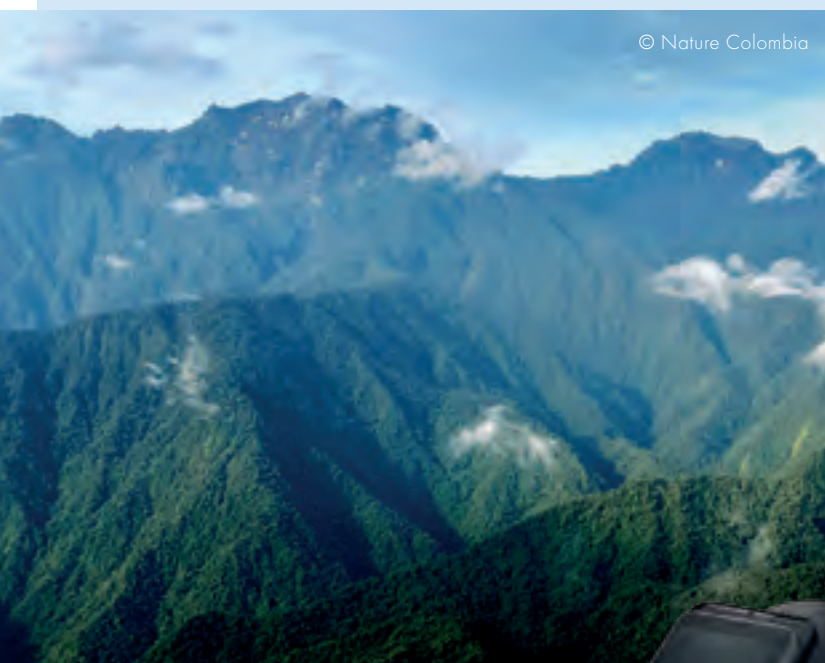
SWAROVSKI OPTIK inspires people
to love and care for nature.

ANDES TO AMAZON:

THE ESSENTIAL
COLOMBIAN HOTSPOTS



Colombia is a birder's paradise. With almost 2,000 bird species and counting, the world's most bird-diverse country is the gift that keeps on giving for nature lovers. You could dedicate years to exploring the hidden corners of Colombia and still not have scratched the surface. Yet, certain hotspots are worth prioritizing for nature lovers visiting Colombia.



© Nature Colombia

THE WESTERN-CENTRAL ANDES TRAIL

A ten-day loop of the Western and Central Andes is a wonderful introduction to Colombia's diverse landscapes and ecosystems. You can start in the rolling mountains of the southern Antioquia region, where you can enjoy lekking Andean Cock-of-the-rock (*Rupicola peruvianus*) before touring a working coffee farm and exploring the Heritage Town of Jardín.

Further south is Manizales, a vertiginous university city surrounded by some of Colombia's best birding sites, including the famous Antpitta (*Grallariidae*) feeding stations of Río Blanco and the páramos of Los Nevados National Park, where you can see Andean Condors (*Vultur gryphus*) soaring over snowy volcanic peaks. The trip ends on a high note along the staggeringly biodiverse Montezuma Road, where more than 600 bird species have been recorded, including Gold-ringed Tanager (*Bangsia aureocincta*), Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer (*Diglossa gloriosissima*), and Dusky Starfrontlet (*Coeligena orina*).

VPA

Take photos of your most beautiful and unique travel moments. With the VPA variable phone adapter, you can connect your smartphone easily to your SWAROVSKI OPTIK binoculars or spotting scope.



LLANOS ORIENTALES

Colombia's vast Eastern Plains are fast becoming one of South America's top wildlife-watching destinations.

Jaguars and pumas stalk the riverside forests, while giant anteaters (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*), capybaras (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*), and tamanduas (*Tamandua*) march across the windswept grasslands. The lakes and rivers are home to giant otters (*Pteronura brasiliensis*) and vast flocks of waterbirds and watched over by the beady eyes of caiman and anacondas.

The Llanos are a wildlife photographer's dream, while the more hardcore birding crowd will enjoy sightings of range-restricted species like Pale-headed Jacamar (*Brachygalba goeringi*) and White-bearded Flycatcher (*Phelpsia inornata*). A horseback ride accompanied by Colombian cowboys is a special way to experience the wildlife of the plains at close quarters, or for those who fancy a more relaxed experience, there's always the option of an open-top jeep safari.



NL Pure 32

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71

INÍRIDA

The Colombian Amazon is a treasure trove of rare birds, mammals, and unique indigenous cultures, and there's nowhere better to experience this intoxicating mix than Inírida. This small riverside city is ideal for exploring a mixture of habitats, including white-sand forest, and crossing off regional rarities like Capuchinbird (*Perissocephalus tricolor*) and Pompadour Cotinga (*Xipholena punicea*) from your birding checklist.

A couple of hours south along the Inírida River are the majestic Mavecure Hills, three of the Guiana Shield's westmost remnants. A hike at dawn up these hills, as the sun rises over the endless expanse of the Amazon and Orange-breasted Falcons (*Falco deiroleucus*) circle overhead, is one of Colombia's most unforgettable travel experiences.



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PACIFIC COAST

Colombia's Pacific coast stands in stark contrast to the more accessible and touristic Caribbean coast: with virtually no road access, this wild stretch of coastline is characterized by dense tropical jungle, rain-soaked black sand beaches, and muddy rivers snaking down from mist-shrouded mountains before merging with the pounding surf. It's also one of Colombia's most biodiverse regions. Visit between June and October to enjoy close-up views of humpback whales, or from September to December to witness olive ridley sea turtles (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) laying their eggs.

Year-round, nature lovers can enjoy sightings of distinctive bird species like Sapayoa (*Sapayoa aenigma*), Humboldt's Sapphire (*Chrysuronia humboldtii*), and Baudó Oropendola (*Psarocolius cassini*), as well as rainforest hikes in search of colorful poison arrow frogs. Adventurous travelers might even take a surfing lesson. You can end the day in one of the region's beachfront ecolodges, sipping traditional local cocktails to the intoxicating rhythms of currulao and marimba music.



THE NORTHERN COLOMBIA BIRDING TRAIL

Colombia's Caribbean coast is a paradise of white-sand beaches, delicious seafood, romantic cities like Cartagena and Santa Marta, and some of the world's best birding. The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta Mountains have been recognized as one of the world's most irreplaceable ecosystems, thanks to their high concentration of endemic flora and fauna species.

This area is the focal point of the Northern Colombia Birding Trail, a route that includes the coastal deserts of La Guajira and Tayrona National Park. In the Santa Marta Mountains alone you can find 28 endemic bird species. Visitors can spot Cotton-top Tamarins (*Saguinus oedipus*), White-tipped Quetzals (*Pharomachrus fulgidus*), and Santa Marta Parakeets (*Pyrrhura viridicata*) before enjoying a dip in the Caribbean or a tour of a cacao farm. And there's nowhere else on earth where you can stand with your feet in the warm waves of the Caribbean, gazing up at snow-capped mountain peaks in the distance.



ATX 65

The ATX spotting scope with a 65-mm objective module is compact and light and the perfect companion for your travel adventures. Combine it with the easy-to-use compact carbon tripod and compact tripod head for a secure and comfortable viewing experience.



CHRIS BELL:

Chris Bell is an English writer and birder who has lived in Colombia since 2011. He has worked as the editor of Colombia's biggest bilingual travel blog, The Colombia Travel Blog, and contributed content to Culture Trip, World Nomads, Uncover Colombia, National Geographic Traveler, The Bogota Post, and CNN. He currently works as Head of Content for WhereNext, a production company in Colombia, and hosts a birding video podcast on YouTube, The Birders Show. Birding is his greatest passion, and he has traveled to all 32 Colombian departments, observing over 1,300 bird species along the way. Chris Bell relies on his NL Pure 8x42 for his birding adventures.

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