



Pico da Caledônia

Habitats: Montane Forest, high montane forest (elfin forest).

Duration: Full day, return for dinner

Departure: 05:30

Journey time: 2 hours each way

What to take: Binoculars, camera, sunscreen, hat, insect repellent, water, sturdy walking boots, light fleece, and a waterproof jacket.

Useful info: Transport is via air-conditioned minibus to the city of Nova Friburgo where we transfer to an open-backed pickup to drive to the summit. Birding the elfin forest is done from the steep cobbled road that leads to the summit. The rest of the day is spent on a wide flat trail. Please bring your passport with you on this excursion. To access the summit for Itatiaia Thistletail you will need to leave your passport at the checkpoint located at the start of the steps (this part of the excursion is optional and anyone who does not want to climb the steps can wait at the checkpoint for the rest of the group). A packed lunch is included in the excursion price.

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Pico da Caledônia is one of the highest peaks in the Serra dos Órgãos mountains, reaching 2,219 metres above sea level. On a clear day the views from the top are truly spectacular. The montane forest here is one of only two known sites (and by far the most accessible and reliable) where the extremely rare and elusive Grey-winged Cotinga may be found. This site is also known for its isolated population of Itatiaia Thistletail.

We start the day birding the elfin forest near the summit searching for the rare Grey-winged Cotinga, Itatiaia Thistletail and other high altitude specialities including Plovercrest, Large-tailed Antshrike, Diademed Tanager, Bay-chested Warbling-Finch.

Late morning we drive part way back down the mountain for lunch, before spending the early afternoon birding another trail at lower altitude with fantastic scenery. Birds here include Dusky-tailed Antbird, Swallow-tailed Cotinga, Black-and-gold Cotinga and Mouse-coloured Tapaculo.



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Target species:

Red-legged Seriema
Plovercrest
White-throated Hummingbird
Brazilian Ruby
Large-tailed Antshrike
Rufous-backed Antwreio
Rufous-tailed Antbird
Dusky-tailed Antbird
Rufous Gnateater
Mouse-coloured Tapaculo
Itatiaia Thistletail
Pallid Spinetail
Sharp-billed Treehunter
Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper
Highland Elaenia
Serra do Mar Tyrannulet
Blue-billed Black-Tyrant
Velvety Black-Tyrant
Shear-tailed Grey Tyrant
Swallow-tailed Cotinga
Black-and-gold Cotinga
Saffron-crested Tyrant-Manakin
Rufous-crowned Greenlet
Cinnamon Tanager
Diademed Tanager
Brassy-breasted Tanager
Bay-chested Warbling-Finch
Green-winged Saltator
White-browed Warbler



Pico da. Caledônia, one of the highest peaks in the Serra dos Órgãos (© Sue Healey)



Male Grey-winged Cotinga (© Colin Bushell)



Plovercrest (© Lee Dingain)



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Swallow-tailed Cotinga (© Steve Blain)