

**SPECTACULAR HAWK MIGRATION
AT PANAMA'S CANOPY TOWER
OCT 8-15, 2022**

ITINERARY

Day 1: Sat, October 8 – Arrival & Canopy Tower Observation Deck

Upon arrival at the airport in the early afternoon, we will be met by our driver who will take us to the famed Canopy Tower, a short 30-min drive away and our base for the next seven nights. After checking in and a brief orientation (and perhaps a welcome beverage), we head up to the observation deck at the top of the tower. The view from the top is amazing to say the least and provides guests with unparalleled eye-level views of toucans, parrots, tanagers, and dozens of other birds commonly found in the canopy, plus sloths, monkeys, iguanas and more. As it will be afternoon, we'll be hoping for huge kettles of migratory hawks and other raptors swirling overhead – a sight that is truly amazing to behold! If the weather and visibility are good, we should see good numbers of Broad-winged, Short-tailed, and Swainson's Hawks moving south, while other resident species such as White, Crane, and Great Black Hawks are likely as well. From this vantage point we can also see ships transiting the Panama Canal, the majestic Centennial Bridge, and miles upon miles of surrounding rainforest. We may also want to visit the hummingbird feeders at the base of the Tower for Long-billed Hermit, White-necked Jacobin, Violet-bellied & Blue-chested Hummingbirds plus White-vented Plumeleteer. Occasionally, a Snowy-bellied Hummingbird is spotted!

Day 2: Sun, October 9 – Semaphore/Ancon Hill; Ammo Ponds

This morning we meet before breakfast on the observation deck, where we'll enjoy the dawn chorus and activity of the canopy with a cup of coffee, tea, or fresh juice. Such showstoppers as Green & Red-legged Honeycreepers, Green Shrike-Vireo, Blue Cotinga, Scaled Pigeon, Keel-billed Toucan and Collared Araçari are all commonly seen from the top of the tower as well as Red-lore and Mealy Parrots. We'll also scan the skies for raptors, looking for the usual migratory species in addition to King Vulture and Ornate Hawk-Eagle. Depending on the direction of the winds, the hawk migration can be fantastic over the Canopy Tower. If the winds are not in our favor, we will venture over to Ancon Hill, the highest hill in the metropolitan area, where Panama Audubon counts migratory raptors from their observatory.

After a siesta and short raptor ID workshop this afternoon, we visit the Ammo Dump Ponds, located just past Gamboa on the way to Pipeline Road. This is the best place to see the elusive White-throated Crake, as well as a host of other waterbirds. Least Grebes and Purple Gallinules are common, and Rufescent Tiger-Heron and Ringed Kingfisher are also resident. We often find Greater Ani, Whooping Motmot, Yellow-tailed Oriole, Southern Lapwing, Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet, Panama Flycatcher, Scrub Greenlet, Lesser Kiskadee, and Black-bellied Whistling-Duck.

Day 3: Mon, October 10 – Pipeline Road – ALL DAY

After breakfast we board our open-air vehicle and enjoy the 20-min ride through Gamboa to the famous Pipeline Road, one of the premier birding spots in the world. Stretching for 10 miles through excellent forest and wetland habitat, it's the best spot in Central Panama to find shy or hard-to-see forest birds. Over 300 species have been recorded here in a single day so expect the birding to be fantastic! We'll be looking for eight species of wrens, five trogons, four puffbirds, three motmots, three manakins, Great Jacamar, Pheasant Cuckoo, Blue Ground-Dove, Little Tinamou, and many other species, including the

elusive Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo and the majestic Harpy Eagle, recently reintroduced in the area. Army ant swarms are found frequently, attended by a host of birds including Bicolored, Ocellated, and Spotted Antbirds, Song Wren, and a host of woodcreepers. Pipeline Road is also a great place for raptors and though we will probably see migrants passing overhead, our focus here will be on finding any of the three forest-falcons, Double-toothed & Gray-headed Kites, Tiny & Semiplumbeous Hawks, and Ornate & Black Hawk-Eagles. We enjoy a picnic lunch and head deeper into the forest, eventually returning to the Canopy Tower for the night.

Day 4, Tue, Oct 11 – Raptor Watch at Metro Park; Summit Ponds and Old Gamboa Rd.

“Metro Park,” encompassing 265 hectares, has the distinction of being the only large forested park within a metropolitan capital in Latin America. More importantly, it protects 192 hectares of dry lowland pacific forest, providing home to bird species that are difficult to find elsewhere. Our morning begins here and we’ll be looking for the beautiful Rosy Thrush-Tanager and the striking Lance-tailed Manakin. It’s also an excellent place to find Southern Bentbill, Rufous-and-white & Rufous-breasted Wrens, Dusky Antbird and the endemic Yellow-green Tyrannulet. The Central American Agouti, a rainforest rodent, is often seen here, too. A viewpoint along the Mono Titi trail is a good spot to witness the mass migration of thousands of Turkey Vultures, Swainson’s & Broad-winged Hawks as they fly over Panama City toward their wintering grounds in South America. Once the thermals start forming by mid-morning, we will head over to Ancon Hill, where several overlooks yield excellent views of the city as well as the hawk migration. Lunch back at Canopy Tower.

Later in the afternoon (after siesta) we visit Old Gamboa Road and the associated ponds at Summit, great places to find a wide variety of Canal Area birds. At Summit Ponds, we will scan for Green, Striated, Capped & Boat-billed herons as well as Green, Ringed, Amazon, and American Pygmy Kingfishers. Also we seek out Rusty-margined & Streaked flycatchers, Mangrove Swallow, Bat Falcon, Cocoa Woodcreeper, and Lineated Woodpecker. Going straight past the two ponds we’ll be on Old Gamboa Road, which passes through a variety of habitats and is home to a number of specialties, including Great Antshrike and Jet Antbird plus Black-tailed, Bran-colored, and Royal Flycatchers. We also hope to find species like White-bellied Antbird, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Yellow-backed Oriole, Boat-billed & Fork-tailed Flycatchers, Black-chested Jays and more. Spectacled Owls often roost in the area and we may have a chance to see them.

Day 5, Wed, Oct 12 – Panama Rainforest Discovery Center; Gamboa Resort & Chagres River

After an early breakfast we head back to Pipeline Road to spend the morning at the Panama Rainforest Discovery Center. This facility, owned by the Avifauna Foundation, is a fantastic place to see a wide variety of forest birds and migratory raptors. We will explore its well-maintained trails and climb the new, well-constructed, spiral metal tower, which takes you above the rainforest canopy. From the top of the tower here we often find White-necked Puffbird, Blue Cotinga, Black-mandibled Toucan, a few species of trogons, pigeons, parrots and more. If the winds are favorable for migration, expect to see some raptors overhead on their way down south. At the covered visitor’s center, we watch hummers feeding at point-blank range and other birds in the surrounding shrubbery and trees.

After lunch, we take a short drive to Chagres River and the accompanying fields & forest. First, we must stop at the Canopy Bed & Breakfast in the picturesque village of Gamboa, to look at the bird feeders. With a beautiful backdrop of Cerro Pelado, the backyard at the Canopy B&B is teeming with bird life. Red-legged, Shining & Green Honeycreepers, Flame-rumped, Crimson-backed & Blue-gray Tanagers, Thick-billed Euphonia, Yellow-bellied & Variable seedeaters, Whooping Motmot and Gray-headed Chachalaca all visit the feeders here. Next, we’re off to the Chagres River, the main tributary for the

Panama Canal. The birding along the riverbanks and the forest edges of Gamboa Resort can be spectacular! Here we search for American Pygmy Kingfisher, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Gray-Necked Wood-Rail, Cocoi Heron, Wattled Jacana, Fasciated & Barred Antshrikes, Cinnamon Becard, and Slaty-tailed Trogon. After scanning for raptors from the observation deck here, we enjoy dinner back at the Canopy Tower.

Day 6, Thu, Oct 13 – Cerro Azul – FULL DAY

After an early breakfast, we depart toward the hills above Tocumen where a completely different climate and, more importantly, a different suite of birds await. The weather will be much cooler & breezier as we ascend the foothills of the San Blas Mountains toward Cerro Azul (2,500 ft.) and Cerro Jefe (3,300 ft.), named after the two tall peaks in the area. Major targets in these cloud-forested hills with peaks of elfin forest will include Yellow-eared Toucanet, Black-and-white and Ornate Hawk-Eagles, Spot-crowned Barbet, Black-eared Wood-Quail, and a nice mix of tanagers, including Silver-throated, Emerald, Speckled, Rufous-winged, Bay-headed, Black-and-yellow, Golden-hooded and Hepatic. We will also have a good chance for a variety of different hummingbirds, including Rufous-crested Coquette, White-tipped Sicklebill, Bronze-tailed Plumbeater, Green Thorntail, as well as Violet-capped, Violet-headed & Snowy-bellied Hummingbirds! We should also find the endemic Stripe-cheeked Woodpecker, along with Black-striped & Spotted Woodcreepers, White-ruffed Manakin, Russet Antshrike, and White-vented & Tawny-capped Euphonias. We will keep an eye to the sky for raptors as we often find flocks of Swallow-tailed Kites passing through here. Lunch will be at a picturesque residence which overlooks miles of Chagres National Park's impressive rainforest. After a little more birding, we head back to the Canopy Tower.

Day 7, Fri, Oct 14 – Canopy Tower; Miraflores Locks

This is our last morning to fully take advantage of the hawk migration in Panama. Depending on the winds and weather conditions, we can focus our morning on the raptors from the Observation Deck of the Canopy Tower, or make a final trip to Ancon Hill to experience the migration from the Pacific side. While we watch the thousands of Turkey Vultures and Swainson's Hawks funneling through, we will keep our eyes open for the odd Peregrine Falcon, Merlin or Northern Harrier.

No trip to Panama is complete without a visit to the Panama Canal, a truly incredible feat of engineering, and our destination this afternoon. The Miraflores Locks are located at the Pacific entrance to the Canal and are the second largest set of locks on the canal. Here we have the chance to watch huge ocean liners transit the Panama Canal (if there are any scheduled during our visit) from two observation decks, offering great photo opportunities. The visitor's center includes a 4-floor museum where guests can learn about its history, operations, markets and future. Of course, don't forget your binoculars; often this is a great place to watch the raptor migration as well! We will return to the Canopy Tower in time to enjoy sunset from the observation deck and a final dinner.

Day 8, Sat, Oct 15 - DEPARTURE

No need to wake up early today. After a leisurely breakfast and some last-minute birding around the Canopy Tower, we will head back to Panama City and catch our return flights home. ***It's best to plan return flights for late morning or early afternoon, but transfers can be arranged for any time to suit your itinerary.***

Itinerary subject to change due to the weather conditions, local information, or the whims of the leader!