

Panama: Canopy Lodge & Canopy Tower
February 20 – Feb 29, 2024

Itinerary:

Day 1: Tue, Feb 20 – Arrival in Panama City

You may arrive anytime today to Panama City's Tocumen Airport (PTY) and transfer to our hotel, which provides a complimentary airport shuttle. Earlier arrivals will have the chance for some optional birding on the hotel grounds. We will have dinner at our hotel and chat about the tour ahead. ***Night in Panama City.***

A) Canopy Lodge: February 21-26

Day 2: Wed, Feb 21 – Transfer to Canopy Lodge

After breakfast at the hotel, we'll disembark to the fabulous Canopy Lodge in El Valle, nestled in the cloud forests of Cerro Gaital Natural Monument. After arriving and getting checked in, we will enjoy a welcome drink and watch the fruit feeders and explore the grounds of this wonderful lodge. Crimson-backed, Blue-gray, White-lined, Flame-rumped, Dusky-faced & Plain-colored Tanagers are common, as are Red-crowned Ant-Tanager, Thick-billed Euphonia, Chestnut-headed Oropendola, Streaked & Buff-throated Saltators, Lineated & Red-crowned Woodpeckers, Red-legged Honeycreepers, Yellow-faced Grassquit, Social Flycatcher, Ruddy Ground Dove, Barred Antshrike, Clay-colored Thrush, Rufous Motmot, Rufous-tailed, Snowy-bellied & Violet-headed Hummingbirds, White-vented Plumeleteer, and Garden Emerald!

Days 3: Thu, Feb 22 - Las Minas Trail, Cara Iguana

Today we will visit a couple of areas in the vicinity of our lodge, firstly at Las Minas, an excellent place to get a wide variety of birds. The road follows the ridge line, with sweeping vistas of forested mountains, speckled with grasslands and small fincas (farms). The views from here are fantastic, as on a clear day near the summit, both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans can be seen! Specialties of the region include Black-and-yellow, Bay-headed & Emerald Tanagers, Tawny-capped Euphonia, Gray-headed Kite, Barred Hawk, Bat Falcon, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, White-tipped Sicklebill, Green Thorntail, Collared (Orange-bellied) & Black-throated Trogons, Wedge-tailed Grass-Finch, Tawny-faced Gnatwren, Plain Antvireo, the endemic Stripe-cheeked Woodpecker, Spotted Woodcreeper, Red-capped & White-ruffed Manakins, Band-rumped Swift and Black Guan have all been recorded here! We get back in time for lunch at the lodge. With a full stomach and some rest, we head to Cariguana Trail, where we enjoy outstanding foothill birding in some of the last remaining examples of quality Dry Pacific Forest. Specialties we hope to find in this bird-rich habitat are Yellow-olive & Panama Flycatchers, Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant, Lance-tailed Manakin, Rufous-breasted & Rufous-and-white Wrens, Rosy Thrush-Tanager, Tody & Whooping Motmots and Long-billed Gnatwren. Hummers to watch for are Garden Emerald, Long-billed Starthroat and White-vented Plumeleteer.

Day 4: Fri, Feb 23 - La Mesa Road; Mata Ahogado

After breakfast, we continue our quest for more lifers with a trip to La Mesa Road. This area, which is a visually pleasing blend of secondary forest, scrubby pastures, overgrown fincas and grassy edges, is home to many of the area's specialties. Here we look for such great birds as Spot-crowned Barbet, Cinnamon Becard, Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, Silver-throated, Golden-hooded, Tawny-crested & Bay-headed Tanagers. Hummingbirds include White-tipped Sicklebill, Rufous-crested Coquette, Crowned Woodnymph, and Black-throated Mango. Also resident are Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Bran-colored Flycatcher, and Orange-bellied (Collared) Trogon. After lunch, we are off to bird the scrubby roadsides of Mata Ahogado. Good birds here are Rosy Thrush-Tanager, Black-headed Saltator, Great Antshrike, White-ruffed Manakin, White-thighed Swallow, White-bellied Antbird, Tody Motmot, and hummers such as Long-billed Starthroat, Rufous-crested Coquette and, when the Inga is in bloom, Snowcap! We will also listen for Purplish-backed Quail-Dove.

Day 5: Sat, Feb 24 – Cerro Gaital; Valle Chiquito

Our morning will be spent at Cerro Gaital, a steep, forested, mist-shrouded mountain that is visible from the lodge! Cerro Gaital (3,500') is the namesake of the Natural Monument, which protects more than 335 hectares of mature cloud forest. This area offers sightings of Black Guan, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Spotted Barbtail, Common Chlorospingus, Black-headed Antthrush, Slaty Antwren, Black-faced Grosbeak, Blue Seedeater, Chestnut-capped Warbler, Pale-vented Thrush, Northern Schiffornis, White-tailed Emerald, Green-crowned Brilliant, and Violet-headed Hummingbird. Scaled Antpitta and Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo have also been recorded here! After lunch we are off to Valle Chiquito. This valley is accessible by a newly paved road and passes through nicely forested woodlands crossed by two rivers. At Rio de Jesus we search for Green Kingfisher and listen for Sepia-capped Flycatcher. We also admire a nice colony of Chestnut-headed Oropendolas in a Cecropia tree. We try for Tody Motmot, Yellow-backed Oriole, White-bellied Antbird, Gray-chested Dove, Yellow-billed Cacique, Black Hawk-Eagle, Lance-tailed Manakin, Panama Flycatcher, Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Little Tinamou, and more. Wrens are abundant here, with Black-bellied, Rufous-and-white, Bay, and Rufous-breasted Wrens all lurking about in the thickets! **Night at Canopy Lodge**

Day 6: Sun, Feb 25 – Altos Del Maria (All Day)

Set in the mountains on the continental divide east of El Valle, the Altos del Maria provides a spectacular addition to the Canopy Lodge birding package. Departing early in the morning from El Valle in comfortable 4x4 sport utility vehicles, we will drive higher into the mountains. Ascending the excellent paved road, we will climb a ridge to our destination for the morning, an expansive area of cloud forest at 1100 meters. Early morning birding will take us along some of the wide, gravel roads in the area where we hope for Snowcap, Brown-billed Scythebill and Black-and-Yellow and Silver-throated Tanagers. We will then walk the roads and search through the woods for additional forest birds, before returning for a picnic lunch at the nature center. Some of our target birds in this region include: Black Guan, Purplish-backed Quail-Dove, Black-crowned Antpitta, and several higher elevation woodcreepers.

B) Canopy Tower: February 26 – 29

Day 7: Mon, Feb 26 – Transfer to Canopy Tower

After a final breakfast at the Canopy Lodge, we drive to the famed Canopy Tower, our base for the next 3 nights. After arriving and getting checked in, there will of course be birding opportunities from the top of the tower, a perfect location from which to observe the birds and other wildlife of the forest canopy. Some of the bird species that we could see from the observation deck are: Green and Red legged Honeycreepers, Green-shrike Vireo, Blue Cotinga, Scaled Pigeon, Mealy and Red lored-Parrots, and Keel-billed Toucan.

One night this week we will go on a night walk, looking and listening for the some of the area's nocturnal creatures. Great Tinamous will be calling around nightfall, and we'll hope to hear Mottled, Black-and-white, and Crested Owls in the vicinity. If we are lucky, we will get to see them as well!

Day 8: Tue, Feb 27 - Semaphore Hill and Ammunition Ponds

Our first excursion from the Tower will be along Semaphore Hill Road. This paved road is little more than a mile long and passes through the forest of Soberanía National Park. Here one can see antbirds and other birds that live within the lowland forest. Olivaceous Flatbill and White-whiskered Puffbird are common, and Slate-colored Grosbeak and Great Jacamar are possible. This road is also great for raptors: White, Tiny and Short-tailed Hawks have been seen, and during migration it's easy to see more than 10 species of warblers in one morning.

After lunch we will head to the Ammunition Dump Pond. This is located just north of Gamboa, on the way to Pipeline Road and is the best place to see the elusive White-throated Crake, as well as a host of other water birds. Least Grebes, Common and Purple Gallinules are common, and Rufescent Tiger-Heron and American Pygmy-Kingfishers are around but are not as easy to find.

Day 9: Wed, Feb 28 - Pipeline Road (All Day)

Pipeline Road is the best place in Central Panama to find forest birds, and plenty of them. Eight species of wrens, five trogons, four puffbirds, three motmots, many antbirds and even more flycatchers have been reported from

the Road. And if its 17 Km are not enough, there's plenty of side trails plus eleven creeks and rivers that can be followed into the forest. Army ant swarms are found frequently, attended sometimes by the very rare Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo, and there are many Manakin leks right beside the road. Pipeline Road is also a great place for raptors: all three Forest-Falcons are heard if not seen with ease, and Tiny and Plumbeous Hawks and Ornate Hawk-Eagles have been reported a few times. The Harpy Eagle release project is working in this area so there's maybe a slim chance of seeing one of these magnificent raptors.

Day 10, Thu, Feb 29 - Departure

After an early breakfast, those participants registered for the Canopy Camp tour (Feb 29-Mar 7, 2023) begin their journey east along the Panamerican Highway for the next adventure. Those participants departing today will be transferred back to the airport in time for their return flights.

*****Itinerary is subject to change depending on weather conditions and the decisions of the guides. Some activities may be substituted or switched around on various days to give us the best chance at finding all our target species.***