

**Spring Texas Highlights – Lower RGV, Hill Country, Big Bend**  
**April 9-19, 2023**  
**Itinerary**

***Please note that this is a linear tour, which begins in Brownsville, TX and ends in Midland, TX.***

**Day 1, Sun Apr 9 – Arrival in Brownsville**

Upon arrival at Brownsville/South Padre Island International Airport (airport code BRO) (please plan to arrive in early PM OR the day prior) we will check in at our hotel. This evening we will look for some of the naturalized Red-crowned Parrots and Green Parakeets in the city at dusk. ***Night in Brownsville***

**Day 2, Mon Apr 10 – Old Port Isabel Rd**

We will spend this morning driving along the Old Port Isabel Road. The open country here is home to one of North America's rarest falcons, the beautiful Aplomado. We will search for this as well as enjoy a great selection of sparrows, shorebirds and other species indicative of open country. We will spend the rest of the morning and afternoon at South Padre Island, where we can expect to find an array of migrating warblers and shorebirds. We will then bird our way west to McAllen, our base for the next few nights. ***Night in McAllen***

**Day 3, Tue Apr 11 – Santa Ana NWR**

The entire day today will be devoted to the outstanding Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge. Here the mosaic of forest, wetland and thorn scrub will produce Green Jay, Plain Chachalaca, Great Kiskadee, Altamira Oriole and many more south Texas specialties. ***Night in McAllen***

**Day 4, Wed April 12 – Rio Grande Valley**

Nearby Estero Llano Grande State Park is one of the best birding spots in the Valley and we spend the morning walking the trails and lagoons of this excellent reserve. Many ducks will still be present, along with Vermilion and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers. Anzalduas County Park is another great spot along the river and some outstanding birds have been recorded here over the past few years. On a recent Venture we watched Tropical Parula and Rose-throated Becard in the same binocular view! ***Night in McAllen***

**Day 5, Thu Apr 13 – Salineno**

We will have an early start this morning as we head west. After a few stops along the Rio Grande at Salineno and Chapeno for Audubon's and Altamira Orioles, Brown Jay and, if we are very lucky, Muscovy Duck. We will then leave the riparian woodlands and head into dry country and spend the majority of the day around Falcon Dam/Falcon State Park before driving to Zapata. Birds of this habitat include Scaled Quail, Greater Roadrunner and Pyrrhuloxia. ***Night in Zapata***

**Day 6, Fri Apr 14 – Hill Country**

We have a few morning stops looking for Morelet's Seedeater before we leave the Rio Grande Valley ecosystems behind. We head north into thorny brushland on our way to the Texas Hill Country, looking for Cave Swallows along the way. Once in the Hill Country, we will spend the remainder of the day searching for the two specialties of the area, Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo. A special treat this evening will be the chance to witness the nightly exodus of millions of Mexican Free-tailed Bats from their roosting cave and a raptor or two taking advantage of this easy meal. ***Night in Leakey / Uvalde***

### **Day 7, Sat Apr 15 – Hill Country cleanup; Drive to Big Bend**

We have all morning to search other spots in the Hill Country for the warbler and vireo if we missed them the previous afternoon. After lunch we head west to the incredible Big Bend National Park, a drive that will take the rest of the day. The towering Chisos Mountains await us, and as we reach the park we will start to climb in elevation and behold the spectacular scenery. Different bird species will start to appear, including Acorn Woodpeckers, Canyon Towhees and Scott's Orioles. ***Night at Big Bend Resort / Chisos Mountain Lodge***

### **Day 8, Sun Apr 16 – Cottonwood Campground**

Today we will head down to the Cottonwood Campground, located along the Rio Grande. Here amongst the mesquites, willows and cottonwoods, we may find Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Summer Tanager, Orchard Oriole, and Lucy's Warbler. We'll have lunch in the Basin area. This evening we will head into the desert and watch it come alive as the sun starts to set. Last time we saw a small herd of Javelina cross the road in front of us and slowly drove the roads looking for rattlesnakes, kangaroo-rats and any nocturnal birds. ***Night at Big Bend Resort / Chisos Mountain Lodge***

### **Day 9, Mon Apr 17 – Chisos Mountains**

Today is the day for our hike up the Boot Canyon Trail. This is the spot for the very localized Colima Warbler, whose breeding range in the US is restricted to the Chisos Mountains. This is a long, although not steep, beautiful, dramatic, and bird-rich hike, and will be one of the highlights of the trip. The entire trail is 11-miles long, but the warbler can usually be seen within the first few miles and those who don't wish to continue may return to the Basin at this point. We will have to carry our water and lunch with us today. Other birds seen today may include Hepatic Tanager, Lucifer and Rufous Hummingbirds, Zone-tailed Hawk, and Band-tailed Pigeon. ***Night at Big Bend Resort / Chisos Mountain Lodge***

### **Day 10, Tue Apr 18 – Big Bend NP**

Today will be our last full day in the park, and after our long day yesterday, we will not be doing any major hikes this morning. We'll enjoy the morning hours birding along the Rio Grande and in the surrounding desert areas, looking for both resident and migrant species at the different springs and wells. We should see Vermilion Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Chat, Varied and Painted Buntings, Inca and Common Ground-Doves, Harris' and Gray Hawks, and Black Phoebe. We will also look at some of the abundant butterflies that Big Bend is so famous for. After lunch we will again hike a short mountain trail from the Basin, or you may relax and explore the lodge area on your own. ***Night at Big Bend Resort / Chisos Mountain Lodge***

### **Day 11, Wed April 19 – Christmas Mountain Oasis; Drive to Midland**

We'll spend our morning just outside the National Park at the fabulous Christmas Mountain Oasis. This is an incredible spot for Lucifer Hummingbird – last year we saw 15 different individuals at this location! This will also give us another chance for things like Varied Bunting, Gambel's Quail, and more. We then drive to Midland, where the tour ends.

***It may be best to plan your return flight from Midland for April 20***