

Guatemala Highlights
March 2-12, 2024
Itinerary

Day 1: Sat, Mar 02 - Arrival in Guatemala City

You may arrive anytime today at La Aurora International Airport (GUA), a three-hour flight (or thereabouts) from most USA gateway cities. Upon arrival you will be transferred to our hotel, a short 10-min drive away, where we will have dinner and a brief orientation about the tour ahead. ***Night at the Clarion Suites Hotel, Guatemala City.***

Day 2: Sun, Mar 03 - Cayala & Cerro Alux Ecological Parks to Antigua

Enjoy breakfast this morning before departing for Cayala, part of Guatemala City's metropolitan green belt, offering 14 acres of natural forests, wildlife, and nature trails. This park is on the eastern edge of the city and has an easy walking trail. Here, 206 species have been recorded, including resident, endemic and migratory birds, making it an excellent introduction to birding in Guatemala. We look for birds like Buffy-crowned Wood Partridge, Blue-and-White Mockingbird, Pacific Parakeet, Bushy-crested Jay, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Melodious Blackbird, Black-capped Swallow, Tufted Flycatcher, and many others. We then continue towards Antigua, a picturesque town renowned for its colorful, Spanish colonial buildings, set amongst volcanoes. ***Night at Posada de Don Rodrigo, Antigua.***

Day 3: Mon, Mar 04 - El Pilar to Los Tarrales

Early morning birding at Finca El Pilar, a private farm located just below 6,000 ft. which features a wonderful display of hummingbird feeders. Many regional endemics can be observed at this location, such as Blue-throated Motmot, Green-throated Mountain-Gem, Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo, Highland Guan, Rufous Sabrewing, and many more. We will then depart in late afternoon and transfer to Los Tarrales. Dinner is at the lodge tonight and we may go out to listen for owls and nightjars. ***Night at Los Tarrales.***

Day 4: Tue, Mar 05 - Full Day at Tarrales / Horned Guan hike

Los Tarrales Reserve is located on the southeastern slope of Atitlan Volcano, in the heart of the Pacific foothills, at 2,300 ft. Its location offers good access to both lowland and highland habitats and therefore a fantastic diversity of birds. Today, those willing participants will be hiking up Atitlan Volcano with the hope of finding the exceptional Horned Guan, a strenuous hike that could take all day. Those seeking a more relaxed pace can enjoy this delightful lodge and its easier trails, and nearby coffee plantation and village, with chances to watch Blue-tailed Hummingbird, Long-billed Starthroat, White-bellied Chachalaca, Turquoise-browed Motmot, Spot-breasted Oriole, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Barred Antshrike, Roadside Hawk, and other species. ***Night at Los Tarrales.***

Day 5: Wed, Mar 06 - Los Tarrales to Lake Atitlan

After more birding around Los Tarrales looking for anything we may have missed, we leave after mid-day, continuing on to the shores of Lake Atitlán, the third largest freshwater lake in Guatemala. It is surrounded by three volcanoes - Atitlán (3,537 m), Tolimán (3,158 m) and San Pedro (2,995 m), which composes quite the panorama around the highland lake. En route we may stop along the lakeshore, where some of the gardens have held Slender Sheartail in past years. ***Night at El Bambu, Santiago Atitlan.***

Day 6: Thu, Mar 07 - Birding Mirador Rey Tepepul

Today finds us birding the slopes of Atitlan Volcano at nearby national park called Mirador del Rey Tepepul. Here we hope to observe the stunning and iconic Resplendent Quetzal, but also the highly sought-after endemic Azure-rumped Tanager, as well as Blue-crowned Chlorophonia, Barred Parakeet, Chestnut-capped Brush-finch, Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer and so many more. After lunch, we bird locally near the lodge. ***Night at El Bambu, Santiago Atitlan.***

Day 7: Fri, Mar 08 - Pink-headed Warbler at Tecpan; back to Guatemala City

After breakfast, we head to the Tecpan Area, one of the many Important Bird Areas of Guatemala with high regional endemism. We will hope to find, Amethyst-throated Mountain-Gem, Mountain Trogon, Blue-throated Motmot, Spotted & Spot-crowned Woodcreeper, the endemic race of Steller's Jay, Black-throated Jay, Black-capped Swallow, Gray Silky-flycatcher, Blue-and-white-Mockingbird, Crescent-chested & Red-faced Warblers, Yellow-eyed (Guatemalan) Junco, Elegant Euphonia, Hooded Grosbeak, and last but not least, the incomparable Pink-headed Warbler. After a few hours birding this fabulous area, we will continue our journey to Guatemala City. ***Night at Clarion Suites Hotel, Guatemala City.***

Day 8: Sat, Mar 09 – To Tikal

Morning transfer to Guatemala City airport on time to catch the 45-minute flight to Flores (FRS). Upon arrival we transfer towards the beautiful Yaxha, a Mayan site. Yaxha was allied with Tikal, and has its own imposing pyramids and plazas, all inter-connected with causeways. We can scan from the top of the temple for flyby parrots, with flocks of Red-lored, White-fronted, and White-crowned Parrots possible. Mealy Parrots and raptors like Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Black Hawk-Eagle, Plumbeous Kite, are regularly seen here as well. We then continue to lunch and then to Tikal National Park for the night. ***Night at Jungle Lodge, Tikal.***

Day 9: Sun, Mar 10 - Tikal National Park

This day will be a day of wandering through the jungle among the famous ruins. Tikal is located within the Maya Biosphere Reserve and it contains some of the best examples of the Classic Mayan Architecture. With towering pyramids that reach above 70 meters (240 ft.), Tikal is one of the few UNESCO World Heritage Sites that is recognized both for its historical heritage and its natural protected setting. While walking through the jungle, visiting the different plazas with pyramids and palaces, birds like Ocellated Turkey, Bat & Orange breasted Falcons, Keel-billed Toucan, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, Chestnut-colored and Pale-billed Woodpeckers, Montezuma Oropendola, Red-capped and White-collared Manakin, King Vulture, Black Catbird, and White-bellied Wren may be observed. We should hear Howler Monkeys at night from our cabins at the Jungle Lodge, and we'll enjoy sightings of Spider Monkeys and Coati mundis! ***Night at Jungle Lodge, Tikal.***

Day 10: Mon, Mar 11 - Tikal to Guatemala City

Early morning breakfast at the hotel, then off to explore the ruins of Tikal to cover more of the forest and to seek out species not seen before. The archeological zone of Tikal is large, magnificent, and worthy of additional exploration. Our flight back to Guatemala City is this afternoon, and we'll have time to rest up and tally our final bird lists before our flights home the following day. ***Night at Clarion Suites Hotel, Guatemala City.***

Day 11: Tue, Mar 12 - Departure

Today we bid adios to Guatemala! Depart at your convenience this morning from La Aurora International airport (GUA).