

Panama: Canopy Lodge & Canopy Tower
February 21 – March 1, 2023

Itinerary:

Please plan to arrive in Panama City anytime on February 20. We are staying at the Crowne Plaza very close to the airport. Hotel and dinner are not included in the tour cost.

A) Canopy Lodge: February 21-26

Day 1, Tue, 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 2-3, Wed, Feb 22 - Las Minas Trail, Cariguana, La Mesa & Mata Ahogado

The next few days we will visit a number 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, 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 24 - El Valle de Antón, Cerro Gaital Trail

Today we will wake up early and go birding on the trails and roadside near the lodge. Birding is excellent and plentiful so this should give us a perfect introduction to the valley birds. Well stocked feeders attract a wide variety of tanagers and euphonias, as well as wintering species from the north. Specialties of the nearby forests include Gray-headed Kite, White-tailed Emerald, Emerald Toucanet, Orange-bellied Trogon, Rufous-capped Warbler, Tawny-capped Euphonia, Common Bush-Tanager, and Black-faced Grosbeak. Green and Little Hermits feed on the roadside flowers, and noisy flocks of Tawny-crested and Dusky-faced Tanagers make themselves very obvious when they are passing through the undergrowth. In the afternoon we'll head to a nearby patch of dry forest looking for Lance-tailed Manakin and Rosy Thrush-Tanager, both hard to see and localized species.

Day 5, Sat, 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 – March 1

Day 6, Sun, Feb 26 – Transfer to Canopy Lodge

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 7, Mon, 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 8, Tue, 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 9, Wed, Mar 1 - Departure

After breakfast at the Tower, we board our van and head back to Panama City for our flights home.

**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.