

New Mexico: Bosque del Apache: Las Vegas & Sandia Mountains January 15-22, 2023

Because of the uncertainties of travel during the winter, please plan to arrive on arrive in Albuquerque by the evening of January 14. We will be staying at the Holiday Inn and Suites at the Albuquerque Airport.

Day 1 (Sunday, Jan 15) Albuquerque

After breakfast we will head to Rio Grande Nature Center – one of the best birding spots in the Albuquerque area. Here we should see some good waterfowl, including Cackling Goose, Canvasback and Wood Duck. If there are any rarities in town we will look for them before starting to drive south. Other stops could other locales in the valley and Belen Marsh before we bird our way south to the small town of Socorro, just north of Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. Just before dusk, we will drive to the refuge to witness the spectacular "fly in" of thousands of Sandhill Cranes and Snow Geese.

Night in Socorro

Day 2 (Monday, Jan 16) Rio Grande Valley

Sparrows can be abundant in the brushy habitats along the backroads to the refuge. We will slowly make our way south and see species such as White-crowned, and Brewer's Sparrows, Pyrrhuloxia and Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay. Many of the cranes and geese will now be feeding in the fields, so we will spend the whole day at Bosque, driving both the loop roads and enjoying the nature spectacle around us. Bald Eagles, Gambel's Quail and Spotted Towhee will also be part of the supporting cast. *Night in Socorro*

Day 3 (Tuesday, Jan 17) Elephant Butte State Park

A morning hike takes us to Water Canyon at an elevation of 7000'. Here we stand a good chance of finding Pygmy Nuthatch, Steller's and Pinyon Jay, Bushtit, and Western Bluebird. There will probably be snow on the ground, but the bracing conditions and views over the high desert make for a beautiful morning. We will then head south to Elephant Butte Lake State Park. Neotropic Cormorants and a variety of ducks are here in good numbers and there is always the possibility of finding a late American White Pelican or an unusual over wintering gull. We will spend the remainder of the day exploring the desert habitats in the Rio Grande Valley. *Night in Socorro*

Day 4 (Wednesday, Jan 18) Santa Fe

This morning we will slowly wend our way north, stopping in Santa Fe for lunch. We will enjoy a couple of hours in this beautiful city (for some culture!) before we drive north towards Las Vegas, NM. We will also visit several hotspots in the area, including Pecos National Historic Park, a Spanish mission first built in 1540 and subsequently rebuilt. Here we hope to run into a flock of Pinyon Jays, as well as Bushtit, Common Raven and various races of Dark-eyed Junco. *Night in Las Vegas*

Day 5 (Thursday, Jan 19)

The morning will be spent exploring Las Vegas National Wildlife Refuge. Here we should get waterfowl, such as Common Goldeneye and Common Merganser; raptors, such as Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawk, Prairie Falcon and Golden Eagle; and wintering sparrows, including American Tree. There is always the outside possibility of finding a roosting Long-eared Owl. In the afternoon we will drive up one of the forested valleys looking for American Dipper. *Night in Las Vegas*

Day 5 (Friday, Jan 20)

Today we begin to drive back south to return to Albuquerque through the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, where we may have time to visit local birding areas, such as Petroglyphs National Monument and riparian areas along the Rio Grande River. *Night in Albuquerque*

Day 6 (Saturday, Jan 21)

This morning we head high into the Sandia Mountains on our quest for Rosy-finches. The road to the Sandia Crest is kept open all winter, rising to an elevation of 10,000 feet. Several bird feeders are kept well stocked and we should be able to see the Rosy-finches as they come to feed. This is sub-alpine spruce-fir habitat and other species that are possible are Evening Grosbeak, Cassin's Finch, Pine Siskin, and perhaps, Clark's Nutcracker. *Night in Albuquerque*

Day 7 (Sunday, Jan 22)

Depending on what times our flights leave, we may be able to do some more birding in the local area.