



Southeast Arizona

Exploring the Sky Islands

Tour Leader: Eric Ripma
August 5-13, 2023

Southeast Arizona is well-known as the hummingbird capital of the United States, but many people forget about all the other amazing bird species of the area. Join us as we explore the “Sky Islands” of Arizona from Tucson to Portal and everywhere in between!

Itinerary Overview:

August 5: Arrival and transfer to hotel in Tucson

August 6: Morning birding in Tucson and transfer to Portal

August 7: Full day birding in the Chiricahua Mountains

August 8: Morning birding near Portal and transfer to Sierra Vista

August 9: Full day birding in the Huachuca Mountains

August 10: Morning birding around Sierra Vista and transfer to Tubac

August 11: Full day birding the Santa Rita Mountains

August 12: Morning birding the Santa Cruz River and late afternoon in the Catalina Mountains

August 13: Departure from Tucson

Detailed Itinerary:

August 5: Arrival and transfer to hotel in Tucson

Upon arrival in Tucson, your leader will meet you at the airport. We'll do some birding on the east side of Tucson if time permits as the group arrives. Highlights may include all the common desert species including Rufous-winged Sparrow, Harris's Hawk, Black-throated Sparrow, Curve-billed Thrasher, Pyrrhuloxia, White-winged Dove, and Black-tailed Gnatcatcher. We may also drive to higher elevations where species such as Mexican Jay, Painted Redstart, Red-faced Warbler and many others are possible.

-Overnight: Tucson, Arizona

August 6: Morning birding in Tucson and transfer to Portal

We'll spend the morning birding in and around Tucson. Depending on the species we see on the first evening, we'll decide which elevations will be best to visit. Most likely we'll bird along a riparian zone where species such as Abert's Towhee, Bewick's Wren, Gray Hawk, Broad-billed Hummingbird, Summer Tanager, and Northern Beardless Tyrannulet are possible. We'll also make a stop at Sweetwater Wetlands where we'll look for an assortment of waterfowl, shorebirds, and Tropical Kingbird. From here, we'll leave Tucson and head towards Portal. We'll make a stop at Wilcox to search for shorebirds, waterfowl, Scaled Quail, and more.

-Overnight: Portal, Arizona

August 7: Full day birding in the Chiricahua Mountains

Our day will begin in the deserts around Portal. Highlights could include Crissal and Bendire's

Thrashers, as well as other common desert birds. Our next stop will be at the South Fork of Cave Creek Canyon where we'll search for Elegant Trogon, Arizona Woodpecker, Painted Redstart, Hepatic Tanager, and others. After lunch in Portal, we'll drive higher up into the Chiricahuas to Barfoot and Rustler Park. Here we'll look for Mexican Chickadee, Western Bluebird, Red Crossbill, Olive and Red-faced Warblers, Yellow-eyed Junco, and other high elevation species. After dinner, we'll head back out in search of owls such as Western and Whiskered Screech-Owls, Elf Owl, as well as Mexican Whip-poor-will and Common Poorwill.

-Overnight: Portal, Arizona

August 8: Morning birding near Portal and transfer to Sierra Vista

On our final day in the Chiricahuas, we'll work to find any species that we might have missed in the area so far. We will also bird along the road to Paradise, looking for Black-chinned Sparrow and Juniper Titmouse. On the way to Sierra Vista, we'll make another stop at Wilcox as the site has an incredibly high rate of turnover - you just never know what you might find! We will also make a stop to look for breeding Mississippi Kites.

-Overnight: Sierra Vista, Arizona



Painted Redstart

August 9: Full day birding in the Huachuca Mountains

Today we'll be birding in the beautiful Huachuca Mountains. We will start at one of the best high-elevation locations in southeast Arizona, Carr Canyon. Here we hope to see many species of warblers, Buff-breasted Flycatcher, Zone-tailed Hawk, and much more. In the afternoon, we'll drive to Miller Canyon which is located in the mid-elevations of the Huachucas. After spending some time watching the feeders, we may hike up the canyon in search of Spotted Owl. If time permits, we will spend time birding some grasslands south of Sierra Vista for Botteri's and Cassin's Sparrows.

-Overnight: Sierra Vista, Arizona

August 10: Morning birding around Sierra Vista and transfer to Tubac

Our final morning in Sierra Vista will be spent looking for any of our targets that we may have missed the day before. There is a good chance we will visit Hunter Canyon in the early morning where we could see species such as Rufous-capped Warbler, Scott's Oriole, Black-chinned Sparrow, and Northern Pygmy-Owl. We will then be off in the direction of Green Valley and Florida Canyon. On our drive west, we'll stop at a couple of birding spots in and around Patagonia.

-Overnight: Tubac, Arizona

August 11: Full day birding the Santa Rita Mountains

Today we'll spend the day in the beautifully rugged Santa Rita Mountains where possible specialties are Five-striped Sparrow, Varied Bunting, and Black-capped Gnatcatcher. These species will bring us to Box Canyon early in the morning with a late morning stop at Florida Canyon. Depending on current locations for Buff-collared Nightjars, we may spend some time in the afternoon and evening in other areas.

-Overnight: Tubac, Arizona



Five-striped Sparrow

August 12: Morning birding the Santa Cruz River and late afternoon in the Catalina Mountains

On our final full day of the tour, the morning will be spent birding along the Santa Cruz River where we'll look for Rose-throated Becards among many other riparian species. In the afternoon and evening, we'll drive back to Tucson and possibly bird around the Catalina Mountains for any species we may have missed thus far.

-Overnight: Tucson, Arizona

August 13: Departure from Tucson

Trip Details:

Cost:

Price per person (double occupancy), from Tucson, Arizona: \$3,399

Single Supplement: \$600

Minimum Participants: 4

Maximum Participants: 6

Price Includes:

Expert Guide

Ground Transportation in Arizona

All Lodging

All Meals

Park Entrance Fees

Price Does Not Include:

Airfare to and from Tucson, Arizona

Visa and Passport Fees (if applicable)

Alcoholic Beverages

Personal Items

Travel Insurance

Tips

Deposit:

A deposit of \$500 per person is required to hold your spot on this tour. The remaining balance is due no later than 3 months prior to the scheduled start date of the tour (May 5, 2023).

If you have any questions about this tour or would like to sign up for it, please contact us at info@sabrewingnaturetours.com, by phone at 317-324-8505, or register through our website at sabrewingnaturetours.com.

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