Although many people have been to central Panama, the western part of the country is much less visited. This tour will take you to the incredible Tranquilo Bay Eco Adventure Lodge for a laid-back tour that will be full of birds, mammals, and reptiles. Much of our transport and birding will be by boat where we will visit islands and other properties that are inaccessible otherwise. We will also spend a day visiting higher elevations on the mainland where there are many regional endemics. This tour is a great mix of birding and relaxation!

**Itinerary Overview:**

**February 10: Arrival and Transfer to Hotel in Panama City**

**February 11: Morning Flight to Tranquilo Bay and Birding on the Property**

**February 12: Fortuna Forest Reserve**

**February 13: Isla Popa and Tranquilo Bay**

**February 14: Changuinola River Valley**

**February 15: Finca de Cocoa “Chocolate Farm” and Tranquilo Bay**

**February 16: San San Pond and Sak Wetland**

**February 17: Tranquilo Bay**

**February 18: Transfer to Panama City and Panama Canal Tour**

**February 19: Departure from Panama City**

**Detailed Itinerary:**

**February 10: Arrival and Transfer to Hotel in Panama City**

Welcome to Panama! You will be met at the airport and then driven to our hotel for the evening. We will have time to relax at the hotel before a welcome dinner. We have an early flight on day two, so we will want to get plenty of rest.

- **Overnight: Panama City, Panama**

**February 11: Morning Flight to Tranquilo Bay and Birding on the Property**

We’ll depart the hotel very early this morning in order to catch our flight to Bocas del Toro. Upon arrival in the islands, a representative from Tranquilo Bay will be waiting to transfer us to the lodge by boat.

Tranquilo Bay Eco Adventure Lodge is strategically located in the epicenter of national parks and protected reserves. This advantageous geographic position enables an efficient use of the archipelago’s protected waters to reach otherwise inaccessible wildlife areas on the mainland and islands by boat. The lodge sits on 200-forested acres covering three distinct ecosystems, adjacent to Bastimentos Island National Marine Park, within the La Amistad UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The main lodge’s veranda, private cabanas, and canopy observation tower provide elevated decks for a birds-eye view.
of the extraordinary wildlife found here. Several kilometers of hiking trails, in addition to the lodge's
grounds, often provide encounters with Two-toed and Three-toed Sloths, White-faced Capuchin,
Panamanian Night Monkeys, Nine-banded Armadillo, Spectacled Caiman, Central American Woolly
Opossum, Grey Four-eyed Opossum, Northern Tamandua, Greater White-lined Bats, Three-wattled
Bellbird, Golden-collard Manakin (several leks), and hummingbird bathing pools.

The islands of Bocas del Toro are often called the
“Galapagos of the Caribbean” due to endemism and
species' differentiation. Each of the archipelago's is-
lands, in addition to various points on the mainland,
contain different morphs of the Strawberry poison
dart frog species *Oophaga pumilo* which are heavily
studied for their geographic variation. Panama’s only
known population of Stub-tailed Spadebill is found on
the islands of Bocas and does not occur on the main-
land. There is so much to see and do here that you’re
going to have trouble leaving.

We’ll spend the rest of the day exploring this wonder-
ful property. Our day will end watching the sunset over
the islands before enjoying drinks, appetizers, and a
fantastic dinner.

- Overnight: Tranquilo Bay

February 12: Fortuna Forest Reserve

The Continental Divide of the Talamanca Range, between the provinces of Bocas del Toro and
Chiriqui, is one of Panama's premier birding and wilderness areas. Today we will focus on the area
known as Umbrellabird Road, between the Continental Divide and north of Fortuna Reservoir.

Fortuna Forest Reserve, established in 1976, is a species-rich area and part of BirdLife International
Endemic Bird Area Costa Rica and Panama Highlands, EBA 020. The distinct avifauna in this glob-
ally important area include many regional endemics and restricted range species. Our visit here is
sure to produce some outstanding birds with opportunities to see Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush,
Red-faced Spinetail, Ashy-throated Chlorospingus, Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Black and Crest-
ed Guans, Blue-and-Gold Tanager, Black-thighed and Black-faced Grosbeaks, and Golden-winged
Warbler to mention a few.

We will enjoy a picnic lunch while overlooking the beautiful vistas of Lake Fortuna. Typical species
highlights might include: Azure-hooded Jay; Sulphur-winged and Barred Parakeets; Bay-headed,
Rufous-winged, Flame-colored, White-winged, Carmiol’s, Scarlet-rumped, Hepatic, and Span-
gled-cheeked Tanagers, Slate-throated Redstart, Tropical Parula, Blue-and-white Swallow, Ruous-

*Montezuma Oropendola*

Several raptors are possible including Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Barred Hawk, Great Black-Hawk, and Swallow-tailed Kite. More possibilities worth mentioning include Northern Emerald-Toucanet; Red-headed and Prong-billed Barbets; White-crowned and White-ruffed Manakins; Broad-billed Motmot; Green Thorntail, Snowy-bellied, Stripe-tailed, and Black-bellied Hummingbirds, and Rufous-crested Coquette. The strange Tayra, a weasel like Neotropical mammal with wrinkled facial skin, has been spotted in this area.

A relaxing boat ride back to the lodge might produce Brown Boobies, Black and Royal Terns, Willet, Mangrove Swallow, and Bottlenose Dolphins among others. We will arrive at the lodge in the early evening where we can discuss our lists and share the day’s best photos over appetizers and drinks on the veranda followed by a tasty dinner.

*Overnight: Tranquilo Bay*

**February 13: Isla Popa and Tranquilo Bay**

Each of the islands in the Bocas del Toro archipelago has interesting wildlife and high levels of endemism, however, Isla Popa the second largest island in the chain, has more species of birds and mammals due to its close proximity to the mainland. A leisurely boat ride of about two kilometers will bring us to a dense gallery forest surrounded by the rich mangrove lagoons of nearby Isla Popa. We will bird watch in this phenomenal area by boat; peacefully enjoying flights of Keel-billed and Yellow-throated Toucans, Crimson-fronted Parakeets, Brown-hooded Parrots, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Golden-hooded Tanager, Plumbeous and Swallow-tailed Kites, Pale-billed and Lineated Woodpeckers, Mangrove Cuckoo, American Pygmy Kingfisher, and hopefully Snowy Cotinga. This mangrove lagoon has some beautiful Turtle Sea Grass where we can have good looks at sponges, starfish, urchins, and upside-down Jellyfish.

We’ll return to Tranquilo Bay for lunch. After a siesta, we will spend the afternoon birding around Tranquilo Bay.

*Overnight: Tranquillo Bay*
February 14: Changuinola River Valley

After coffee, fresh tropical juices and a complete Panamanian breakfast, we will leave the dock at 6:00AM for a comfortable sunrise boat ride to La Escapada, a beautiful hobby farm on the mainland. The early birding here on site at this farm can be fantastic. As we pass down the dock, through the mature mangrove forest, Common Potoo, Green and Boat-billed Herons, and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron might be seen. Birding an edge of forest just past the mangroves will hopefully produce Lovely Cotinga, Long-tailed Tyrant, Scarlet-thighed and Blue Dacnis, Brown Jays, Gartered Trogon, and several species of raptors.

From La Escapada our van will take us along the foothills stretching the coastline in one of Central America’s narrowest migratory bottlenecks. This area is important for a diverse group of resident Neotropical raptors such as: Black Hawk-Eagle; White-tailed, Grey-headed, and Hook-billed Kites; White and Red-tailed Hawks; and the mighty King Vulture. We will enjoy a picnic lunch at an amazing overlook in the Caribbean foothills. This beautiful vista of the low wet forest in the San San Pond Sak Wetlands will give us an excellent opportunity to scan the canopy for Lovely and Snowy Cottingas, as well as soaring raptors. We will take several side-roads today that branch out into indigenous villages where the Ngäbe practice sustenance farming along the Changuinola River. Here along forested edge, cocoa farms and patches of gallery forest we will search for Scarlet-rumped Cacique; Black-faced Grosbeak; Chestnut-colored, Rufous-winged, and Crimson-bellied Woodpeckers; Rufous-tailed Jacamar; Blue Ground-Dove; Northern Bentbill; Great Antshrike; Rufous and Broad-billed Motmots; and the rare Yellow-eared Toucanet. A short boat ride through “Dark Land” and “Dolphin Bay” will bring us back to the lodge in the early evening.

Overnight: Tranquillo Bay

February 15: Finca de Cocoa “Chocolate Farm” and Tranquilo Bay

After birding from the lodge’s terrace with Panamanian coffee and a casual breakfast a little later than usual, we will take a calm 20-minute boat ride through Dolphin Bay to Buena Esperanza. The collection of tropical flora found at this location represents the best plants and therefore, butterflies in the archipelago. A superb water garden and natural creek running through the property also attract many species of mammals, reptiles, and multi-colored amphibians. The psychedelic green and black poison dart frogs, *Dendrobates auratus*, can be prolific with sufficient moisture. The landowners, who live onsite, protect this beautiful piece of mainland forest, by using the property to operate an artisanal chocolate farm. Cacao trees, grown to produce organic chocolate, thrive under the shade of the forest canopy. Under this stunning canopy we will be searching for Slaty-tailed, White-tailed, and Gartered Trogons, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Black-chested Jay, Pale-billed Woodpecker, Pied Puffbird,
Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant, Montezuma and Chestnut-headed Oropendolas, Keel-billed and Yellow-throated Toucans, Cocoa Woodcreeper, and many more species. Mammal sightings might include Bottle-nosed Dolphin, Mantled Howler Monkey, Three-toed and Two-toed sloths, squirrels, and Greater White-lined Bats. After returning to Tranquilo Bay for lunch and a hammock siesta, birding excursions to the canopy observation tower, forest trail system, and hummingbird bathing station will be available options.

-Overnight: Tranquillo Bay

**February 16: San San Pond and Sak Wetland**

Today will be a tranquil day of “birding by boat” within several lush, coastal, wetland habitats. San San Pond Sak Wetlands is a designated Ramsar site, as well as, part of the La Amistad UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The area is rich with abundant habitats including Atlantic wet lowland forest, Raphia palm swamp, fresh water river course, ocean impact beachfront, and mangroves. Access to this verdant wildlife area will be via boat through the historic Snyder Canal, as birds conveniently fly through the gallery forest back and forth across the waterway. After the Snyder Brothers finished construction in the late 1890s, the canal was used to transport bananas from the Changuinola River Valley, to the protected waters of Almirante Bay at Boca del Drago, where they were loaded onto transport ships. Panama’s first canal was vital in establishing The United Fruit Company, and the very beginnings of what would become, “The Banana Republic”.

This is an excellent place to find many lowland bird species, northern and altitudinal migrants, raptors, and shorebirds. All six species of kingfishers known to the Americas can be found here and we will be watching closely for regional endemics like the diminutively distributed Nicaraguan Seed-Finch, White-collar Manakin (Almirante race), Olive-backed Euphonia, Black-cowled Oriole, Cane-brake Wren, and Three-wattled Bellbird. Also possible are Masked Duck, Common Gallinule, Least Bittern, Pied-billed Grebe, Great Potoo, Northern Jacana, and Bare-throated Tiger-Heron. Raptor sightings might include Yellow-headed Caracara; Bat, Laughing, and Peregrine Falcons; Osprey; and Pearl Kite. From the high branches of fruiting trees down to the grassy and shrubby edge, we might find Flame-rumped and Golden-hooded Tanagers, Olive-crowned Yellowthroat, Red-breasted Meadowlark, Buff-throated Saltator, Groove-billed Ani, Squirrel Cuckoo, chatters of Olive-throated Parakeets, Streaked and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, and the tiny Common, Black-headed and Slate-headed Tody-Flycatchers.

With any luck, mammal sightings might produce Mantled Howler Monkey, Crab-eating Raccoon, White-nosed Coati, Neotropical River Otter, West Indian Manatee and Bottlenose Dolphin. Soropta Beach, important for migrating and resident shorebirds, is also a nesting ground for Leatherback and Hawksbill sea turtles, in addition to Green Iguanas, Basilisk Lizards, Common Boa Constrictor, Spectacled Caiman, and American Crocodile. Here on the beach, we will enjoy a picnic lunch with fresh sea breeze and shorebirds. This vibrant river mouth and beachfront might produce Parasitic and Pomarine Jaegers; Wilson’s, Collared, and Semipalmated Plovers; Ruddy Turnstones; Sanderlings; Least, Pectoral and Semipalmated Sandpipers; Common and Lesser Nighthawks; Lesser and Greater
Yellowlegs; four species of tern; and Roseate Spoonbill. In the afternoon, sea conditions permitting, we will pass just two miles offshore to a breathtaking rookery and reserve known as Swan’s Caye, for beautiful close-up looks at Panama’s only known breeding colony of Red-billed Tropicbirds, as well as, Brown Boobies and Magnificent Frigatebirds. We will return to the lodge in the late afternoon.

**February 17: Tranquilo Bay**

Today after enjoying some early morning birds from the canopy observation tower or the lodge’s veranda, we will have a casual breakfast including highland coffee and fresh tropical fruit juices. Following our full breakfast, we will enter the forest trail in search of Chestnut-backed Antbird, White-flanked and Dot-winged Antwrens, Black-crowned Antshrike, Red-throated Ant-Tanager, Tawny-crested Tanager, Rufescent Tiger-Heron, and the geographically misplaced Stub-tailed Spadebill. After a short hike we will arrive at Pineapple Hill, a small elevated clearing at the forest’s edge, which is an important forage area for a multitude of Neotropical and migratory species.

This is an excellent place to get good looks at feeding birds like Golden-collared and Red-capped Manakins; three species of honeycreepers; Passerini’s, Scarlet, White-lined, and Summer Tanagers; Baltimore Oriole; Band-tailed Barbirhroat; Green-breasted Mango; White-necked Jacobin, Purple-crowned Fairy; Scaled Pigeon; Double-toothed Kite; Roadside Hawk; and the hard to see White-throated Crake. Once we are ready to move on, another forest trail will take us to a Golden-collared Manakin lek. During the mating season, from about December-August, active courts in each lek should have displaying males. Further along this trail will bring us to an area of high forest canopy, where Three-wattled Bellbirds like to spend midday. When the sun is a little strong, this canopy specialist likes to perch underneath the leaves in the cooler shade, presenting a nice opportunity with less backlighting for the photo enthusiast. On the way back to the lodge, to enjoy a homemade lunch in comfort, we will search the forest floor for the famous Isla Bastimentos Strawberry poison-dart frog. This morph of Oophaga pumilio, is studied onsite by the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute who are researching its evolutionary traits.

After a short siesta, we can focus our efforts in the mangrove forest looking for several species of herons, Green Ibis, Common Black Hawk, all six kingfishers known to the Americas, Mangrove Cuckoo, Whimbrel, Willet, Prothonotary Warbler, and the resident Yellow Warbler or “Mangrove Warbler” whose males exhibit a stunning rufous hood. In the evening we will climb the canopy tower to watch from a bird’s-eye view, the pandemonium of Red-lored and Mealy Parrots paired up and returning home, as groups of chattering Blue-headed Parrots join in the chorus. Some previous guests have dubbed these daily flights “The Invasion of Tranquilo Bay.” We will also have a good chance of up-
close looks at White-crowned and Scaled Pigeons; Black-crowned and Masked Tityras; Lineated and Black-cheeked Woodpeckers; Blue-gray, Palm, and Plain-colored Tanagers; White-vented Euphonia; and scores of flycatchers. Once we watch the beautiful tropical sun set over the Talamanca Range, we can walk back to the lodge for hard earned drinks, appetizers, and a delicious meal.

*Overnight: Tranquillo Bay*

**February 18: Transfer to Panama City and Panama Canal Visit**

We will return to Panama City around midday and spend the afternoon sightseeing. Our first stop will be the Panama Canal where we can enjoy their wonderful museum and then watch as ships pass though the locks. We’ll make a few other stops around Panama City as time allows before checking in at the Riande Aeropuerto Hotel. Once everyone is settled in, we’ll have a farewell dinner at the hotel.

*Overnight: Riande Aeropuerto Hotel*

**February 19: Departure from Panama City**
Trip Details:

Cost:
Price per person (double occupancy), from Panama City, Panama: $4,399
Single Supplement: $650

Price Includes:
- 2 Expert Guides
- Ground Transportation in Panama
- Flights within Panama
- All Lodging
- All Meals
- Park Entrance Fees

Price Does Not Include:
- Airfare to and from Panama City, Panama
- Airport Taxes
- Passport and Visa Fees
- 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 (November 12, 2023).

If you have 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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