Panama
Canopy Camp, Tower, and Lodge

Tour Leaders: Rob Ripma, Melissa Fratello, and Local Guide
October 21 - November 3, 2024
Panama offers some of the most exciting birding in all of North America. Our tour will take us first to the incredible Canopy Camp in the Darién. This is one of the least explored parts of Central America and the birding is fantastic. Then, we’ll move on to the extremely unique Canopy Tower, a former US Air Force radar tower in the midst of Soberanía National Park. This area has a huge diversity of species and many new birds. We’ll end the trip in El Valle at the Canopy Lodge about two hours west of the Panama Canal. This is the highest elevation we will visit on the tour and we will spend our time looking for all the special species that call this area home.

**Itinerary Overview:**

October 21: Arrival in Panama City, Panama and Transfer to Airport Hotel
October 22: Transfer to Canopy Camp with Birding Stops
October 23: Canopy Camp Grounds and Pan American Highway
October 24: El Salto Road and Tierra Nueva Foundation
October 25: Harpy Eagle Quest
October 26: San Francisco Reserve and Transfer to Canopy Tower
October 27: Observation Deck, Semaphore Hill Road, and Ammo Dump Ponds
October 28: Pipeline Road Entrance and Summit Gardens
October 29: Pipeline Road (Full Day)
October 30: Canopy Tower and Transfer to Canopy Lodge
October 31: Las Minas and Cara Iguana
November 1: La Mesa Road and Mata Ahogado
November 2: Full Day in the Pacific Lowlands
November 3: Transfer to Panama City for Flights Home

* This is a general itinerary, our day-by-day schedule (outside of travel days) can change based on local conditions and bird reports.

**Detailed Itinerary:**

October 21: Arrival in Panama City, Panama, and Transfer to Airport Hotel

Upon arrival, you can catch the hotel shuttle from the airport to our hotel. We will gather for a welcome dinner and have time to relax before our early start tomorrow.

*Overnight: Riande Aeropuerto Hotel or Crowne Plaza*

October 22: Transfer to Canopy Camp with Birding Stops

After an early breakfast at our hotel, we will depart for Canopy Camp Darien! The journey is approximately 4 hours, but we will make stops along the way in exciting birding areas. As we drive east along
the Pan-American Highway, we will scan for roadside birds and open-field raptors including Savanna Hawk and Crested Caracara. Our first scheduled stop will be at the bridge at Bayano Lake, a great opportunity to stretch our legs and see what is present along the lakeside. This reservoir supports large numbers of water birds, including a colony of Neotropic Cormorants, as well as Anhinga, Cocoi Heron, and Bare-throated Tiger-Heron. We will scan the water’s edge for Purple Gallinule, Pied Water-Tyrant, Smooth-billed Ani, and Ruddy-breasted Seedeater. A short trail leading from the water’s edge is a great place to search for Black Antshrike, Bare-crowned Antbird, Rufous-winged Antwren, and Golden-collared Manakin.

At another great stop along the way, Río Mono Bridge, the surrounding forest is home to One-colored Becard, Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Blue Cotinga, Pied Puffbird, Orange-crowned Oriole, Blue Ground Dove, and more. We will also scan the river below for Green-and-rufous Kingfisher and the elusive Fasciated Tiger-Heron. While enjoying a lovely Panamanian lunch, the hummingbirds at the feeders will no doubt capture our attention, as Long-billed Starthroat, Sapphire-throated Hummingbird, Scaly-breasted Hummingbird, Black-throated Mango, and more take their lunch as well—great hummingbird photo opportunities abound here!

After a delicious lunch, we will continue east along the Pan-American Highway to Canopy Camp. We plan to arrive before daylight fades so we can settle into our tents and get acquainted with the setting. After a delicious dinner, we will gather to have a meeting about the days to come and settle into our tents for the night.

*Overnight: Canopy Camp*

**October 23: Canopy Camp Grounds and Pan American Highway**

Yellow-throated and Keel-billed Toucans sound a morning chorus from the towering Cuipo trees beside the camp. Step out of your tent to a spectacular view of Darién! We will meet our guide early in the clearing and start birding! Chestnut-headed Oropendola, Black-crowned Tityra, Pale-bellied Hermit, Barred Puffbird, Olivaceous Piculet, White-headed Wren, Ruddy Pigeon, Black-tailed Trogon, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Spot-crowned Barbet, Yellow-breasted Flycatcher, and Sooty-headed Tyrannulet can be found around the camp open areas. After breakfast in the open-air dining room, we will spend the morning birding “Nando’s Trail”, a wide, loopy trail through the mature secondary-growth forest beside the camp! We will seek out Royal Flycatcher, Black Antshrike, Slaty-backed Forest-Falcon, Tiny and Semiplumbeous Hawks, Great Potoo, Gray-cheeked Nunlet, White-fronted Nunbird, Double-banded Graytail, and Russet-winged Schiffrinis. Golden-collared and Golden-headed Manakins lek throughout these woods as well!
There will be plenty of time for a siesta in the early afternoon during the hottest part of the day. In the afternoon we will drive to the very end of the Panamerican Highway, scanning and stopping for birds along the road. Here we will search for various regional specialties and other fascinating species including Black Oropendola, Black Antshrike, Spectacled Parrotlet, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Laughing Falcon, Pearl Kite, and Black-collared Hawk. Marshy roadsides along the highway are a great place to find Pied Water-Tyrant, Ruddy-breasted Seedeater, Yellow-hooded Blackbird, Limpkin, and more. Arriving at the end of the highway, the bustling frontier town of Yaviza will give us a feel for daily life in the Darien. The cemetery in town is a great place to look for tanagers, motmots, and flycatchers, and Bicolored Wrens have recently nested here. After a cold drink and a snack, we will head back to the Camp for dinner.

After dinner, we will grab our spotlight and search the grounds for owls and other nocturnal wildlife. Central American Pygmy-Owl, Tropical Screech-Owl, Spectacled, Black-and-white, Mottled, and Crested Owls, and Common and Great Potoos may be heard, and we’ll try our best to call them in. Nocturnal mammals are common here and we’ll scan for the eyeshine of Kinkajou, Olingo, Western Night Monkey, and Central American Woolly Opossum, among others!

**Overnight: Canopy Camp**

**October 24: El Salto Road and Tierra Nueva Foundation**

We will wake up for an early breakfast just after dawn as the birds start their morning chorus. Then we’ll board the Canopy Camp’s birdmobile and head to El Salto Road. This 6-km long road extends northeast off the Panamerican Highway and for the first 2 kilometers, is bordered by mature secondary forest. Here we will scan the roadsides and forest for Orange-crowned Oriole, Blue Cotinga, Crane Hawk, Golden-green Woodpecker, Double-banded Graytail, Black-breasted Puffbird, White-eared Conebill, and Blue-and-yellow and Chestnut-fronted Macaws. Harpy Eagle has even been seen here! At the end of the road, we will walk a short trail through a dense thicket in hopes of finding Bare-crowned Antbird, Pale-bellied Hermit, Bay Wren (eastern Panama race), Olivaceous Piculet, Streak-headed Woodcreeper, and more. Then we’ll head back to the Camp for lunch.

Adjacent to El Salto Road is the property of the Tierra Nueva Foundation. Fundación Tierra Nueva is a non-profit organization whose main mission is “working towards the sustainable development of people of the Darién Rainforest.” The property is the home of a technical school focusing on applications in agriculture. We will explore the trails of this large, forested property, in hopes of finding Streak-headed Woodcreeper, Yellow-breasted and Black-billed Flycatchers, Red-rumped Woodpecker, Slaty-backed Forest-Falcon, Cinnamon, Cinereous and One-colored Becards, White-eared Conebill, White-headed Wren and the magnificent Great Curassow. We will also search for the eastern race of the Chestnut-backed Antbird, which shows white spots on the wings.

**Overnight: Canopy Camp**

**October 25: Harpy Eagle Quest**
Provided there is an active Harpy Eagle nest, we will spend the day visiting the nest site. Logistics for the day will be determined by where the nest is located.

**Overnight: Canopy Camp**

**October 26: San Francisco Reserve and Transfer to Canopy Tower**

We will have some time before breakfast to enjoy the Canopy Camp birds one last time—families of White-headed Wrens jaunt around the forest edges and Scaly-breasted and Violet-bellied Hummingbirds visit the nectar feeders. After breakfast, we will say our goodbyes to the Canopy Camp and make our way back toward Panama City. Along the way, we will stop at San Francisco Nature Reserve, a privately owned forest reserve protecting 1,300 acres. The reserve serves as a wildlife refuge and protects the headwaters of the major rivers in the area. Open fields, ponds, marshland, streams, mature secondary, and even pockets of primary forest are found in the reserve, and it is home to hundreds of species of birds. We will walk the wide road and check out some of the forest trails for Choco Sirystes, Bare-crowned Antbird, White-fronted Nunbird, Great Jacamar, Russet-winged Schiffornis, Royal Flycatcher, Rufous Piha, Central American Pygmy-Owl, Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle, the endemic Yellow-green Tyrannulet, Boat-billed Heron, Blue and Plain-breasted Ground-Doves, and many others. Even the rare Wing-banded Antbird has been recorded here! We will have lunch in Torti, and with full stomachs, make our way to Canopy Tower, arriving in time to get checked in before dinner.

**Overnight: Canopy Tower**

**October 27: Observation Deck, Semaphore Hill Road, and Ammo Dump Ponds**

This morning we won’t be able to resist getting up at dawn, as the Mantled Howlers roar in the distance. From the observation deck with a hot cup of coffee or tea in hand, we will watch the mist rise from the valleys surrounding the tower as the morning bird activity starts. Red-lored and Mealy Parrots fly over the valleys and Scaled Pigeons perch in the treetops. Up close, Golden-hooded, Palm, and Plain-colored Tanagers, Fulvous-vented Euphonias, and Green Honeycreepers feed in the ceiba trees next to the tower. Green Shrike-Vireo, Squirrel Cuckoo, Black-cheeked and Cinnamon Woodpeckers, Masked Tityra, Black-breasted Puffbird, Cocoa Woodcreeper, and many others may be visible. We will scan the distant treetops for Blue Cotinga, Gray-headed Kite, and Crane Hawk.

After a delicious breakfast, we will meet at the hummingbird feeders, where White-necked Jacobin, White-vented Plumeleteer, Long-billed Hermit, and Blue-chested and Violet-bellied Hummingbirds feed at the nectar feeders. This morning, we will walk slowly down Semaphore Hill Road, scanning...
the understory of the forest and the canopy above for forest birds, raptors, and anything else we may come across. Great Tinamou, White-whiskered Puffbird, Rufous and Broad-billed Motmots, Black-faced Antthrush, Red-capped and Blue-crowned Manakins, White-shouldered Tanager, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, White-breasted Wood-Wren, Black-bellied Wren, Slate-colored Grosbeak, Black-crowned and Fasciated Antshrikes, Dot-winged, Checker-throated, and White-flanked Antwrens and many other understory species will hopefully be encountered. Collared Forest-Falcon, Black Hawk-Eagle, Double-toothed Kite, and Semiplumbeous Hawk are all possibilities for this morning!

In the afternoon, we'll bird at the Ammo Dump Ponds along the Panama Canal. This large lagoon supports a nice diversity of bird life, including Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Little Blue Heron, Green and Ringed Kingfishers, Greater Ani, Wattled Jacana, Purple Gallinule, Osprey, Snail Kite, and White-throated Crake as well as American Crocodile and Lesser Capybara. We will scan the edges for Crimson-backed Tanager, Streaked Saltator, Black-striped Sparrow, and three species of seedeaters. 

Overnight: Canopy Tower

October 28: Pipeline Road Entrance and Summit Gardens

After breakfast we’ll board the Birdmobile or El Tinamu, both open-air vehicles, that take will take us Pipeline Road, the best place in Central Panama to find forest birds and one of the premier birding spots in the world! This morning we concentrate our efforts at the beginning of Pipeline, where we will look for Greater Ani, Gray-cowled Wood-Rail, Yellow-tailed Oriole, Masked Tityra, Rosy Thrush-Tanager, Isthmian (formerly Plain) Wren, Streaked Flycatcher, Red-throated Ant-Tanager, Squirrel Cuckoo, Gray-headed Chachalaca, Southern Bentbill, Forest Elaenia, Panama Flycatcher, Blue Ground Dove and Little Tinamou. Other birds recorded here are Black-bellied and Buff-breasted Wrens, Golden-collared Manakin, White-necked Puffbird, Gartered, Slaty-tailed, Black-throated, White-tailed and Black-tailed Trogons, Purple-crowned Fairy, Yellow Tyrannulet, White-bellied and Dusky Antbirds, Fasciated and Black-crowned Antshrikes, and many more.

During migration, this entrance road is excellent for migrant warblers, flycatchers, grosbeaks, and tanagers.

In the afternoon, we'll visit Summit Gardens which is a center for recreation, education, and conservation, dedicated to reflecting and enhancing Panama's tropical and cultural diversity. The botanical gardens are great for migratory warblers and other forest-edge species, including a colony of Chestnut-headed Oropendolas, Yellow-margined Flycatcher, Laughing
Falcon, Gray-lined, Crane, and Great Black Hawks, Collared Forest-Falcon, Tropical Pewee, Masked Tityra, Golden-fronted and Scrub Greenlets, Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Giant, Shiny, and Bronzed Cowbirds, and Blue Cotinga. This park is the best place to find Streak-headed Woodcreeper, a difficult species to get elsewhere on this tour.

*Overnight: Canopy Tower*

**October 29: Pipeline Road (Full Day)**

Today will be an early morning as we head off to the world-famous Pipeline Road! This road is surrounded by mature lowland forest and is home to over 500 species of birds. As we walk the gravel road, we will scan for White-bellied, Dusky, and Chestnut-backed Antbirds, Slaty-tailed, White-tailed, and Black-throated Trogons, Whooping Motmot, White-necked Puffbird, Southern Bentbill, Golden-collared Manakin, Gray-chested Dove, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Yellow-throated Toucan, Black-striped Woodcreeper and if we’re lucky to come across an army ant swarm, Bicolored and Ocellated Antbirds, Gray-headed Tanager, and Song Wren. This is one of the best places to find Pheasant Cuckoo and Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo as well! We will enjoy a delicious picnic lunch with the birds in the heart of the forest, miles down Pipeline Road. In the afternoon, we’ll continue further down Pipeline Road, into Caribbean slope forest, where we hope to find dozens more birds, including Russet-winged Schiﬄornis, Spot-crowned Antvireo, Moustached Antwren, Streak-chested Antpitta, Black-faced Antthrush, Slaty-backed Forest-Falcon, White-breasted Wood-Wren, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, and Black Hawk-Eagle! We will cross some forest streams, scanning them for elusive stream birds such as Agami Heron, Sunbittern, and Green-and-rufous Kingfisher. No doubt it will be an adventurous and memorable day on Pipeline Road.

*Overnight: Canopy Tower*

**October 30: Canopy Tower and Transfer to Canopy Lodge**

After some birding at Canopy Tower, we’ll transfer to the Canopy Lodge, located in the mountains of El Valle de Antón, nestled in the cloud forests of Cerro Gaital Natural Monument. At 2,400-feet in elevation, you will immediately appreciate the noticeably cooler temperatures here! Have your binoculars ready as we will immediately want to scan the fruit feeders and grounds for birds! Crimson-backed, Blue-gray, White-lined, Flame-rumped, Dusky-faced, and Plain-colored Tanagers are around, as are Red-crowned Ant-Tanager, Thick-billed Euphonia, Chestnut-headed Oropendola, Streaked and Buff-throated Saltators, Lineated and 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 and Violet-headed
Hummingbirds, White-vented Plumeleteer, and Garden Emerald! We’ll spend the afternoon birding around Canopy Lodge before enjoying our first wonderful dinner here.

*Overnight: Canopy Lodge*

**October 31: Las Minas and Cara Iguana**

We’ll want to be up at dawn to see the morning activity as the birds come in for their breakfast at the feeders. During our breakfast, we will watch for Orange-billed Sparrows around the lodge and Bronze-tailed Plumeleteers at the nectar feeders. This morning we will be heading up the hill to Las Minas Road, a pleasing blend of forest and roadside habitat at a higher elevation overlooking the vast valleys where we hope to find Silver-throated, Emerald, and Hepatic Tanagers, Tawny-capped Euphonia, Orange-bellied Trogon, Black-faced Grosbeak, Black-crowned Antpitta, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Wedge-tailed Grass-Finch, and many other foothills specialties. The hard-to-see Black-headed Anthrush and Scaled and Black-crowned Antpittas have been recorded here!

After some rest and relaxation, we will take a short drive to Cara Iguana Road, where a short stretch of dry forest hosts a nice diversity of bird life. We will check one of the properties in this quiet neighborhood for Spectacled Owls, and explore the roadsides for Barred Antshrike, Lesser Elaenia, Lance-tailed Manakin, Rufous-and-white Wren, Tropical Screech-Owl, and Garden Emerald.

*Overnight: Canopy Lodge*

**November 1: La Mesa Road and Mata Ahogado**

After breakfast, we will continue our quest for more lifers with a trip to La Mesa Road. This area, which is a visually pleasing blend of secondary forest, scrubby pastures, overgrown fincas, and grassy borders, is home to many of the area’s specialties. Here we look for such great birds as Spot-crowned Barbet, Cinnamon Becard, Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, Silver-throated, Golden-hooded, Tawny-crested, and Bay-headed Tanagers, Spot-crowned Antvireo, and Spotted Woodcreeper. Hummingbirds include White-tipped Sicklebill, Rufous-crested Coquette, Crowned Woodnymph, and Black-throated Mango. Other residents are Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Bran-colored Flycatcher, Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, and Collared Trogon.

After lunch we are off to Mata Ahogado, to spend the afternoon birding along the scrubby roadsides, often full of birds! Good birds here are Rosy Thrush-Tanager, Black-headed Saltator, Great Antshrike, White-ruffed Manakin, White-thighed Swallow, White-bellied Antbird, Tody Motmot, and hummers such as Long-billed Starthroat, Rufous-crested Coquette and, when the Inga is in bloom, Snowcap! We will also listen for Purplish-backed Quail-Dove.

*Overnight: Canopy Lodge*

**November 2: Full Day in the Pacific Lowlands**

The Pacific lowlands and its fantastic suite of birds await us today! We will make our way down to sea
level and explore the dry scrub forest and open areas of El Chirú. There are many new birds to see down here, and we will make a day of it. In these areas we will scan for Mouse-colored Tyrannulet, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Crested Bobwhite, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Gray-lined and Short-tailed Hawks, Yellow-headed Caracara, Red-breasted Blackbird, Yellow-crowned Parrot, Plain-breasted Ground-Dove, and Plain-breasted Spinetail. We will enjoy a delicious picnic lunch and soak up the sun at Santa Clara beach, all the while keeping an eye out for Sandwich, Royal, and Elegant Terns, Brown and Blue-footed Boobies, Whimbrel, Magnificent Frigatebird, Brown Pelican, and other pelagic and shorebirds. Over at the rice fields at Juan Hombron, we hope to see Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Savanna Hawk, Pearl Kite, Crested Caracara, and Groove-billed Ani.

*Overnight: Canopy Lodge*

**November 3: Transfer to Panama City for Flights Home**

After a leisurely breakfast, if time permits, you may do some last-minute Panamanian birding in the gardens surrounding the lodge. Then, we will drive back to Panamá City and catch return flights home!
**Trip Details:**

**Cost:**
- Price per person from Panama City, Panama: $5,899
- Single Supplement: N/A
- Minimum Participants: 8
- Maximum Participants: 10

**Price Includes:**
- 2 Expert Guides
- Ground Transportation in Panama
- All Lodging
- All Meals
- Park Entrance Fees
- Donation to Tucson Audubon

**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 (June 14, 2022).

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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