Panama
Canopy Tower

Tour Leaders: Tyler Ficker and Local Guide
September 22 - 28, 2024
Panama offers some of the most exciting birding in all of North America. We will spend our time at the extremely unique Canopy Tower, a former US Air Force radar tower in the middle of Soberanía National Park. The diversity of species found in this region is spectacular. Birding on top of Canopy Tower provides an excellent vantage point for canopy-dwelling species, raptors, sloths, and ships heading down the Panama Canal! With days full of parrots, motmots, toucans, antbirds, sloths, and monkeys, you won't want to miss this fantastic opportunity to bird one of the most iconic sites in Central America!

**Itinerary Overview:**

**September 22:** Arrival and Transfer to Canopy Tower

**September 23:** Observation Deck, Semaphore Hill Road, and Ammo Dump Ponds

**September 24:** Pipeline Road Entrance and Panama Rainforest Discovery Center

**September 25:** Pipeline Road (Full Day)

**September 26:** Full Day at Cerro Azul and Cerro Jefe

**September 27:** Metropolitan Natural Park and Summit Ponds and Old Gamboa Road

**September 28:** Departure

* 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:**

**September 22:** Arrival and Transfer to Canopy Tower

Upon arrival at Tocumen International Airport in Panama City, you will be met at the airport by your guides and transferred to the Canopy Tower just a short hour's drive from the airport. Immediately upon arrival at the Tower, you will want to have your binoculars and cameras ready, as hummingbirds buzz around the feeders in the parking lot and birds, sloths, monkeys, and butterflies are visible outside every window! As the staff ferry luggage to your rooms, we invite you up to the third floor for a cold drink and without wasting any time, up to the observation deck, overlooking the vast rainforest! Keel-billed Toucan, Green Honeycreeper, and Palm Tanager may be nearby, and if lucky, a King Vulture or Black Hawk-Eagle in the distance! Before dinner, we will meet with our guide and be
given an introduction to the Tower while enjoying a drink and appetizers. Tonight, we will fall asleep to the tranquil sounds of the rainforest around us!

**Overnight: Canopy Tower**

**September 23: 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 cecropia 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 Velvety Manakins, White-shouldered Tanager, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, White-breasted Wood-Wren, Black-bellied Wren, Slate-colored Grosbeak, Black-crowned and Fasciated Antshrikes, Dot-winged, Checkered-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**
September 24: Pipeline Road Entrance and Panama Rainforest Discovery Center

After breakfast, we’ll board the Birdmobile or El Tinamu, both open-air vehicles, that will take us to 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 Titirya, 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, Gardered, 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.

After lunch and a rest, we continue to the Panama Rainforest Discovery Center, an ecotourism and environmental education facility created and administered by Fundacion Avifauna Eugene Eisenmann. It is located off Pipeline Road adjacent to Soberanía National Park. The center contains several attractions, the best of which is a 100-foot-tall observation tower, with 4 rest platforms—each stopping at a different layer of the rainforest. The view from the top is incredible! Here, we scan for raptors like Double-toothed Kite and Semiplumbeous Hawk and canopy birds like Scaled Pigeon, Pied Puffbird, and Blue Cotinga. We will also take a quick bird tour through the 1.1-kilometer circuit of well-maintained forest trails, one ending at a pond, which is excellent for birds! Snail Kite, Wattled Jacana, Little Blue Heron, Least Bittern, and Sungrebe are often resident at the pond, and along the trails, we look for White-necked and White-whiskered Puffbirds, motmots, trogons, manakins, antbirds, wrens, tanagers, flycatchers, and many others. The covered Visitor Center has several hummingbird feeders (attracting many species that may be photographed easily), bathrooms, lunch tables, and a small gift shop with drinks and snacks.

Overnight: Canopy Tower
September 25: 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 the Caribbean slope forest, where we hope to find dozens more birds, including Russet-winged Schifhornis, 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

September 26: Full Day at Cerro Azul and Cerro Jefe

Today is an exciting day! We will start our day very early, but it will be worth it as we head up to the foothills and highlands east of Panama City! A completely new suite of birds awaits us at Cerro Azul (2500 ft.) and Cerro Jefe (3300 ft.). In this cloud-laden highlands, we will explore the forest trails and edges for new species, including Black-and-yellow, Emerald and Speckled Tanagers, White-vented Euphonia, Yellow-eared Toucanet, Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle, Black-eared Wood-Quail, Spotted Woodcreeper, Russet Antshrike and the endemic Stripe-cheeked Woodpecker! It is hummingbird heaven here, and we could see up to 17 species including Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, Rufous-crested Coquette, White-tipped Sicklebill, and Violet-capped Hummingbird. We will have lunch at a lovely residence overlooking the vast Chagres National Park and continue birding through the early afternoon to search for even more great species! We will make our way back to the Canopy Tower in time to freshen up before dinner.

Overnight: Canopy Tower
September 27: Metropolitan Natural Park and Summit Ponds and Old Gamboa Road

We will awake as the howler monkeys roar in the distance. After an early breakfast, we board the van for Metropolitan Natural Park, a reserve located in the heart of Panama City. This Pacific dry forest is home to a wide variety of birds and wildlife. As we walk the trails, we will look for some of the dry forest specialties that can be found here, including Yellow-bellied and Lesser Elaenias, Rufous-breasted and Rufous-and-white Wrens, Lance-tailed Manakin, Rosy Thrush-Tanager, Collared Forest-Falcon, Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Yellow-crowned and Paltry Tyrannulets, the endemic Yellow-green Tyrannulet, Golden-fronted Greenlet, Yellow-backed Oriole, Yellow-crowned Euphonia, and Streaked Saltator. It is also a great place to find Geoffroy’s Tamarin, Central American Agouti, and Hoffmann’s Two-toed Sloth. After our morning at the park, we will head back to the Canopy Tower for lunch.

There will be some time after lunch to watch the hawk migration on the observation deck or take a siesta in a hammock, and by mid-afternoon, we’ll be ready to go birding again! Old Gamboa Road and the associated ponds at Summit are great places to find Canal Zone birds. We will scan for Green, Striated, Capped, and Boat-billed Herons as well as Green, Ringed, Amazon, Green-and-rufous (rare), and American Pygmy Kingfishers, which are all resident here! Also, we seek out Rusty-margin and Streaked Flycatchers, Lesser and Great Kiskadees, Greater Ani, Mangrove Swallow, Bat Falcon, Cocoa Woodcreeper, and Lineated Woodpecker. Going straight past the two ponds you’ll be on Old Gamboa Road, one of the birdiest spots around. This road passes through a variety of habitats and has plenty of specialties, including Blue Ground Dove, Great Antshrike, Jet Antbird, Black-tailed, Bran-colored and Royal Flycatchers, Lance-tailed and Golden-collared Manakins, and the delightful Rosy Thrush-Tanager! We also will find species like White-bellied Antbird, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Yellow-backed Oriole, Boat-billed and Fork-tailed Flycatchers, Yellow-headed Caracara, Crane Hawk, Black-chested Jays, and more. Also resident are Gray-headed Chachalaca, with Spectacled Owl a real possibility too, as the guides know where they often roost.

Overnight: Canopy Tower

September 28: Departure

We will have time for some last-minute birding from the Tower before breakfast and transferring to the airport for flights home.
Trip Details:

Cost:
Price per person from Panama City, Panama: $2,699
Single Supplement: N/A
Minimum Participants: 6
Maximum Participants: 10

Price Includes:
2 Expert Guides
Ground Transportation in 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 (June 22, 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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