Panama
Canopy Lodge and Tower

Tour Leaders: Whitney Lanfranco and Local Guide
July 21 - 31, 2024
Panama offers some of the most exciting birding in all of North America. Our tour will take us first to the El Valle and the Canopy Lodge about two hours west of the Panama Canal. From Canopy Lodge, we will travel to the extremely unique Canopy Tower, a former US Air Force radar tower amid Soberania National Park.

**Itinerary Overview:**

- **July 21:** Arrival and Transfer to Canopy Lodge
- **July 22:** Las Minas and Cara Iguana
- **July 23:** Full Day at Altos del Maria
- **July 24:** La Mesa Road and Mata Ahogado
- **July 25:** Cerro Gaital and Valle Chiquito
- **July 26:** Transfer to Canopy Tower
- **July 27:** Observation Deck, Semaphore Hill Road, and Ammo Dump
- **July 28:** Pipeline Road and Summit Gardens
- **July 29:** Plantation Trail and Charges River
- **July 30:** Summit Ponds and Rainforest Discovery Center
- **July 31:** Transfer to Airport 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:**

- **July 21:** Arrival and Transfer to Canopy Lodge

Upon arrival, the group will transfer to Canopy Lodge in beautiful El Valle. If time allows, we can spend some time birding around the property or at the feeders before enjoying a wonderful welcome dinner.

*Overnight: Canopy Lodge*
July 22: 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 are heading up the hill to Las Minas Road, a pleasing blend of forest and roadside habitat at 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 Antthrush and Scaled Antpitta 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

July 23: Full Day at Altos del Maria

An early breakfast before dawn calls once again, but we won’t want to waste any daylight today! We will spend a full day at the highest elevation we will reach during our time in Panama, indulging in the pristine cloud forest and its wonderful birds and wildlife! We’ll leave the lodge at dawn in 4x4 vehicles and head up the steep roads to Altos del Maria, a gated community nestled in these mist-shrouded mountains. The matrix of roads allows us to explore many areas of these highlands, as we search the mature humid forests for Spotted Woodcreeper, Black Guan, Ochraceous Wren, Streak-chested Antpitta, Black-crowned Antpitta, Gray-breasted Wood-Wren, Tufted Flycatcher, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Tawny-crested Tanager, Slate-colored Grosbeak, Rufous-browed Tyrannulet, Russet Antshrike, Yellow-eared Toucanet, and other highland specialties.

Hummingbirds are abundant here and we will look for Garden and White-tailed Emeralds, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, Band-tailed Barbroth, Purple-throated Mountain-Gem, Green Hermit, Brown Violetear, and the exquisite Snowcap. Even rarities, such as Brown-billed Scythebill, Crimson-bellied Woodpecker, and Three-wattled Bellbird have been recorded here! By noon we will relax around a small lake and enjoy a delicious picnic lunch. There is much more birding to do after lunch, as we continue to look for Red-faced Spinetail, Barred Forest-Falcon, Sulphur-
rumped Flycatcher, Black-and-yellow, Bay-headed, Silver-throated, and Tawny-crested Tanagers along another forest trail. By mid-afternoon, we will make our way back to the Canopy Lodge for some time to relax before dinner.

**Overnight: Canopy Lodge**

**July 24: La Mesa Road and Mata Ahogado**

After breakfast, we 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. Also, resident 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**

**July 25: Cerro Gaital and Valle Chiquito**

Today after breakfast, we proceed to Cerro Gaital, a steep, forested, mist-shrouded mountain that you see from the lodge! Cerro Gaital (3,500’) is the namesake of Cerro Gaital Natural Monument, which protects more than 335 hectares of mature cloud forest. This area offers sightings of Black Guan, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Collared Trogon, Spotted Barbtail, Common Chlorospingus, Silver-throated Tanager, Black-headed Anthrshush, Slaty Antwren, Spot-crowned and Plain Antvireos, Black-faced Grosbeak, Blue Seedeater, Chestnut-capped Warbler, Gray-headed Kite, White Hawk, Tawny-capped Euphonia, Pale-vented
Thrush, Northern Schiffornis, White-tailed Emerald, Green-crowned Brilliant, Violet-headed Hummingbird, and Crowned Woodnymph. Scaled Antpitta and Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo have also been recorded here!

After lunch, we are off to Valle Chiquito for more birding! This valley is accessible by a newly paved road and passes through nicely forested woodlands crossed by two rivers. At Rio de Jesus we search for Green Kingfisher and listen for Sepia-capped Flycatcher. We also admire a nice colony of Chestnut-headed Oropendolas in a Cecropia tree. We will try for Tody Motmot, Yellow-backed Oriole, White-bellied Antbird, Gray-chested Dove, Yellow-billed Cacique, Zone-tailed and Gray-lined Hawks, Black Hawk-Eagle, Lance-tailed Manakin, Panama Flycatcher, Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Little Tinamou, Long-billed Starthroat, and Garden Emerald. Wrens are abundant here, with Black-bellied, Rufous-and-white, Bay, and Rufous-breasted Wrens all lurking about in the thickets!

**Overnight: Canopy Lodge**

**July 26: Transfer to Canopy Tower**

After a leisurely breakfast and some morning birding at Canopy Lodge, we’ll depart for a two-hour drive to our next destination, Canopy Tower! You’ll want to have your binoculars ready as we arrive as there are very active hummingbird feeders at the base of the tower. We might see Long-billed Hermit, White-necked Jacobin, Violet-bellied and Blue-chested Hummingbirds, and White-vented Plumeleteer. Occasionally, a Snowy-bellied Hummingbird is spotted! We’ll spend the rest of the day getting familiar with all of the birds that can be seen around the tower. Many birds, including toucans, parrots, tanagers, hawks, and dozens of others, as well as monkeys, two species of sloth, and other mammals are commonly seen. From this vantage point atop the Tower, you can also see ships transiting the Panama Canal, the majestic Centennial Bridge, and miles of rainforest!

**Overnight: Canopy Tower**

Northern Emerald Toucanet

White-vented Plumeleteer
July 27: Observation Deck, Semaphore Hill Road, and Ammo Dump

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 Titia, 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 hot 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!

Once lunch is over, we will have some time to relax, have a siesta in a hammock, or enjoy the swifts and raptors on the observation deck. We will meet again mid-afternoon and board one of the “rainforest mobiles”, Canopy Tower’s special birding vehicles for a visit to the Ammo Dump Ponds. 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. After a full and exciting day of birding, we will return to the tower, where a scrumptious meal awaits us!

Overnight: Canopy Tower
July 28: Pipeline Road and Summit Gardens

After breakfast we’ll head to the 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 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.

Summit Gardens 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. The Harpy Eagle is Panama’s national bird, and this park has an exhibit, including a life-size nest and interpretive panels, tracing the importance of the Harpy in Panamanian history and culture dating back to pre-Columbian times.

Overnight: Canopy Tower
July 29: Plantation Trail and Charges River

After breakfast, we take a short ride to the bottom of Semaphore Hill to Plantation Trail, one of our premier birding areas, often said to rival the Pipeline Road itself! This easy trail passes through mature rainforest and follows a small creek (Rio Chico Masambi) and is a reliable place to find Golden-crowned Spadebill. Oftentimes at the parking area near the entrance, we find Black-chested Jays. Other birds to look for along the trail include Ocellated, Bicolored, Chestnut-backed, White-bellied, and Spotted Antbirds, Broad-billed and Whooping Motmots, five species of trogon, White-whiskered Puffbird, hummingbirds (Blue-chested, White-necked Jacobin, and others), Plain-brown, Northern Barred, Cocoa, and Ruddy Woodcreepers, Cinnamon, Crimson-crested and Black-cheeked Woodpeckers, White-breasted Wood-Wren, Song Wren, Dot-winged, Checker-throated and White-flanked Antwrens, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Bright-rumped Attila, Gray-headed Tanager, Long-billed Gnatwren, Black-crowned and Fasciated Antshrikes, Red-capped and Velvety Manakins, Great Tinamou, Ruddy-tailed, Royal and Yellow-margined flycatchers, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Scaly-throated Leaftosser, and, occasionally, Great Jacamar or the endemic Yellow-green Tyrannulet!

After lunch, we take a short drive to Chagres River and the accompanying fields and forest. First, we must stop at the Canopy Bed and Breakfast in the picturesque village of Gamboa to look at the bird feeders! With a beautiful backdrop of Cerro Pelado, the backyard at the Canopy B&B is teeming with bird life. At the fruit feeders, we are likely to see Red-legged, Shining and Green Honeycreepers, Lemon-rumped, Crimson-backed and Blue-gray Tanagers, Thick-billed Euphonia, Yellow-bellied and Variable Seedeaters, Whooping Motmot, and Gray-headed Chachalaca, with Central American Agoutis lurking about under the feeders. Next, we're off to Chagres River, the main tributary for the Panama Canal. The birding along the riverbanks and the forest edges of Gamboa Resort can be spectacular! Here, we search for Amazon, Green, and American Pygmy Kingfishers, as well as Whooping Motmot and Cinnamon Woodpecker. We could also see Gray-cowled Wood-Rail, Cocii, Green and Striated Herons, Wattled Jacana, Pied-billed Grebe, Anhinga, Royal and Sandwich Terns, Brown Pelican, Neotropic Cormorant, Tricolored and Little Blue Herons, Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Mangrove Swallow, Black-chested Jay, Lesser Kiskadee, Rusty-margined Flycatcher, Yellow-billed Cacique, Black-bellied and Buff-breasted Wrens, Fasciated and Barred Antshrikes, Cinnamon Becard, Slaty-tailed Trogon, White-bellied Antbird, and even Slaty-backed Forest-Falcon and Blue Cotinga at times!

Overnight: Canopy Tower
July 30: Summit Ponds and Rainforest Discovery Center

Old Gamboa Road and the associated ponds at Summit are great places to find Canal Zone birds. At Summit Ponds 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! We also seek out Rusty-margined and Streaked Flycatchers, Mangrove Swallow, Bat Falcon, Cocoa Woodcreeper, and Lineated and Crimson-crested Woodpeckers. 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 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 Flycatcher, Yellow-headed Caracara, and more. Also resident are Gray-headed Chachalaca, with Spectacled Owl a real possibility too, as the guides know where they often roost.

After lunch, we depart to the Panamá 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. Also, we’ll explore 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, and a small gift shop with drinks and snacks.

Overnight: Canopy Tower

July 31: Transfer to Airport for Flights Home

After breakfast, we will transfer to the airport for our departing flights.
Trip Details:

Cost:
Price per person from Panama City, Panama: $3,999
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 (April 21, 2024).

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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