



Guatemala

Birding and Culture in the Mayan World



Tour Leader: Rob Ripma

January 20-29 with extension January 28 - February 3, 2027

Itinerary Overview:

Main:

January 20: Arrival in Guatemala City, Guatemala - Transfer to Antigua
January 21: Birding at Finca El Pilar and Afternoon Walking Tour of Antigua
January 22: Birding in Tecpan Area - Transfer to San Marcos Area
January 23: Birding the San Marcos Area
January 24: Birding the San Marcos Area - Transfer to Quetzaltenango
January 25: Birding Fuentes Georginas - Transfer to Los Trrales Nature Reserve
January 26: Full Day Birding at Los Trrales Nature Reserve
January 27: Birding and Cultural Boat Ride Around Lake Atitlan
January 28: Birding at Los Trrales - Transfer to Guatemala City
January 29: Departure from Guatemala City, Guatemala

Extension:

January 28: Afternoon Flight to Flores - Transfer to Flores Island
January 29: Birding En Route - Transfer to Estación Biológica Las Guacamayas
January 30: Birding El Peru Archaeological Site and Las Guacamayas
January 31: Las Guacamayas - Transfer to Tikal National Park
February 1: Full Day Birding at Tikal National Park
February 2: Morning Birding at Tikal - Flight to Guatemala City
February 3: Departure from Guatemala City, Guatemala

Detailed Itinerary:

January 20: Arrival in Guatemala City, Guatemala - Transfer to Antigua

We'll meet you at the La Aurora International Airport (Guatemala City). Once we have the whole group, we'll transfer to Antigua, Guatemala and have a wonderful welcome dinner.

-Overnight: Meson de Maria or similar

January 21: Birding at Finca El Pilar and Afternoon Walking Tour of Antigua

Finca El Pilar is a small paradise located in the mountain forest of Guatemala and just 10 minutes away from the center of La Antigua, Guatemala. It has an infrastructure of trails for birding, which spread through the organic plantations of coffee, mountain forest, and cloud forest. The vegetation of this reserve is mainly coffee, pine, and oak, with an altitudinal range from 1,710 to 9,500 feet above sea level.

One of the main attractions at Finca El Pilar are the hummingbird feeders where it is possible to spot a wide variety of the hummingbird species that inhabit the area. Some species that we hope to see here include Rufous and Violet Sabrewings, Rivoli's, White-eared, Azure-crowned, and Blue-tailed Hummingbirds, Blue-throated Motmot, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Bushy-crested Jay, Black-

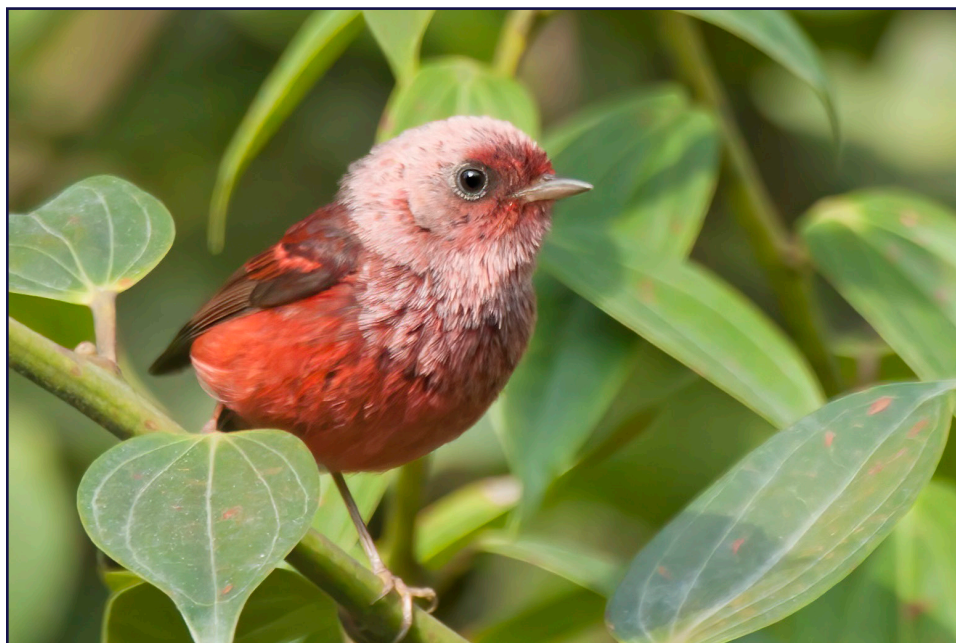
capped Swallow, Gray Silky-flycatcher, Hooded Grosbeak, Rufous-collared Robin, and Rufous-collared Sparrow.

After lunch, we'll start the fascinating cultural tour of Antigua. We will visit the magnificent churches, ruins, and museums and when combined with the old cobbled streets, it brings the stories and legends of those colonial times alive. We will be visiting important cultural areas of Antigua such as La Merced Church, Central Park, the famous Santa Catalina Martir Arch of the 5th Avenue, and much more.

-Overnight: Meson de Maria or similar

January 22: Birding in Tecpan Area - Transfer to San Marcos Area

Today, we'll take a short one-hour drive from our first stop in the pine-oak forest. This area offers easy hiking and incredible birding. We'll search for many endemic species of the north Central American highlands such as Pink-headed Warbler, Blue-throated Motmot, and Rufous-browed Wren. We'll also find migrant Townsend's, Wilson's, Black-and-White, and Red-faced Warblers together with the resident Slate-throated Redstart, Crescent-chested, and Olive Warblers, as well as Hutton's Vireo.



Pink-headed Warbler

The flocks are often accompanied by Spot-crowned, and sometimes by Spotted Woodcreepers, and Brown Creepers. With some good luck we may see a Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo within the flock. Bushtits dwell throughout the forest and at times can be seen in large flocks of more than 30 birds. In the afternoon, we'll drive to San Marcos (with birding stops along the way) where we'll be staying for the night.

-Overnight: Hotel Miralvalle or similar

January 23: Birding the San Marcos Area

Today, we'll explore Refugio del Quetzal and El Astillero Municipal Park. Refugio del Quetzal is a natural reserve with an elevation between 5,750 and 6,900 feet in the western highlands of Guatemala. This forest has a high, dense canopy of evergreen trees and a fairly open understory of palms and ferns. It provides the quetzal with a food-rich environment. The humidity is very high, and this area is an important water reserve for the community.

Some of the specialty species we hope to see include Resplendent Quetzal, Azure-rumped Tanager, Collared Trogon, Blue-throated Motmot, Blue-and-white Mockingbird, Golden-browed Warbler, White-faced Quail-Dove, Green-throated Mountain-gem, Mottled Owl, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Pacific Parakeet, Spot-crowned Woodcreeper, Brown-capped Vireo, Bushy-crested Jay, Brown-backed Solitaire, and Rufous-collared Robin.

Our next stop will be El Astillero Municipal Park. It is an extremely important area because it is located in two vitally important watersheds for the Department of San Marcos. It has a conserved forest, inhabited by endemic and threatened species with high ecological value, such as the Pink-headed Warbler, Highland Guan, Resplendent Quetzal, Horned Guan, and several species of amphibians and reptiles.

The park area within the Suchiate River basin is the most important for the conservation of biological diversity because it contains populations of endangered species of flora and fauna, making it an area of particular interest for scientific, birding, and nature tourism. Additional highlights here may include Unspotted Saw-whet Owl, Guatemalan Pygmy-owl, Singing Quail, Mexican Violetear, Green-throated Mountain-gem, Amethyst-throated, Wine-throated, and Emerald-chinned Hummingbirds, Blue-throated Motmot, Spotted Woodcreeper, Black-throated Jay, Steller's Jay, Black-capped Swallow, Rufous-browed Wren, Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush, Blue-and-white Mockingbird, Chestnut-capped Brushfinch, White-naped Brush-finch, Golden-browed Warbler, Slate-throated Redstart, Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer, Northern (Guatemalan) Flicker, Hooded Grosbeak, Yellow-eyed Junco, Fulvous Owl, Black-capped Siskin, and Whiskered Screech-Owl.

-Overnight: Hotel Miralvalle or similar

January 24: Birding the San Marcos Area - Transfer to Quetzaltenango

We'll spend the morning visiting the same parks as yesterday in order to pick up any species that we may have missed. After lunch, we'll make the drive to Quetzaltenango where we will settle into our hotel for the night.

-Overnight: Las Cumbres Hotel or similar

January 25: Birding Fuentes Georginas - Transfer to Los Tarrales Nature Reserve

Our morning will be spent birding the very humid, sub-tropical forest at Fuentes Georginas. Here we

hope to spot Wine-throated and Garnet-throated Hummingbirds, Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer, and Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush among others. Around midday we will transfer to Los Tarrales Reserve. After we settle in, we'll have time to do a bit of exploring in the afternoon.

-Overnight: Los Tarrales Nature Reserve

January 26: Full Day Birding at Los Tarrales Nature Reserve

On this morning we'll load into 4x4 vehicles for the drive up to the Vesubio area of Volcan Atitlan, in a quest to see Azure-rumped Tanager. Other highlights along the way might include Rufous Sabrewing, Emerald-chinned Hummingbird, Tody Motmot, quails, and doves among other common highland species. We'll have breakfast next to the beautiful coffee plantations.

After lunch, back at Los Tarrales, we'll spend the afternoon birding around La Laguneta. This area offers good opportunities to find species such as White-bellied Chachalaca, Yellow-naped Parrot, and Rufous-breasted Spinetail among others.

-Overnight: Los Tarrales Nature Reserve

January 27: Birding and Cultural Boat Ride Around Lake Atitlan

Before breakfast, we'll do some birding around the lodge. Then, after breakfast, we'll make our way to Lake Atitlan where we will board a boat for a day of birding and culture around the lake. We'll make a stop to look for Belted Flycatcher and Ocellated Quail among many others. We'll also visit some culturally rich communities on the shores of the lake. In the afternoon, we'll head back to Los Tarrales and have time for more birding around the property.

-Overnight: Los Tarrales Nature Reserve

January 28: Birding at Los Tarrales - Transfer to Guatemala City

Today, we'll get back into the 4x4 vehicles and take a short ride to La Rinconada. Here we will be searching for Long-tailed Manakin, Cinnamon Hummingbird, Rufous-naped Wren and others.

After lunch, we'll transfer to the Radisson Hotel in Guatemala City. For participants continuing on the extension to the lowlands, we'll take an afternoon flight to Flores, Petén, Guatemala. For those participants heading home tomorrow, dinner will be at the hotel.

-Overnight: Radisson Hotel, Guatemala City

January 29: Departure from Guatemala City, Guatemala

Extension:

January 28: Afternoon Flight to Flores - Transfer to Flores Island

The group continuing on to the extension will take an afternoon flight to Flores. From the airport

we'll transfer to our hotel on Flores Island and have dinner at a local restaurant.

-Overnight: Hotel Maya Internacional or similar

January 29: Birding En Route - Transfer to Estación Biológica Las Guacamayas

After breakfast we'll leave Flores and make the three-hour drive to Paso Caballos. The whole road possesses great birding opportunities where we can watch some birds in open areas, secondary forest, and ponds. A variety of flycatchers, hawks, herons, and kingfishers are likely to be seen.

Once we arrive in the community of Paso Caballos, we will board a boat that will carry us along the San Pedro River towards Las Guacamayas Biological Station (approx. 20 minutes). Of course, we'll be birding the whole way! Here we may find species such as herons, kingfishers, Limpkin, parrots, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, Northern Jacana, and many more.

Once docked at Las Guacamayas, the staff will show us to our rooms before giving us an introduction to the activities of the station's solid waste management, research programs, and conservation and social projects. After lunch and a siesta, we'll spend the afternoon birding around the base station ending at Las Guacamayas lookout.

After a wonderful dinner, we'll take a nighttime aquatic excursion exploring the Sacluc stream. Our experienced local guide will accompany us and illuminate the creatures that live here including the Morelet's Crocodile, bats, birds, and more.

-Overnight: Las Guacamayas Biological Station

January 30: Birding El Peru Archaeological Site and Las Guacamayas

We'll be up early for coffee before boarding our boat to take us to the archaeological site, El Peru, for a morning of birding. Here we will visit the most important nesting area of the Scarlet Macaw in Guatemala. We can also find interesting species such as Ocellated Turkey, Bat Falcon, Black-and-white Owl, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Rose-throated Tanager, Green-backed Sparrow, and others. We'll be back at EBG for lunch. After lunch you'll have the afternoon to relax and do some light birding around the lodge.

-Overnight: Las Guacamayas Biological Station

January 31: Las Guacamayas - Transfer to Tikal National Park

We'll again board our boat this morning to go birding along the San Pedro River. From the boat we hope to find several species including Agami Heron and Sungrebe.

After breakfast, we'll transfer to Tikal National Park. We'll make a stop in Flores for lunch and then briefly do a bit of birding at El Remate. Once we arrive at Tikal National Park, we'll settle into our hotel before doing a sunset tour in the park.

-Overnight: Hotel Jungle Lodge



Agami Heron

February 1: Full Day Birding at Tikal National Park

Today will start with morning birding within Tikal National Park. Tikal is part of the nucleus area of the Maya Biosphere Reserve and has a high level of conservation activity and research.

The monuments, remnants of the ancient Maya culture, are in the middle of luscious jungles and are ideal places for birding. Possible species include Ocellated Turkey, Orange-breasted Falcon, Yucatan Jay, Black Catbird, Rose-throated Tanager, Great Curassow, White-fronted Parrot, Mealy Parrot, Crested Eagle, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Keel-billed Toucan, Chestnut-colored Woodpecker, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher; White-bellied Wren, Montezuma Oropendola, and many hummingbirds among others.

Since this tour is during the migratory season, flocks of warblers, tanagers, and others make this destination a fantastic tropical paradise.

After breakfast, back at our lodge, we'll go on a fascinating archaeological tour. Don't worry; we'll be birding the whole time as well!

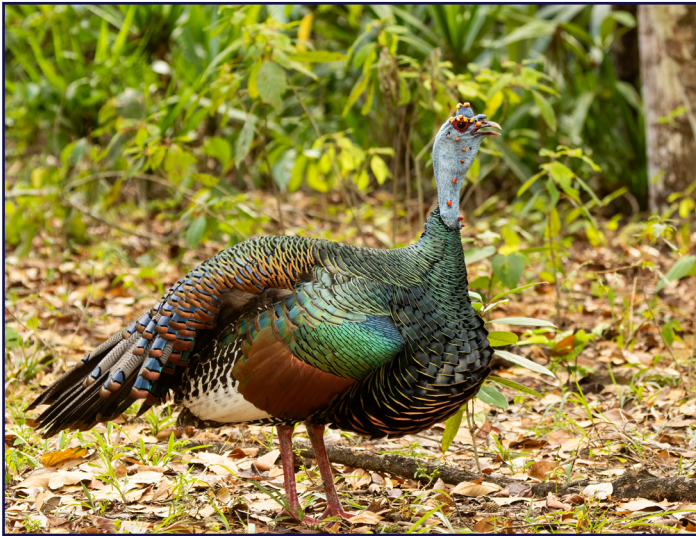
-Overnight: Hotel Jungle Lodge

March 23: Morning Birding at Tikal - Flight to Guatemala City

We'll spend this morning birding around Tikal National Park before transferring to the airport in Flores to catch our flight back to Guatemala City.

-Overnight: Radisson Hotel Guatemala City or similar

March 24: Departure from Guatemala City, Guatemala



Trip Details:

Cost:

Main Tour:

Price per person (double occupancy), from Guatemala City, Guatemala: \$4,399

Single Supplement: \$700

Extension:

Price per person (double occupancy), from Guatemala City, Guatemala: \$3,599

Single Supplement: \$450

Minimum Participants: 6

Maximum Participants: 10

Price Includes:

2 Expert Guides

Ground Transportation in Guatemala

All Lodging

All Meals including 1 soft drink per meal

Park Entrance Fees

Portion of Proceeds to Tucson Bird Alliance

Round trip flights to Flores on extension

Price Does Not Include:

Airfare to and from Guatemala City

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 (October 22, 2026).

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.

Responsibility/Disclaimer Statement:

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