



Texas and Louisiana

Migration Madness on the Gulf

Tour Leader: Eric Ripma

April 18-25, 2027

Itinerary Overview:

April 18: Arrival in Houston, TX (IAH)

April 19: Sheldon Lake, J.J. Mayes Trace Park, High Island - Transfer to Winnie

April 20: Jocelyn Nungaray National Wildlife Refuge, Bolivar Peninsula, and High Island

April 21: Angelina National Forest and Cattail Marsh

April 22: Jocelyn Nungaray National Wildlife Refuge, Bolivar Peninsula, and High Island

April 23: Sabine Woods, Texas and Cameron Parish, Louisiana - Transfer to Lake Charles, LA

April 24: Cameron Parish, Louisiana

April 25: Departure from Houston, Texas

Detailed Itinerary:

April 18: Arrival in Houston, TX (IAH)

Arrival in Houston at George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH), transfer to hotel, and gather for a group dinner.

-Overnight: Houston, TX

April 19: Sheldon Lake, J.J. Mayes Trace Park, High Island - Transfer to Winnie

After an early breakfast, we'll begin our drive east towards Beaumont. We will make several stops along the way including at Sheldon Lake. Many species of wading birds should be seen and it will be our best chance to see a Limpkin during the tour. Depending on weather conditions we may make stops at a couple more inland sites, but if the weather is good for migration, we will drive to the coast. J.J. Mayes Trace Park is one of our possible stops where we will bird freshwater marsh, second growth, and forest edge habitats. Some of the highlights species could include King Rail, many species of herons and egrets, Painted Bunting, and many species of migrant songbirds. After lunch in Winnie, we will likely make our first visit to High Island. Hopefully there will be many migrants around, but if not, we will check out a very impressive rookery with hundreds of herons, egrets, spoonbills, and more!

-Overnight: Winnie, TX

April 20: Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, Bolivar Peninsula, and High Island

We'll spend the whole day birding in and around the famed High Island, including a stop at Anahuac NWR. We'll also spend some time tracking down many shorebirds and waterbirds on the flats at Bolivar Peninsula. Much of the birding will depend on the weather, so we won't hold ourselves to a specific schedule.

High Island is an underground salt dome on the Texas coast that rises over 30 feet above sea level. This slightly higher elevation allows the growth of many species of trees and shrubs that can't grow in the surrounding marsh. When migrant songbirds that are crossing the Gulf of Mexico reach the up-

per Texas coast, this “island” provides good habitat for them to rest and recover from their long flight. We will visit several of the refuges looking for many species of warblers, thrushes, vireos, tanagers, orioles, and more!



Hooded Warbler

Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, just to the west of High Island, provides great access to both salt and freshwater marshes and some small woodlots. We will spend some time birding from the auto loop around Shoveler Pond where we should see Least Bitterns, Purple Gallinules, several species of ducks, and many species of shorebirds. We will also walk some of the trails where we will be looking for many species of migrant passerines. This area is also great for raptors including White-tailed Kites.

Bolivar Peninsula, a 27-mile spit of land that extends west from High Island towards Galveston Island is one of the premier locations for observing shorebirds along the entire Gulf Coast. In addition to the shorebird habitat, there is also great saltmarsh habitat. We will spend time birding a number of locations on the peninsula including Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary, Rollover Pass, Tuna Road, and Horseshoe Marsh. The birding can be spectacular with some of the highlights including American Oystercatcher, Wilson’s, Piping, and Snowy Plovers, Red Knot, thousands of American Avocets, many species of terns, Clapper Rail, and Seaside Sparrows.

-Overnight: Winnie, TX

April 21: Angelina National Forest and Cattail Marsh

Early this morning we will make a couple hour drive north of Beaumont to Angelina National Forest. We’ll spend the morning looking for a few specialty species of the piney woods region that is restricted to the southeastern United States. Our targets will be Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Bachman’s Sparrow, and Brown-headed Nuthatch. Once everyone has had their fill of these specialties and before we

head to lunch, we will spend some time birding at Martin Dies Jr. State Park. The main specialty of this park are breeding Swallow-tailed Kites and Swainson's Warblers. In the afternoon, we'll visit Cattail Marsh in Beaumont. This 900-acre marsh complex will give us a great chance to see a wide variety of waterbirds including rails and bitterns and many species of shorebirds! There is a great boardwalk for birding here and we will join someone from Cattail Marsh so that we can drive around to areas that are too far to access on foot.

-Overnight: Winnie, TX



Brown-headed Nuthatch

April 22: Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, Bolivar Peninsula, and High Island

Since migration changes so rapidly, we'll visit many of the same locations we did on the first day to see what new species might be migrating through. We will also spend some time birding the many rice fields in this area. Once we find a rice field with the correct water level, we should find hundreds to thousands of shorebirds. Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, and White-rumped Sandpiper are among the highlight species.

-Overnight: Winnie, TX

April 23: Sabine Woods, Texas and Cameron Parish, Louisiana - Transfer to Lake Charles, LA

We'll leave early this morning to drive to the Texas/Louisiana border. The coastal marsh and woodlands can have overwhelming numbers of migrants depending on weather conditions. Sabine Woods is one of the best spots along the entire Gulf Coast during migration. Unlike High Island, Sabine Woods is a coastal chenier, which is formed by a slightly elevated sandy ridge that allows oaks and other trees and shrubs to grow. We will spend time walking the trails and watching the waterdrips for the long list of migrants that move through the area.

After lunch, we will drive east into Louisiana. We will spend the afternoon birding at Peveto Woods, another great spot to watch the many warblers, vireos, thrushes, tanagers, and orioles that pour through this region each spring. This sanctuary is usually much less visited than the sites in Texas, but has the same potential for birding. We'll spend the afternoon walking the trails and watching the water drips. Hopefully it's a good day for migrants!

-Overnight: Sulphur, LA



Black-throated Green Warbler

April 24: Cameron Parish, Louisiana

We will spend our entire day birding throughout Cameron Parish. We will spend some time at Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge on their auto loop. This is a great site for many marsh species including King Rail, Least Bittern, and Purple Gallinule. Depending on water levels there can also be many shorebirds present at this site. We will also spend some time along the shoreline looking for any shorebirds, gulls, or terns we may have missed up to this point. Depending on migration, we may also revisit Peveto Woods to see what new migrants might be around. We will be flexible throughout this day to best take advantage of the conditions for migration.

-Overnight: Sulphur, LA

April 25: Departure from Houston, Texas

We'll leave early from Louisiana to drive back to the airport in Houston. We'll arrive no later than 11am for afternoon departures.

Trip Details:

Cost:

Price per person (double occupancy), from Houston, TX: \$3,799

Single Supplement: \$750

Minimum Participants: 4

Maximum Participants: 5

Price Includes:

Expert Guides

Ground Transportation in TX and LA

All Lodging

All Meals

Park Entrance Fees

Price Does Not Include:

Airfare to and from Houston, TX (IAH)

Visa and Passport Fees (if applicable)

Alcoholic Beverages

Personal Items

Tips

Travel Insurance

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 (January 18, 2027).

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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