

Panama Birding Tour with Susan Foster

August 26 - Sept 4, 2023

(9 nights, 4 at Canopy Lodge – 5 at Canopy Tower)

CANOPY LODGE

This 4-night Panama birding tour explores the foothills and cloud forests of El Valle de Antón — the home of motmots, tanagers, hummingbirds, antpittas and the mythical Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo. We enjoy all accommodation at the award-winning Canopy Lodge, with exciting bird-filled trips to La Mesa, Cerro Gaital Natural Monument, Cara Iguana, Las Minas, and the beaches of Juan Hombron and Santa Clara — all designed to find as many of the area's specialties as possible.

Day 1 (August 26)

ARRIVAL, ORIENTATION, CANOPY LODGE GROUNDS/FEEDERS

Upon arrival at the airport, you will be met by our driver who will transfer you 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.

A member of our staff will greet you as you arrive at the Lodge, and you will be provided with an orientation on the use of the facilities. At this time we will answer any questions you may have. As your luggage is being ferried to your room, or after you get settled in, you may visit the dining area and enjoy a refreshing drink and snack. You will immediately want to scan the fruit feeders and grounds for birding opportunities. Crimson-backed, Blue-gray, White-lined, Flame-rumped, Dusky-faced & Plain-colored Tanagers are about, as are Red-crowned Ant-Tanager, Thick-billed Euphonia, Chestnut-headed Oropendola, Streaked & Buff-throated Saltators, Lineated & 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 & Violet-headed Hummingbirds, White-vented Plumeleteer, and Garden Emerald! Dinner at CANOPY LODGE.

Day 2 (August 27)

AM: LAS MINAS TRAIL (20 MIN. FROM CANOPY LODGE)

After breakfast (during which we watch for Orange-billed Sparrow and Bay Wren calling just around the dining area), we head to Las Minas, an excellent trail for Panamanian bird watching. The road follows the ridge line, with sweeping vistas of forested mountains, speckled with grasslands and small fincas. The views from here are fantastic, as on a clear day near the summit both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans can be seen!

Specialties of the region include Wedge-tailed Grass-Finch, Black-and-yellow, Bay-headed & Emerald Tanagers, Tawny-capped Euphonia, Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, Spot-crowned Antvireo, Gray-headed Kite, Barred Hawk, Bat Falcon, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Swallow-tailed Kite, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, White-tipped Sicklebill, Green Thorntail, Orange-bellied (Collared) & Black-throated Trogons, Tawny-faced Gnatwren, Plain Antvireo, the endemic Stripe-cheeked Woodpecker, Spotted Woodcreeper, Red-capped & White-ruffed Manakins, Band-rumped Swift, and Black Guan. A forested slope here is also our best chance for Black-crowned Antpitta and Black-headed Antthrush! After this birding excursion, we get back in time for lunch at the CANOPY LODGE.

PM: CARA IGUANA (15 MIN. FROM CANOPY LODGE)

With a full stomach and some rest, we head to Cara Iguana Trail, where we enjoy outstanding foothill birding in some of the last remaining stands of quality Pacific dry forest. Exclusive Panamanian birding opportunities in this area include Lesser Elaenia, Yellow-olive & Panama Flycatchers, Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Lance-tailed Manakin, Rufous-breasted & Rufous-and-white Wrens, Rosy Thrush-Tanager, Tody & Lesson's Motmots, and Long-billed Gnatwren. Also resident are Striped Cuckoo, Little Tinamou, Common Potoo, Dusky & White-bellied Antbirds, Barred Antshrike, White-winged Becard, Tropical Screech-Owl and Bat Falcon. Hummers to watch for in particular are Garden Emerald, Long-billed Starthroat and White-vented Plumeleteer. During migration we look for Bay-breasted, Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Green & Worm-eating Warblers. Dinner at CANOPY LODGE.

Day 3 (August 28)

AM: LA MESA ROAD (15 MIN. FROM CANOPY LODGE)

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 & 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 Orange-bellied (Collared) Trogon. Lunch at CANOPY LODGE.

PM: MATA AHOGADO ROAD (15 MIN. FROM CANOPY LODGE)

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. Dinner at CANOPY LODGE.

Day 4 (August 29)

PACIFIC DRY FOREST & SANTA CLARA BEACH (45 MIN. FROM CANOPY LODGE) FULL DAY

After breakfast we are off for a full day of Panama bird watching in the Pacific dry forest, with its unique cast of birds. Among the species we will be seeking out today are Yellow-headed Caracara, Roadside, Gray-lined, Zone-tailed, Savanna & Short-tailed Hawks, Peregrine & Aplomado (rare) Falcons, White-tailed Kite, and Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. We will also search for Crested Bobwhite, Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant, Golden-fronted Greenlet, Grassland Yellow-Finch, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Brown-throated Parakeet, Blue Ground Dove, Red-breasted Meadowlark, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, and Crested Oropendola.

We stop at a spot where we sometimes find Common Potoo. Hummers to be on the watch for in this unique scrubby area are the near-endemic Veraguan Mango and Garden Emerald. We enjoy a picnic lunch at a popular beach at Santa Clara where we hope to spot Sapphire-throated Hummingbird working the coastal shrubbery. You may want to bring your bathing suits to take a dip in the warm waters of the Pacific Ocean (83F/28C). On the beach or flying by may be Least, Western & Spotted Sandpipers, Sanderling, Blue-footed & Brown Boobies, Sandwich, Royal & Elegant Terns, Willet, Whimbrel, and Franklin's & Laughing Gulls. At the Juan Hombron rice fields we hope to find Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Crested Caracara, Gray-cowled Wood-Rail, Northern Scrub-Flycatcher, Southern Lapwing, Great Blue Heron, Tricolored Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Glossy Ibis, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Pale-breasted Spinetail, Plain-breasted Ground Dove, Mouse-colored Tyrannulet, Common (or Mangrove) Black Hawk, and Pearl Kite. Dinner at CANOPY LODGE.

Day 5 (August 30)

DEPARTURE TO CANOPY TOWER (ABOUT 2.5 HRS. FROM CANOPY LODGE)

After a leisurely breakfast, if time permits you may do some last-minute Panamanian bird watching in the gardens surrounding the lodge. Then, we will drive back to Canopy Tower.

CANOPY TOWER

This all-inclusive tour emphasizes the bird-rich lowland tropical forests of the Canal Zone. It features some of the best birding Central America has to offer! Our base of operations will be the world-famous Canopy Tower with unlimited access to our fabulous Observation Deck every morning, afternoon and evening, where you can enjoy "canopy birding" at its best. Excursions to some of Panama's premier birding locations, including the world famous Pipeline Road, along with Semaphore Hill, Plantation Trail, Summit Ponds, the Panama Rainforest Discovery Center and its remarkable tower, the Chagres River, Gamboa and the marshy Ammo Ponds round out an outstanding 5 days of birding.

PM: SUMMIT PONDS /OLD GAMBOA ROAD (10 MIN. FROM CANOPY TOWER)

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 & Boat-billed Herons as well as Green, Ringed, Amazon, Green-and-rufous (rare) & American Pygmy Kingfishers, which are all resident here. We also seek out Rusty-margined & Streaked Flycatchers,

Mangrove Swallow, Bat Falcon, Cocoa Woodcreeper and Lineated & 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 & Royal Flycatchers, Lance-tailed & 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.

Day 6 (August 31)

AM: CANOPY TOWER & SEMAPHORE HILL ROAD

Your guide will be waiting for you at the Observation Deck for early morning birding. While you look for birds you can enjoy hot coffee, tea and orange juice. Some of the bird species that we may see from the observation deck are Green & Red-legged Honeycreepers, Green Shrike-Vireo, Blue Cotinga, Scaled Pigeon, Mealy & Red-ored Parrots, Keel-billed Toucan, Collared Araçari, Red-capped & Blue-crowned Manakins, a huge diversity of flycatchers and tanagers, and raptors including King Vulture and Black Hawk-Eagle. After breakfast, at mid-morning, you'll start exploring Soberanía National Park by taking a pleasant walk down Semaphore Hill Road. This winding, shady paved road, festooned on its shoulders by wildflowers of many types, is a little more than a mile long and crosses a large creek about half-way down. There are some incredible Panama birding opportunities here, including birds from the forest interior as well as edge-dwellers. Olivaceous Flatbill, Plain Xenops, Lesser Greenlet, Black-breasted & White-whiskered Puffbirds, Fasciated & Black-crowned (formerly Western Slaty) Antshrikes, Slate-colored Grosbeak, Bay-headed & White-shouldered Tanagers, Black-throated & Slaty-tailed Trogons, Broad-billed & Rufous Motmots and even Great Jacamar may be found. Great Tinamou is often heard but harder to see. This road is also great for raptors, such as White, Tiny & Great Black Hawks. During migration it's easy to see more than 10 species of warbler in one morning. Your morning bird list will be impressive, as we catch a ride back just in time to enjoy a delicious lunch at the CANOPY TOWER.

PM: AMMO DUMP PONDS & ENVIRONS (15 MIN. FROM CANOPY TOWER)

The Ammo Dump Ponds are located just past Gamboa on the way to the Pipeline Road. It is the best place to see the elusive White-throated Crake, as well as a host of other waterbirds. Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Wattled Jacana, and Purple Gallinule are common, and Least Grebe and American Pygmy-Kingfisher are also resident. In this area we often find Greater Ani, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Whooping Motmot (recent split from Blue-crowned), Yellow-tailed Oriole, Southern Lapwing, Anhinga, Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet, Scrub Greenlet, Lesser Kiskadee, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Panama, Social & Rusty-margined Flycatchers, and even Olivaceous Piculet. Panama birding is excellent here, and you'll definitely add to your impressive list of birds! Dinner at CANOPY TOWER.

Day 7 (Sept 1)

AM: PIPELINE ROAD ENTRANCE (20 MIN. FROM CANOPY TOWER)

After breakfast you board the Birdmobile or El Tinamu, both open-air vehicles, that take you 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 (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 & Buff-breasted Wrens, Golden-collared Manakin, White-necked Puffbird, Gartered, Slaty-tailed, Black-throated, White-tailed & Black-tailed Trogons, Purple-crowned Fairy, Yellow Tyrannulet, White-bellied & Dusky Antbirds, Fasciated & Black-crowned Antshrikes, and many more. During migration this entrance road is excellent for migrant warblers, flycatchers, grosbeaks and tanagers. Lunch at CANOPY TOWER.

PM: SUMMIT GARDENS/HARPY EXHIBIT (10 MIN. FROM CANOPY TOWER)

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 & Great Black Hawks, Collared Forest-Falcon, Tropical Pewee, Masked Tityra, Golden-fronted & Scrub Greenlets, Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Giant, Shiny & 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. Dinner at CANOPY TOWER.

Day 8 (Sept 2)

WORLD FAMOUS PIPELINE ROAD (20 MIN. FROM CANOPY TOWER) FULL DAY

Today we will search for the area's most sought-after specialties, from the Great Jacamar and the Pheasant Cuckoo to the Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo and the Harpy Eagle, both recorded here. Eight species of wren, 5 trogons, 4 puffbirds, 3 motmots, and many tanagers and flycatchers, including the unusual Brownish Twistwing, are often found. Also, the calls of Streak-chested Antpitta and Black-faced Antthrush will lure us in!

Army ant swarms are found occasionally, attended by a host of birds including Bicolored, Ocellated & Spotted Antbirds. Plus, we will hunt for Golden-collared, Red-capped & Blue-crowned Manakins, always high on a birder's list of favorites! Raptors include 3 forest-falcons, Tiny & Semiplumbeous Hawks, Ornate & Black Hawk-Eagles soaring overhead. Other residents include Carmiol's & Sulphur-rumped Tanagers, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Black-crowned & Masked Tityras, Cinnamon & Crimson-crested Woodpeckers, Scarlet-rumped Cacique, Red-lored & Brown-hooded Parrots, Collared Araçari, Speckled Mourner, Buff-throated Foliage-Gleaner, Keel-billed & Yellow-throated Toucans, and Black-striped, Northern Barred and Plain-brown woodcreepers. As we cross several rivers, we search for Sunbittern and Green-and-rufous Kingfisher. To maximize our time in the field, we enjoy a nice picnic lunch along Pipeline Road—but with scope and binoculars at the ready! After lunch, we search for more species, including the elusive Wing-banded Antbird, Spot-crowned Antwren, Moustached Antwren, Ruddy Quail-Dove, and Marbled Wood-Quail! Dinner at CANOPY TOWER.

Day 9 (Sept 3)

AM: RAINFOREST DISCOVERY CENTER (20 MIN. FROM CANOPY TOWER)

After breakfast we depart to the Panamá Rainforest Discovery Center, an ecotourism and environmental education facility created and administered by Fundación 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 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 & 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. Lunch at CANOPY TOWER.

PM: MIRAFLORES LOCKS (OPTIONAL)

This afternoon you have the option to relax on your own, catch up on some photography, or visit the Miraflores Locks Museum. In addition to seeing first-hand the operation of the Canal, with huge container ships negotiating the narrow locks, you may also explore the world-class museum there. Magnificent Frigatebirds can be seen gliding overhead, so you won't miss out on any Panama birding opportunities.

Day 10 (Sept 4)

DEPARTURE

If time permits, after breakfast you may have one last look from the Observation Deck. Then we take you to the airport for your return flight home, with awesome memories of birds, mammals, wildflowers, butterflies and everything else you experienced while birding at the Canopy Tower!

Please note that this itinerary may change without prior notice due to weather, alterations in habitat or other conditions.