



# PANAMA

## CANOPY LODGE & TOWER

**Guides: Adam Sell & Local Guide**

**March 15-23, 2025**

**Cost: \$4995 per person sharing**

**Single Supplement: See important information section**

**Maximum group size: 10 participants**



**Extend your Panama tour to the [Canopy Camp](#) for a \$300 discount!**

Panama is not only the gateway for commerce between oceans, but also the bridge between two continents. This has created a melting pot of biodiversity with avifauna of both North and South America, and many species limited to this region. With its incredible birding, wonderful accommodations, excellent infrastructure, and easy access from the United States, it offers perhaps the best combination of a great destination for an introduction to the tropics and a place where the seasoned world birder can go to see a blast of new birds in an incredible setting.

This easy weeklong tour is designed to take in the best of Panamanian birding, staying at the world-famous Canopy Family of lodges, renowned for their exceptional birding, delicious food, and comfortable accommodations. The main tour takes in their two best known and most easily accessed lodges—Canopy Tower in the Central lowlands of Soberanía National Park and Canopy Lodge at a higher elevation in El Valle de Antón. Day trips to higher elevation and Pacific dry forests will allow us to maximize the diversity of neotropical birds seen, which include a few endemics! No visit to Panama City would be complete without visiting the Panama Canal, and we will enjoy an afternoon at Miraflores Locks to learn about the history and engineering behind it all.

## ITINERARY

### **Day 1, Sat, Mar 15. Arrival in Panama City. Transfer to Canopy Lodge**

Today is an arrival day. We will all meet up at Tocumen International Airport and will take about a 2-hour transfer to the beautiful Canopy Lodge, which will serve as our base to exploring the foothills and surrounding habitats of El Valle de Anton.

### **Day 2, Sun, Mar 16. La Mesa Trails & Choro el Macho**

After breakfast, we will depart for our morning birding destination, La Mesa, a visually-pleasing blend of scrubby pastures, secondary forest and grassy fields. This area is located at a higher elevation than the lodge, and we can expect to find some different species. Tawny-capped Euphonia, Tawny-crowned tanagers, Orange-bellied Trogon, Black-faced Grosbeak, Silver-throated Tanager, Southern Lapwing, Cinnamon Becard, Spot-crowned Antvireo, Black-throated Mango, Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant and Blue-throated Toucanet are resident here. Lunch at Canopy Lodge.

After a delicious lunch and 'siesta' to relax and enjoy the grounds, we will venture back out in the late afternoon explore the trails around the Canopy Lodge and the Canopy Adventure. These winding trails pass through the dark understory of foothills forest, passing by streams, where we hope to find Buff-rumped and Rufous-capped warblers, Sunbittern, Tawny-crested Tanager, Tawny-capped Euphonia, Bay Wren and many others. The rare and spectacular Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo follows swarms of army ants through these forest trails, and if we're really lucky, we may come across one. Mottled Owls roost in dense tangles through the day, before commencing their evening activity. At the Canopy Adventure, we will pass by "Chorro El Macho", the largest waterfall in the area. We will return back to the Lodge for dinner.

### **Day 3, Mon, Mar 17. Altos del Maria**

Departing early in the morning after breakfast, we drive from El Valle in air-conditioned 4x4 SUVs up into the mountains. Set on the continental divide east of El Valle, Altos del Maria provides a spectacular addition to the birds of the region. Ascending an excellent paved road, we will climb a ridge to our destination, an expansive area of cloud forest at 3,600 ft. This area harbors an exciting variety of highland forest birds. Some of the characteristic species of this cloud forest include Yellow-eared Toucanet, Black Guan, Black-crowned Antpitta, White Hawk, Barred Forest-Falcon, Collared (Orange-bellied) Trogon, Spotted Woodcreeper, Red-faced Spinetail, Spotted Barbtail, Russet Antshrike, Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher, Rufous-browed Tyrannulet, White-ruffed Manakin, Ochraceous Wren, Slate-colored Grosbeak, and Black-and-yellow, Bay-headed, Dusky-faced & Tawny-crested Tanagers. Even the bizarre Brown-billed Scythebill is seen here regularly. Hummingbirds we may spot include Band-tailed Barbthroat,

the exquisite Snowcap, Garden & White-tailed Emeralds, Purple-throated Mountain-Gem, and White-tipped Sicklebill.

After a picnic lunch in the field, we will drop down into a valley and climb to the ridge on the opposite side. Reaching some large swaths of mature humid forest along this ridge, we will explore some trails and roadside spots in search of even more forest birds. Around mid-afternoon, we will head back into El Valle for some relaxation time prior to dinner back at the lodge.

#### **Day 4, Tue, Mar 18. Cerro Gaital and Camino Mata Ahogados**

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, Orange-bellied (Collared) Trogon, Spotted Barbtail, Common Chlorospingus, Silver-throated Tanager, Black-headed Antthrush, Slaty Antwren, Spot-crowned & Plain Antwrens, Black-faced Grosbeak, Blue Seedeater, Rufous-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 a full morning of Panama bird watching, it's time for lunch at the Canopy Lodge.

After our lunch, we will make our way to a productive road for mid-elevation birding, Camino Mata Ahogados. On this road, we will continue our search for the wonderful birds of this region, including Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Tody Motmot, Dull-mantled Antbird, White-ruffed Manakin, Golden-winged Warbler, Black-and-yellow Tanager.

#### **Day 5, Wed, Mar 19. Morning birding & transfer to Canopy Tower**

After enjoying our breakfast and the wonderful lodge feeders, we will pack up and make our journey to the Canopy Tower, located within Soberanía National Park in Panama's Canal Zone outside of Panama City. Arguably one of the most well-known ecolodges in the world, the Canopy Tower will serve as our base, and oftentimes it will be difficult for us to pull ourselves away from the 360-degree observation deck above the canopy. We will check in and relax around the tower grounds in the evening.

#### **Day 6, Thu, March 20. Semaphore Hill & Ammo Dump Ponds**

This morning will start at dawn on the observation deck. Mealy, Red-lored and Blue-headed parrots, Scaled Pigeon, Collared Aracari, Blue Cotinga, Short-tailed and Band-rumped swifts and Gray-breasted Martin as well as several species of tanagers will greet our guests as they enjoy a

hot drink before breakfast. Collared Forest-Falcon, Green Shrike-Vireo and Great Tinamou, as well as the roar of Mantled Howler monkeys, make up a typical dawn chorus in Soberanía National Park. After breakfast, we will walk down Semaphore Hill Road, where it is possible to see Blue-crowned and Red-capped manakins, Cocoa and Plain-brown woodcreepers, Rufous Motmot, Slaty-tailed Trogon, White-whiskered Puffbird, Black-crowned Antshrike, Yellow-olive Flycatcher, Plain Xenops, Blue-black Grosbeak and White Hawk among many others.

In the afternoon, we will visit the Ammo Ponds, near the town of Gamboa. This wetland is home to a wide variety of aquatic species, such as Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Striated Heron, White-throated Crake, Amazon Kingfisher, Snail Kite, Wattled Jacana and Purple Gallinule. We will scan the roadsides and grasses for Variable, Yellow-bellied and Ruddy-breasted seedeaters, Blue-black Grassquit, Scrub Greenlet, Smooth-billed Ani, Black-striped Sparrow and Ruddy Ground-Dove.

### **Day 7, Fri, March 21. Cerro Azul**

We will depart early for Cerro Azul, in the foothills east of Panama City. The cloud forest of Cerro Azul, at an elevation of 2500 ft., is a haven for hummingbirds, and up to 16 species are possible—Rufous-crested Coquette, White-tipped Sicklebill, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, Green Thorntail, Violet-headed, Violet-capped and Snowy-bellied hummingbirds are common. We will spend the morning searching for Yellow-eared Toucanet, Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle, Spot-crowned Barbet, Russet Antshrike, Spotted Woodcreeper, Black-eared Wood-Quail, and several species of tanagers, including Silver-throated, Emerald, Rufous-winged, Bay-headed, Speckled, Golden-hooded, Black-and-yellow and Hepatic. The endemic Stripe-cheeked Woodpecker is regularly seen in this area. We will have lunch at a picturesque residence overlooking the vast rainforest of Chagres National Park. The afternoon is reserved for even more birding at Cerro Azul. Dinner at Canopy Tower.

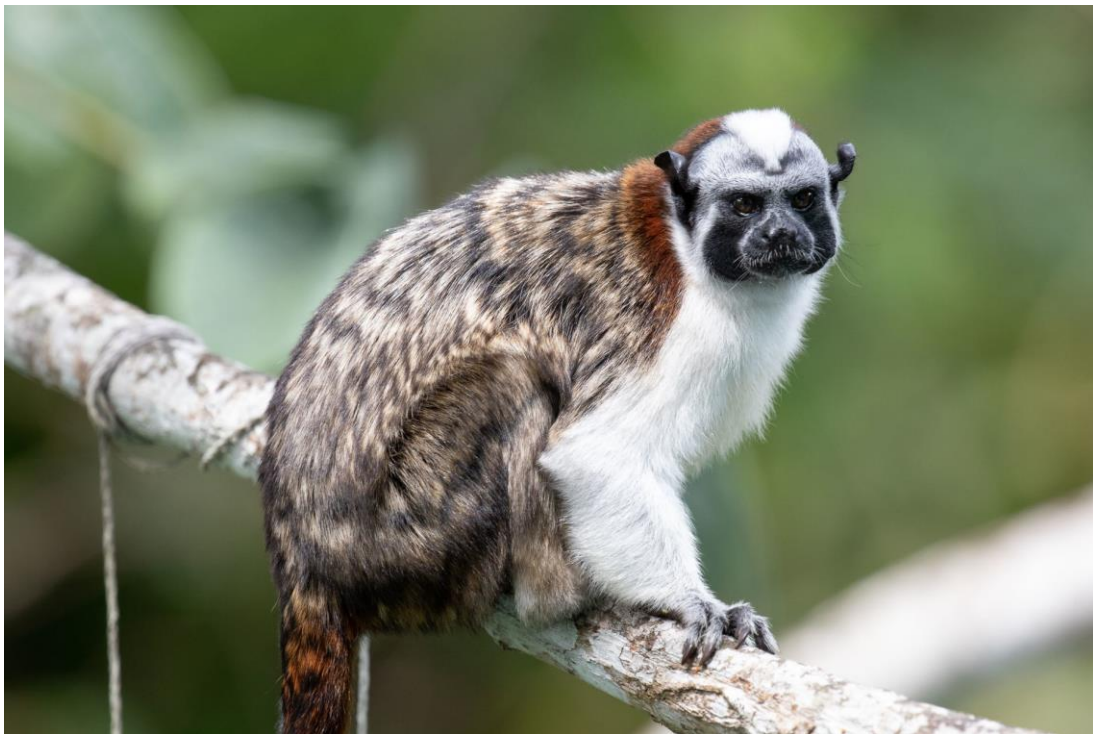
### **Day 8, Sat, March 22. Pipeline Road & Miraflores Locks**

After an early breakfast, we will depart for the world-famous Pipeline Road! Over 500 species have been recorded here, and we will be watching and listening for White-bellied Antbird, Golden-collared Manakin, Rufous Motmot, Yellow-throated Toucan, Purple-crowned Fairy, Black-striped Woodcreeper, Brown-capped Tyrannulet, Forest Elaenia, Rufous Mourner, Spot-crowned Antvireo, Fasciated Antshrike, Chestnut-backed Antbird, White-breasted Wood-Wren, Streak-chested Antpitta, Red-throated Ant-Tanager and up to 5 species of trogons! If we're lucky, an army ant swarm may provide up-close looks at Spotted, Bicolored and Ocellated antbirds, Northern Barred and Plain-brown woodcreepers, Song Wren and Gray-headed Tanager. We will return to the Canopy Tower for lunch.

In the afternoon, we will enjoy a trip to the Miraflores Locks to marvel at one of the greatest undertakings in human engineering. A visit to the Panama Canal is a unique experience and worth the time when in the Canal Zone area. As for birding, we will keep an eye out for migrants and regulars. Maybe we will catch some good movement of northbound raptors!

**Day 9, Sun, March 23. Departure for home or start of connecting Canopy Camp tour**

Today is a travel day and you can schedule your departure for any time. For those continuing on the Canopy Camp tour, we will transfer in the afternoon to the Riande Airport Hotel before we begin our trip to the Darién the following morning.



*Geoffroy's Tamarin are often easily viewed from the Canopy Tower*

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

### Contact and registration information

To sign up, each participant should complete the [booking form](#). Once we receive the form, we will send you information about paying the trip deposit. If you have any questions before registering, please contact the office at [info@redhillbirding.com](mailto:info@redhillbirding.com).

### Timing

The trip will **begin on Saturday, March 15, 2025 in Panama City, Panama**. The tour will **end on Sunday, March 23, 2025 in Panama City, Panama**. The main airport in Panama City is Tocumen International Airport (PTY). If you would like to arrive early or depart later, we can arrange airport transfers for those dates for an additional cost.

The Canopy Family has free scheduled airport transfers to the Canopy Lodge. **The scheduled transfer times are at 9:30 am and 3:30 pm**. Please plan your arrival times to accordingly. Private transfers at different times can be arranged with an additional fee. If you would like to arrive the night before, we can book you a room at the Riande Airport Hotel, which includes breakfast. The 2023 price was \$110/night.

Please do not book your flights until we confirm that the minimum number of participants (6) have registered for this tour.

### Price

The price of the trip is **\$4995** per person sharing a room. The price includes all meals, from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 9, all transportation and accommodation during that period; internal flights; airport transfers on Day 1 and Day 8; bottled water and non-alcoholic beverages with meals; a Red Hill Birding guide and a local guide for the duration of the trip; tips for the local guides and drivers; and all entrance fees. The price **does not include** international airfare; visa fees; alcoholic beverages outside of wine at dinner; snacks; laundry; tips for the Red Hill Birding guides; tips for hotel staff; or other items of a personal nature.

A deposit of **\$1000** is due upon booking to secure your reservation for this tour (**\$2000** if joining both tours) and full payment is due by **December 15, 2024**.

### **\*Note about single supplement**

At the Canopy Tower and Lodge, there are a number of single rooms, each with en suite bathrooms. There are a limited number of single rooms available for participants at both the Canopy Tower and Lodge which would remove the cost of the single supplement. Please reach out to us if you are interested in this option.



If you would like a double room without sharing at Canopy Tower and Canopy Lodge, or if there are no longer any open single rooms available, there will be an additional single supplement charge of \$181.50 *per night*. The Canopy Family charges a per person rate rather than a per room, so the single supplement is higher than usual for our tours.

### **Physical difficulty**

This trip is physically **moderate**. The terrain is varied, with a few relatively steep trails. We will be birding along roads, wide trails, and narrow trails. Some trails may be slippery after rain. Because of the nature of rainforest birding, we will have two guides to make sure that everybody sees as many of the birds as possible. We will be walking quite a bit, but we will be walking at a “birding pace.” There is excellent birding right at the lodges, so there is always the option to stay back if you do not feel up for a particular outing.

At the Canopy Tower, it is necessary to walk up several staircases to get to the rooms, restaurant, and the rooftop deck. You will be making this climb several times daily. There is no elevator.

### **Pace**

The pace of the trip is **easy to moderate**. We will be staying in just two comfortable lodges for the duration of the trip. We will maximize the amount of time we spend in the field with early mornings (some of them will be optional) and some fairly long days. Most days will include an afternoon siesta after lunch to relax or enjoy the grounds on your own; on some days we will stay out all day, arriving back at the lodge to freshen up before dinner. We will have optional nighttime excursions on a couple of evenings to look for owls, nightjars, potoos, nocturnal mammals, and other creatures of the night.

### **Weather**

Panama is solidly a neotropical country, and we will be visiting during the “dry season”, when daily rain is not expected, but always a possibility. We will make every effort to avoid being outside during the rain, but it is important to have good rain gear and waterproof hiking shoes. The weather will be hot and humid in the lowlands at the Canopy Tower, but it will be somewhat cooler in the foothills at the Canopy Lodge.

### **Photography**

The photographic opportunities in Panama are **good**. Bird photography inside the forest is always difficult, but some of our birding is along roads and wide trails, where there is better light. Photography from the Canopy Tower is excellent, and generally photography around the Canopy Lodge is very good. That said, this is primarily a birdwatching tour, so while there will be

ample opportunities for photography along the way, we will not be making special considerations for photographers.

### **Accommodations & Food**

The accommodations and food on this tour are excellent. Canopy Tower and Canopy Lodge are famous for their excellent cuisine and service. Wireless internet is provided for free at both lodges. Bottled water will be provided throughout, as well as the opportunity to refill your reusable water bottle. In the hot climate, it is important to stay hydrated. Soda, wine, and coffee/tea are included with meals; additional alcoholic beverages are extra.

### **Packing considerations**

You will generally want to wear comfortable, light-weight clothing. Long sleeves and long pants are recommended for sun protection. Comfortable, waterproof walking/hiking shoes are a must. Light-weight, quick-dry clothing that will allow you to stay cool in the tropical heat and dry quickly after rains is best. Although we are in the dry season, appropriate rain gear or an umbrella would be wise, as the tropics can always have rain.

In terms of gear, you will want to bring the usual binoculars, field guide, hat, camera, and other gear you are accustomed to going birding with. It is critical to stay well-hydrated, so please bring a reusable water bottle. For coffee drinkers, a travel coffee mug is a nice thing to have along in the morning. Panama at this time of year is generally sunny, so bring sunscreen and a hat. Bugs are rarely a problem at either lodge and where we are birding, but some mosquitoes will be around in areas with standing water, so some bug spray will be helpful. A flashlight (preferably a headlamp) will be useful during our night-time outings. Your guide will have a spotlight. Electricity is available at all lodges. Be sure to bring enough extra batteries and memory cards for cameras. No adapters for electricity are needed.

As always, the essentials, such as binoculars and medications, should be packed in carry-on bags in case of lost luggage.

### **eBird**

Your Red Hill Birding guide and/or local guides will eBirding the entire tour. If you have an eBird account, they will collect your username/email address in order to share those lists, and will share them when it is convenient. You are welcome to edit your lists to add/remove species, edit text, or change numbers as much as you would like, since any edits you make to your lists do not change others' lists. And we love it when participants add photos and sound recordings to the checklists!

The leader will also provide an eBird Trip Report after the tour and will add participants who have an eBird account to the report; this way, you can see your personal trip details and those



of the whole group. These trips reports are accessible to anyone who has the link, so participants who do not have eBird accounts can still view the trip report to see the trip list, photos, and any added text.

### Resources

The best field guide for Panama is *The Birds of Panama: A Field Guide* by George Angehr and Robert Dean. *Birds of Central America: Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama*, by Andrew C. Vallely and Dale Dyer is also excellent, but obviously covers more than our tour area. *The New Neotropical Companion* by John Kricher provides a highly readable and extremely informative introduction to tropical ecology, with a lot of great information about birds.

The Merlin Bird ID App by Cornell University has a very nice “bird pack” for Panama, which can be downloaded for free and has photos, information, and sound recordings of the birds we will encounter. It is highly recommended.

### Money

The currency in Panama is the Balboa, the value of which is tied 1:1 with the American dollar. Dollars are accepted and circulated as legal currency. There is no need to change money.

### Tipping

We aim to provide exceptional service, using guides that are knowledgeable, interesting, personable, and experienced. While tipping is never expected, if you feel that your guides went above and beyond, you are welcome to leave them a gratuity. **Note that the tip for our local guides and drivers are included in the tour price.**

### Travel insurance

We do not require travel insurance for trips to Panama. However, we recommend purchasing it to help protect you against the unexpected. For your convenience, we offer travel protection through Travelex Insurance Services. For more information on the available plans or to enroll, go to [www.travelexinsurance.com](http://www.travelexinsurance.com) or contact Travelex Insurance Services at 800-228-9792 and reference location number 13-0441.

Travelex Insurance Services, Inc CA Agency License #0D10209. Travel Insurance is underwritten by, Berkshire Hathaway Specialty Insurance Company, NAIC #22276. 55Y

Note that to be eligible for some benefits, travel insurance must be purchased within 1-2 weeks of paying the trip deposit.