



# SOUTHEAST ARIZONA IN WINTER

## JANUARY 15 – 20, 2025

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**Guide: Josh Engel**

Maximum group size is 7 participants

Price: \$2475 per person  
Based on double occupancy  
**\$540 single room supplement**

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**Check out the trip website here: [redhillbirding.com/arizonawinter](http://redhillbirding.com/arizonawinter)**

**To register, fill out the booking form here: [redhillbirding.com/bookingform](http://redhillbirding.com/bookingform)**

Southeast Arizona ranks high on many birders' lists as the country's top birding region. With a huge diversity of birds year round in stark mountain and desert landscapes, it's no mystery why. This short itinerary will allow you to soak in many of the ecological wonders Southeast Arizona has to offer. From the deserts of Tucson where we will get familiar with common specialties of the Sonoran Desert through multiple "sky island" mountain ranges, we'll get a thorough sampling of the best the region offers in winter. Our itinerary will take us to such fabled winter birding hotspots as Madera Canyon, the Santa Cruz and San Pedro River corridors, Patagonia, and grassland sites full of wintering raptors and sparrows. Southeast Arizona in winter is not as well-known for birding as in summer, but the birding is fantastic and the weather verges on perfect.



## ITINERARY

### **Day 1, Wed, Jan 15. Arrive to Tucson, drive to Green Valley. Night: Green Valley.**

We will meet at the airport in Tucson in the early afternoon, gathering everyone, and head out for a bit of birding before ending the day in Green Valley, where we will be based for two nights. Our afternoon birding may be to the famed Sweetwater Wetlands, where water in the desert draws a large diversity of waterbirds along with many wintering and resident songbirds—birds like Cinnamon Teal, Gambel's Quail, Verdin, Phainopepla, Abert's Towhee, and even Greater Roadrunner.

### **Day 2, Thu, Jan 16. Green Valley to Sierra Vista via Las Cienegas and Patagonia. Night: Green Valley.**

We will have a full day to explore the Santa Rita Mountains—Madera Canyon in particular—and the riparian forest along the Santa Cruz River. We will start in the Santa Rita Mountains south of Tucson, where Madera Canyon is located. Madera Canyon is home to the Santa Rita Lodge, which has a host of hummingbird and other feeders that are always a hit with both birds and birders. The flurry of birds here will be evident as soon as we pull in, with Anna's and hopefully other hummingbirds all vying for spots on the feeders, while Dark-eyed Junco, Spotted Towhee, and various other sparrows forage under the see feeders. Mexican Jay, Bridled Titmouse, and Arizona Woodpecker all visit the regular feeders here, too, adding to the excitement. An Elegant Trogon sometimes winters here, and if one is around, we will look hard for it.

For the afternoon, we will investigate the Santa Cruz River, south of the Santa Ritas. There are walking paths in many areas along the Santa Cruz River, and the riparian forests and edges here are full of birds in winter. It's an interesting mix of enticing local residents like Rufous-winged Sparrow, Bridled Titmouse, and Hutton's Vireo, and wintering species like Western Bluebird and the occasional Lawrence's Goldfinch or Rufous-backed Robin.

### **Day 3, Fri, Jan 17. Green Valley to Sierra Vista. Night: Casa de San Pedro B&B.**

We will head out early from Green Valley, making our way east and then south to start our birding in the grasslands of Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. Northern Harriers, White-tailed Kites, and sometimes Prairie Falcons ply the grasslands. Says Phoebe and Loggerhead Shrike dot the fence lines, and we will learn the intricacies of identifying Chihuahuan and Western Meadowlarks. Sparrow flocks are impressive here, and we could find Vesper, Brewer's, Grasshopper, Lark, and many others, and with a large dose of luck, possibly Baird's Sparrow or Chestnut-collared Longspur.

From there we will head to the small town of Patagonia for lunch and afternoon birding. Patagonia is not only famous for its "picnic table effect," it just has a lot of great birding. We will stop in at Tucson Audubon's Paton Center for Hummingbirds, where we hope to see Violet-crowned and Broad-billed Hummingbird visiting the feeders among the abundant Anna's.

We may also visit Patagonia-Sonoita Creek and Patagonia Lake State Park in this area. There are occasionally Black-capped Gnatcatcher and Elegant Trogon here in winter, along with many other great birds, like Green-tailed, Canyon, and Abert's Towhees, Lazuli Bunting, Hepatic Tanager, Cassin's Kingbird, and Vermilion Flycatcher. Red-naped Sapsuckers winter in the area, and Gila and Ladder-backed Woodpeckers are common.

We will end the day near Sierra Vista, where we will stay for two nights in a beautiful B&B in the desert that features an array of bird feeders.

**Day 4, Sat, Jan 18. Sierra Vista area. Night: Casa de San Pedro B&B.**

We will have a full day in the Sierra Vista area. We will start the morning birding around the B&B and the San Pedro River, watching the feeders at the B&B and checking out the riparian habitats nearby.

We will also spend time in canyons on the east side of the Huachuca Mountains, where if we get extremely lucky, we may bump into Montezuma Quail, one of the US's most difficult-to-find resident birds. This will also give us another chance to see birds of oak woodlands at higher elevations, like Mexican Jay, Yellow-eyed Junco, Arizona Woodpecker, Acorn Woodpecker, Bushtit, and Rivoli's Hummingbird. Hammond's and Dusky Flycatchers and Townsend's Solitaire winter in the area, and Brown Creeper, Canyon Wren, and many others are resident.

**Day 5, Sun, Jan 19. Sierra Vista to Tucson. Night: Tucson.**

After breakfast at the B&B, we will head to the Sulphur Springs Valley and Whitewater Draw. We will cruise grasslands and agricultural areas looking for wintering birds like Ferruginous Hawk, Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, Common and Chihuahuan Ravens, Long-billed Curlew, flocks of sparrows and Lark Buntings, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. We could also come across Scaled Quail, Common Ground-Dove, and perhaps Sage and Bendire's Thrasher.

The real draw here, pardon the pun, is Whitewater Draw. We hope to see large flocks of Snow and Ross's Geese and Sandhill Cranes feeding in fields and coming in to the wetlands after their morning foraging. Wintering ducks and other waterbirds are also abundant here, and could include 15 species of ducks, various shorebirds, grebes, and rails.

From here, we will work our way back to Tucson. We will keep an eye on bird reports, perhaps tracking down Chestnut-collared or Thick-billed Longspurs, or stopping in at the ponds in Willcox, another great spot for waterbirds in the desert. We'll get back to Tucson in the evening.

**Day 6, Mon, Jan 20. Departure from Tucson.**

We want one last morning for birding, so we will do some desert birding around Tucson before heading to the airport around midday. We will hope to find birds of the Sonoran Desert that we haven't seen yet, perhaps including Gilded Flicker, Harris's Hawk, and Black-tailed Gnatcatcher. By lunchtime, we will be dropping you at the airport for your return home.

## IMPORTANT NOTES

### 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 at 2:00pm at the Tucson Airport on Wednesday, January 15, 2025**, and will **end at the Tucson Airport by 11am on Monday, January 20**. We will be birding in a single van with the guide driving.

### Physical difficulty

This trip is **physically easy**. Much birding will be done from roads and other easily accessible places. That said, this is a hilly and mountainous region, so we will sometimes be walking over uneven and possibly steep terrain. We will always be walking at a birding pace (that is, very slowly). These walks could last up to a few hours and total several miles by the end of the day.

### Pace

The **pace** of the trip is **easy-moderate**. A typical day will have us up early to take advantage of early morning bird activity. This is a relatively short trip and the winter weather is mild, so we will be spending most of the day in the field. We will sometimes take breakfast or lunch into the field with us. There may be one or two optional nighttime outings to look for owls and other nocturnal creatures.

### Price

The price of the trip is **\$2475** and the single room supplement is **\$540**. This price **includes** all meals (excluding alcoholic beverages) from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 6; all transportation and accommodation during that period; an expert Red Hill Birding guide with a scope and audio equipment; all entrance fees; and a bound checklist to keep track of sightings during the trip. It **does not include** alcoholic beverages, travel insurance, airport transfers, optional activities, snacks, laundry, tips (apart from meals), or other items of a personal nature.

A deposit of \$600 per person and the submission of the [booking form](#) will secure your place on the trip. Upon receiving your booking form, we will send you deposit details. Final payment is due by April 24, 2024. We accept payment by Zelle, check, and bank transfer. We also accept payment by credit card with an additional 3% processing fee.

### Hotels

Accommodations are good throughout. We will be staying in nice motels in Tucson and Green Valley. Near Sierra Vista, we will stay in Casa de San Pedro B&B, a wonderful desert inn that caters to birders and is located in a beautiful and birdy location. Generally, there will be free wireless internet. We favor hotels that are convenient to our birding sites whenever possible.

### **Photography**

The **photographic opportunities** are **very good**. The open nature of desert habitat lends itself well to bird photography, although it is more difficult in the forests where we are birding at higher elevations. We will be visiting several feeder setups (including hummingbird feeders) that are also excellent for photography. Although this is primarily a birding tour and we will not be making special accommodations for photographers, this is an excellent part of the country for bird photography and any photographers in the group will go home with many excellent images.

### **Weather**

The weather in Southeast Arizona in January is typically just about perfect, with cool mornings as low as about 40° and daytime highs around 70° and plenty of sunshine. We will be spending some time at higher elevations where it is a bit cooler, but we will be arriving as the day is warming. Rain is unlikely. It is worth checking the weather forecast before departure.

### **Packing considerations**

You will generally want to wear comfortable, light-weight clothing. Long sleeves and long pants are recommended for sun protection. A warm jacket and even hat and gloves are useful for when it gets cool at night and for early morning birding.

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 in such a dry environment, so please bring a reusable water bottle. For coffee drinkers, a travel coffee mug is a nice thing to have along in the morning. Southeast Arizona is sunny, so bring sunscreen and a hat as well. A flashlight (preferably a headlamp) will be useful during our nighttime outings.

### **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. Tips at restaurants are included in the cost of the tour.

### **Travel insurance**

We do not require travel insurance for domestic trips. 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.

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



Elegant Trogon carrying a caterpillar to its nest. Photo by Nathan Goldberg.