

P A N A M A

Canal Zone and Chiriqui Highlands

Custom Tour for the Lucky Ladies

Dates (2012) and prices TBA

Why Panama?

Located between 7 and 9 degrees north of the Equator, Panama boasts immense tracts of tropical rainforest. Within its small surface exists a great variety of tropical habitats, including Caribbean coral reefs, Pacific mangrove wetlands, dry tropical forests, wet rain rainforests, and mountain cloud forests with their moss-laden, orchid-covered trees. These tropical ecosystems harbor an incredible diversity of colorful flowers and plants and a wide array of wild animals like sloths, toucans, anteaters, and monkeys. There are about 960 different species of birds - more than the total number of species found in the U.S. and Canada combined, and more than found in neighboring Costa Rica! Having more than 30% of its national territory protected, Panama presents excellent opportunities to see wildlife and learn about tropical environments. Many of these protected areas are readily accessible, only minutes from the modern capital, Panama City.

Our itinerary offers opportunities to bird in most of the habitats that Panama has to offer. We will search the protected wet rainforests, mangroves, wetlands, and dry forests of the Canal Zone before we fly to the highlands to search for Resplendent Quetzals and other birds of the cloud forest. Visit many of the same habitats and see many of the same species you would encounter in Costa Rica for a fraction of the cost.

**We saw over 349 species following
this itinerary in 2010!**



Red-legged Honeycreeper at the Soberania Field Station and Lodge feeders.

Day 1: Arrive in Panama City, Panama (no meals)

Upon your arrival at the Tocumen International Airport, you will be transferred to Soberania Field Station and Lodge in Gamboa.

Day 2: Soberania National Park/Gamboa (BLD)

After breakfast this morning, we will visit sites near the field station in Gamboa. Over 170 species have been seen just in the yard of the field station! Some nearby sites we will visit include the Ammo Dump, the Marina of the Gamboa Rainforest Resort, and Plantation Trail. The Ammo Dump ponds provide our best chance to see the elusive White-throated Crake, along with Rufescent Tiger-Heron and a plethora of other species. From the marina, we might see Purple Gallinule among the plentiful water birds. Frequently Capybara are seen foraging at the water's edge. At Plantation Road we will be on the lookout for interesting inhabitants of the lowland rainforests including Black-chested Jays, Black-breasted Puffbirds, and Purple-throated Fruitcrows, among many others. In addition, we will also search the skies above for raptors like White Hawk, Bat Falcon, Black Hawk-eagle, and even a majestic King Vulture.



Purple Gallinule

Day 3: Pipeline Road AM / Summit Ponds and Summit Gardens PM (BLD)

Today you will have the opportunity to hike along the world famous Pipeline Road within Soberanía National Park. With just over 48,287 acres, this park contains outstanding

biodiversity, including most of the 500 species of birds recorded for the Panama Canal area. Frequently you can come across a mixed-species foraging flock containing literally dozens of different birds such as Dot-winged and White-flanked Antwrens, Fasciated and Western-slaty Antshrike, Plain Xenops, Olivaceous Flatbill, Black-tailed Flycatcher, Cocoa Woodcreeper, and many more. This area is also famous for the occurrence of Army Ant swarms who, by raiding the forest floor, flush out many insects that in turn attract a series of properly named Antbirds. Possible are Spotted, Bicolored, and Ocellated Antbirds, along with many Woodcreepers including Northern-barred, Plain-brown, and Black-striped. In addition, you may come across a Gray-headed Tanager, or an opportunistic White-whiskered Puffbird, or even an elusive Streak-chested Antpitta.



White-whiskered Puffbird



Streak-chested Antpitta

At Summit Ponds we can expect to see Boat-billed Heron and multiple Kingfisher species, and we might be lucky enough to find Capped Heron. As we walk down Old Gamboa Road, we will watch for a pair of resident Spectacled Owls, as well as more typical forest species. From parts of the road, you will be able to see work being done for the new Panama Canal locks.



Boat-billed Heron



Amazon Kingfisher

Day 4: Cerro Azul / Cerro Jefe (BLD)

After an early drive this morning, we will be birding the foothills of the Chagres National Park. With over 320,000 acres, this is the largest protected area in the Panama Canal Watershed. Here we can find humid forest species like Rufous-crested Coquette, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, White-tipped Sicklebill, and even the endemic Stripe-cheeked Woodpecker. At close to 3,000

feet above sea level, in the Cerro Jefe area you will come across some mountain specialties like the Scale-crested Pygmy-tyrant, Spotted Woodcreeper, Yellow-eared Toucanet, Black-and-Yellow, Bay-headed, Rufous-winged, and Olive Tanagers; as well as an opportunity for the nearly endemic Tacarcuna Bush-tanager.



Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant



White-tipped Sicklebill

Day 5: Rainforest Discovery Center and Pipeline Road / Fly to David (BLD)

This morning we will return to Pipeline Road, where we will visit the Rainforest Discovery Center. The center boasts a 100-foot observation tower, providing an excellent vantage point for viewing canopy species. We will take time to enjoy the hummingbird show at the feeders at the visitors center and explore a few short trails before we return to the lodge for lunch and to prepare for our departure to the highlands. Later in the afternoon, you will understand why Panama harbors such tremendous biodiversity as the landscape changes dramatically during our short 50-minute flight from the Canal Zone to the Chiriqui Province.



Silver-beaked Tanager



Squirrel Cuckoo



Violet-bellied Hummingbird

Day 6: Baru Volcano National Park (BLD)

Today we will explore the forests of the Los Quetzales Trail at the Baru Volcano National Park. Because of its importance in preserving unique elements of the flora and fauna, UNESCO has declared this area a Biosphere Reserve. Amidst the moss-covered, epiphyte-laden trees of the cloud forest we may spot Buffy Tufted-cheek, Sooty-capped Bush-tanager, Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher, and Large-footed Finch. Flowering bushes by the trail may yield White-throated Mountain-gem, Stripe-tailed, Scintillant, and Volcano Hummingbirds.

Later today, if time permits, we will visit the Dracula Orchid Farm where we will amuse our eyes with these enchanting flowers, all the while staying on the lookout for Silver-throated Tanager, Black-faced Solitaire, Ruddy-capped Nightingale-thrush, Magnificent Hummingbird, and others.

Day 7: La Amistad International Park (BLD)

Early in the morning we will travel into La Amistad International Park (jointly protected by Panama and Costa Rica). Endemism is high in this Important Bird Area (IBA) and we will make special efforts to see many birds restricted to the Chiriqui/Talamanca Range. As we search for tiny plain brown birds like Zeledonia and easy-to-hear but difficult-to-see skulkers like Silvery-fronted Tapaculo, we will be dazzled by some of the most gaudy birds in the world such as Spangle-cheeked Tanager, Collared Redstart and Flame-throated Warbler. Here we may also find the breathtakingly gorgeous Resplendent Quetzal.



Resplendent Quetzal

Day 8: Western Foothills (BLD)

Today we will explore nearby forests in search of foothill bird species. We will start by visiting the Volcan Lakes where we may discover some waders like Northern Jacana, Masked Duck, Least and Pied-billed Grebes. In addition, the lush forest around the lakes may yield many new species, including Olivaceous Piculet, Slaty Spinetail, and possibly the nearly endemic Fiery-billed Aracari. Late in the afternoon, we will be transferred back to David, where we will board our flight back to Panama City. Time permitting, we may bird the airport grounds for Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Brown-throated Parakeet, and the endemic Veraguan Mango.



Collared Aracari

Day 9: Madden Dry Forest/ Miraaflores Locks (BLD)

Following breakfast, we will visit the lowland tropical forests of the Chagres National Park. In the dry forests near the Madden Dam we will be on the lookout for such specialties as Lance-tailed Manakin, Rosy Thrush-tanager, Orange-billed Sparrow, Rufous-and-white Wren, White-bellied Antbird, and with some luck, the endemic Yellow-green Tyrannulet.

Later in the afternoon of Day 10, you will be transferred to the Airport Riande Hotel where you will have dinner on your own before you prepare to leave the next day.

Day 10: Departure (B)

Today you will enjoy a buffet breakfast at the Riande Aeropuerto Hotel before taking the hotel shuttle to the Tocumen International Airport at whatever time is appropriate for your flight.

Terms and Conditions:

Price includes: Lodging in comfortable hotel and/or lodges, all meals as indicated, all local terrestrial, aquatic and air transportation within Panama, transfers, entrance fees, bilingual birding guide, and a donation to the conservation efforts of the Panama Audubon Society.

Price does not Include: International airfare to Panama City, Panama tourist card (USD\$5), Airport departure tax (USD\$20), alcoholic drinks, travel insurance, gratuities, and expenses of a personal nature (laundry, mini-bar, phone calls, medication, etc.).

Note: Departure tax and tourist card fees may be included in your airfare.

Cheepers! Birding on a Budget LLC reserves the right to make changes in the itinerary if the need should arise due to unforeseeable circumstances such as weather, landslides, and other natural phenomena, as well as suggestions by local guides in order to take advantage of an unusual birding opportunity.

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Three-toed Sloth