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Panama Green Season: Birding & Biodiversity July 10 – 17, 2016



Experience the explosion of biodiversity that arrives in Panama during Green Season. Discover unrivaled birding, a rich variety of mammals, amphibians, insects, and plants, and unique habitats — from volcanic craters to lush rainforest and Canal-side jungle. July is prime time ... Panama doesn't get more lush! And another perk of travelling to Panama during the green season? You can take advantage of deep off-season discounts. Bring on the rain!

Live among the birds for three nights at Canopy Tower, located in a remote section of beautiful Soberanía National Park. A repurposed radar tower, our lodgings are situated in the midst of the Panamanian rainforest. The top level gathering and dining area is literally in the canopy, where you can see monkeys, toucans, sloths, mixed flocks and more, right at eye level! There is also an upper deck, where you can take your morning coffee (or afternoon cocktail), that has spectacular 360° degree views of the surrounding forest, and a view of the Panama Canal. Early mornings on the top deck can't be beat, with many species of raptors and parrots taking flight for the day.



Enjoy four more nights at the spectacular Canopy Lodge, where you awake to early-morning bird calls, wisps of cloud forest fog, and frantically feeding wildlife. Enjoy breakfast with the birds, then set off for adventures in and around El Valle de Antón.

This off-season journey just can't be beat!

Tour Highlights

- Enjoy daily excursions to renowned birding areas like Panama's famous Pipeline Road
- Let expert guides help you tally a great list of tropical butterflies, frogs, birds, and mammals
- Bird from Canopy Tower's open-air "Birdmobile" — yes!
- Opt-in to night bird excursions and search for Spectacled Owl, Kinkajou, fantastic large insects, and more
- Immerse yourself in wildlife — on a walk, or from your balcony or hammock ... photo ops abound
- Ziplining anyone? A rush awaits just next door to Canopy Lodge (optional, of course)
- Stay on (or come in early) and experience the Panama Canal by boat, even going through two locks



Tour Summary

8-Day / 7-Night Birding and Biodiversity Tour with Local Guides
3 Nights Canopy Tower / 4 Nights Canopy Lodge
From Panama City



Sun., July 10 Panama City



Plan to arrive in Panama City today. Depending on your flight time, you can choose to stay close to the airport (complimentary shuttle) or in the city (by taxi) if you have time to explore a bit of Panama City — we make your reservation accordingly. As flights are spread throughout the day, dinner tonight is on your own, you can contact others of the group to meet up once we know arrival times.

Accommodations at the Riande, Airport, or the Country Inn and Suites, Amador

Mon., July 11 Canopy Tower



This morning there are shuttles from both hotels mid-to-late-morning to the Canopy Tower, our base for the next three nights. Arrive at this most-unique lodging to a frenzy of activity at the hummingbird feeders. Watch for Long-billed Hermit, White-necked Jacobin, Violet-bellied and Blue-chested Hummingbirds, and White-vented Plumeleter.

Take some time to unpack, and then sample the rainforest and Canal view from the observation deck ahead of lunch.

Our first walk is typically down Semaphore Hill right from the Tower. This winding and shady paved road, festooned by many types of wildflowers, is a little more than a mile long with a bridge that crosses a large creek about half-way down. There are life forms of every taxa to observe, up close and personal! Termites (often sharing their huge arboreal nests with trogons or puffbirds), leafcutter ants, beetles, dragonflies, damselflies, and butterflies abound, and photographic opportunities are generally excellent. Fallen fruits dropped by parrots may attract satyrs, skippers, or a foraging agouti (a forest rodent often called a *neque* in Panama). If we're lucky, we



see the cute Geoffrey's Tamarin, Black Howler Monkey, two species of toucans, or Two-toed Sloth.

We enjoy dinner tonight (and the next two nights) on the Tower's upper level with 360° canopy-level views. *Accommodations at the Canopy Tower, Panama's Canal Region. (B,L,D)*

Tues., July 12 & Wed., July 13 Canopy Tower / Pipeline Road / Semaphore Hill Road / Ammo Dump Ponds / Gamboa Resort

These two days are full of exciting moments as we spend time birding the areas surrounding Canopy Tower, including the famous Pipeline Road, Ammo Dump Ponds (our best chance at the elusive Rufescent Tiger-Heron and White-throated Crake), the Chagras River Walk by Gamboa Resort, Summit Ponds, and maybe even the Panama Rainforest Discovery Center with its remarkable observation tower. You can also elect to enjoy time at the Tower. Indeed, many species can be seen just outside the large windows — without ever leaving your chair or hammock (this is a vacation, after all!).

Several field trips occur from the Tower's famous open-air "Birdmobile" which follows us as we bird, allowing you to rest a bit and also drive back up the hill. Each day a new trail or area is featured, with the goal of seeing as many species as possible.

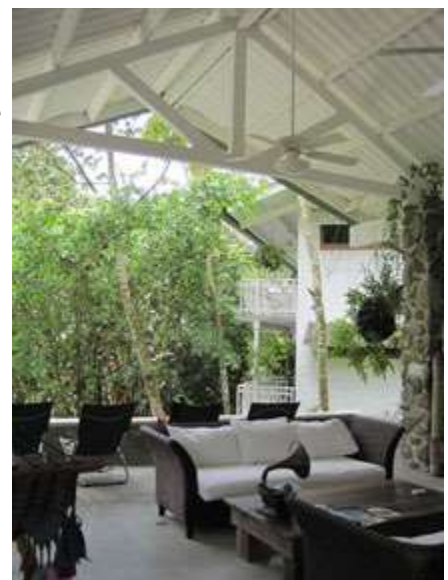
The Green Season is in full force, so you never know what you might see ... butterflies galore, basking iguanas, or maybe even a sloth or two! A variety of flowering plants are at their peak. Eight species of wrens, five trogons, four puffbirds, three motmots, Great Jacamar, Common Potoo, Pheasant Cuckoo, Greater Ani, Gray-necked Wood-Rail, and Gray-headed Chachalaca are a few of the dozens of bird species to be seen.

Butterflies will find Pipeline's roadsides, Discovery Tower, and forest trails home to a variety of clearwings, leafwings, heliconians, owl butterflies, morphos, and satyrs, and it is along Pipeline that we have our best chance to see helicopter damselflies including *Megaloprepus*, the world's largest damselfly. We also watch the ground for amphibians that frequent wet-soil areas and streams.

At ponds we scan for Green, Striated, Capped, and Boat-billed Herons as well as Green, Ringed, Amazon, and American Pygmy Kingfishers. On a boat excursion on Gatun Lake, we search for Greater Ani, Limpkin, Snail Kite, and White-faced Capuchin Monkey. This is part of the Panama Canal and we see the famous Titan Crane in the distance, at the dredge station in Gamboa.

With luck we find an ant swarm along with its many attendant birds, like the elusive Rufous-vented Ground Cuckoo, the bold Bicolored Antbird, or maybe even a Streak-throated Antpitta if we're lucky! Each day has two excursions, a morning and an afternoon adventure. Mid-day might find you searching the gardens for that elusive butterfly you saw flit by from your room, capturing memorable photos, or just enjoying a siesta. One evening we feature a night drive. Internet and an extensive library are available on site.

*Accommodations at the Canopy Tower, Panama's Canal Region.
(B,L,D each day)*



Thurs., July 14 – Sat. July 16 Canopy Lodge / La Mesa Road / Cerro Gaital / Canopy Adventure



After breakfast this morning, we make the two-hour drive to the beautiful Canopy Lodge in El Valle de Antón. This lodge, surrounded by lovely gardens, is set in an extinct volcanic caldera. In fact, El Valle de Antón is the largest inhabited volcanic crater in the Western Hemisphere. At 2,400 feet, you immediately appreciate the cool mountain air.

Our twice-daily excursions include La Mesa Road, Cerro Gaital, residential areas above El Valle, and perhaps the Canopy Adventure right next door, where the adventurous among us can try their hand at ziplining! On roads and trails, we sample different types of forest, as well as more open habitats for the best mix of species. One outing may be down to the beach where drier forests occur on the country's Pacific Ocean side. These include Roadside, Gray, and Short-tailed Hawks, White-tailed Kite, and Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. Hummers to be on the watch for in this unique

scrubby area are Veraguan Mango (endemic!) and Garden Emerald. One of the most sought after species, often found close to the Lodge, is the Tody Motmot, arguably one of the world's cutest species.

The Lodge maintains very active feeders just off the dining area, and you find yourself checking them often for great views of hummingbirds, tanagers, aracarís, chachalacas, and more. A rushing stream goes through the property and we may find a large Basilisk Lizard or even elusive Sun Bittern. There are natural ponds you can swim in, and at night we visit them to look for some of the native frogs.

This is a little piece of heaven, one very hard to leave!

Accommodations at the Canopy Lodge, El Valle (B,L,D each day)



Sun., July 17 Departures / Or, Add A Day If You Wish!

This morning, those that are not staying on depart for Panama City and flights home.

If you do wish to stay on, an extra day is available for anyone wanting more birding time! Altos del Maria is a great option for an outing to search for higher elevation species, including the cute little Snowcap Hummingbird. These are lush forests festooned with orchids and bromeliads. This is at an additional cost, and should be added at the time of registration.

(B)



A Pre-Tour Option: At Your Leisure, A Partial Canal Crossing

Those that wish to do a partial Canal crossing can come in ahead of the tour, timed with the weekly Saturday partial Canal crossing. A typical route is from the Pacific through two locks, and typically includes lunch. Cost is about \$165 per person; we can recommend a good company and lodgings. Let us know if this interests you so we can assist in the scheduling.



PLAN AHEAD!

Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance (formerly Access America).

Offset your Carbon Footprint. Show us the receipt and we'll take 50% — up to \$50 — of your carbon offset fee off your final payment!

Cost of the Journey

The cost of this journey is \$2195, double occupancy, or \$2045 single occupancy, from Panama City. This cost includes all accommodations (one night Panama City, three nights Canopy Tower, four nights Canopy Lodge; meals as specified in the itinerary; group airport transfers; professional guide services; local park and other area entrance fees; and miscellaneous program expenses.

The cost is based on a minimum number of 2 participants, maximum group size of 8. To keep tour costs low, we use expert local guides, colleagues we have worked with for many years, highly familiar with species and your surroundings. With this we can offer the program for a small group, the perfect way to experience these lodges and the birding and wildlife diversity that surrounds them.

The cost does not include transportation to or from your home to Panama, or items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone charges, portage, maid gratuities, or beverages from the bar. Single supplement (as available) is lower than the shared room cost since in the Tower you have shared bath; please ask for details.



Travel Planning



Please plan to arrive in Panama City at your convenience on or before July 10. We will assist those wishing to come in early for the Canal Crossing or other activities as you register. While they can accommodate earlier flights, we suggest you plan to depart after NOON, as it is a three hour (plus) drive from the Lodge to the airport, and you need to be there several hours ahead of your flight.

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Photo Credits

Pg. 1: Rufous-capped Warbler, Clearwing Butterfly, Peg Abbott (PA). Pg. 2: White-faced Capuchin, Road to Canopy Tower, Canopy Tower, Panama City, PA. Pg. 3: Pheasant Cuckoo, Carla Bregman; Howler Monkeys, PA. Trogon, PA, Panama Canal, Howard Topoff (HT). Pg. 4: Hibiscus, Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Canopy Lodge, PA. Pg. 5: Two-toed Sloth, Squirrel Cuckoo and Basilisk Lizard, PA. Pg. 6: Canal Lock sign, Snail Kite, Canopy Adventure, PA. Pg. 7: Tamandua, HT; Orange-bellied Trogon, Lyn Diana.

Book your tour by e-mailing info@naturalistjourneys.com or phone us at toll-free 866.900.1146, worldwide: 520.558.114

