

# Guatemala: Tikal & Las Guacamayas With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

March 23 – 30, 2019

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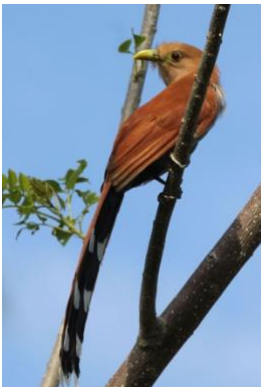
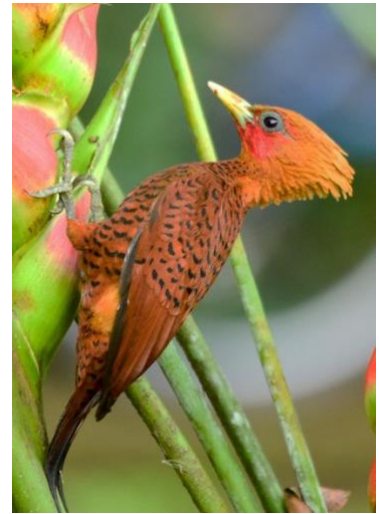
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Naturalist Journeys, LLC







Guatemala, a small country in northern Central America, once formed the core of Maya civilization. Today, in addition to hosting a stunning array of Neotropical birds and a colorful Maya culture, it offers imposing ancient architecture in the form of temple pyramids such as those of Tikal — some of the most famous in the Americas. These structures rise out of an extensive area of tropical rainforest, the largest in the Americas north of the Amazon and often called the “Mayan Rainforest.” This rainforest is so vast and so pristine that it still holds populations of large mammals such as Jaguar and Baird’s Tapir, as well as gamebirds such as Ocellated Turkey and Great Curassow.

On this tour, we explore the natural history of the “Selva Maya,” while also taking in the cultural wonders that this part of the world has to offer. Tikal itself is perhaps one of the richest birding sites in all of northern Central America, while Las Guacamayas Biological Station offers a wonderful combination of comfortable lodging set in a remote area of forest. Since this tour is scheduled in late March, colorful tanagers, toucans, parrots, and manakins abound, joined by more familiar migratory warblers, tanagers, and orioles from points north.

## Itinerary

**Sat., Mar. 23**

### Arrival in Guatemala City

Welcome to Guatemala! Arrive today at La Aurora International Airport. You may travel to Guatemala independently or we are happy to suggest convenient flights on which you may join others from the group.

It is about a three-hour flight from most USA gateway cities to Guatemala. Upon arrival, you are met at the airport for the transfer to our first hotel, a short 10-

## Tour Highlights

- ✓ Explore and birdwatch in the “Selva Maya,” the largest tropical rainforest north of the Amazon and home to an extraordinary biodiversity of both plant and animal species
- ✓ Marvel at the grandeur of the ancient ruins of Tikal, the capital of one of the most powerful kingdoms of the ancient Maya
- ✓ Visit the Waka' Perú Archaeological Site, the former capital of an ancient Maya city-state and a stronghold for the Guatemalan population of Scarlet Macaw
- ✓ Experience a stay at Las Guacamayas Biological Station; enjoying the accommodations and cuisine and learn about its many environmental and social programs
- ✓ Search for many colorful bird species typical of northern Central American rainforest: Ocellated Turkey, Keel-billed Toucan, Chestnut-colored Woodpecker, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Tody Motmot, Yellow-winged Tanager, Red-capped Manakin, and so many more

## Tour Summary

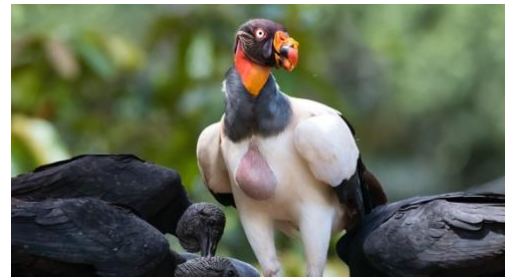
8-Day / 7-Night Guatemala Birding & Nature

Tour with Bob Meinke

\$2750 from Guatemala City

Airport is La Aurora International Airport (GUA)





minute drive from the airport. For those arriving earlier than today, your transfer is coordinated with the regular hotel shuttle.

The group officially gets together this evening at 7:00 PM in the hotel lobby to enjoy a welcome dinner where we meet our guides and fellow travelers, and enjoy an overview of this birding and nature tour to Tikal and Las Guacamayas Biological Field Station.

*Accommodation at the Clarion Suites Hotel, Guatemala City (D)*

### **Sun., Mar. 24 Flight to Flores | Tikal**

This morning, after our short flight to Flores, we meet up with our local guide. En route to Jungle Lodge we visit the beautiful Yaxha area, located 40 miles from the airport. Yaxha, always an ally of Tikal, has imposing pyramids and is connected with causeways. It is also within the Maya Biosphere Reserve and located near the Yaxha Lake. The site is part of the National Park Yaxhá Nakúm-Naranjo, which protects lowland rainforest. It is birdy here, as well as fascinating from a cultural perspective, a good start to seeing a host of new species in this lush habitat. Some of the more common and charismatic species that occur here include Squirrel Cuckoo, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Lesson's Motmot, Keel-billed Toucan, Bat Falcon, Blue Bunting, and Montezuma Oropendola.

*Accommodations at Jungle Lodge, Tikal National Park (B,L,D)*

### **Mon., Mar. 25 & Tue., Mar. 26 Tikal National Park**

Tikal is located within the Maya Biosphere Reserve and is the very best example of the Maya Classic time period. With towering pyramids that reach more than 240 feet, it is impossible to understand how impressive Maya architecture is without a personal view. Tikal is one of the few UNESCO World Heritage Sites that is recognized both for its historical heritage and its natural protected setting. While walking through the forest, we visit the different archaeological groups with plazas, pyramids, and palaces; Howler and Spider Monkeys, and showy birds like Squirrel Cuckoo, Keel-billed Toucan, and Ocellated Turkey are also moving around. We enjoy lunch at a local restaurant inside the park, and then we have the option to continue exploring. If you find yourself wanting a siesta, our hotel is just outside the gate! These two days are to wander through the jungle among the famous ruins, learning about Maya history with time for some birding. The archeological zone of Tikal is large, magnificent, and worthy of additional exploration. Birds are present in mixed flocks, while we also watch for raptors above — King Vulture, Plumbeous Kite, Swallow-tailed Kite, and Ornate Hawk-Eagle are all regularly seen overhead.

*Accommodations at Jungle Lodge, Tikal National Park (B,L,D)*





### **Wed., Mar. 27 Transfer to Las Guacamayas**

We begin our journey to the remote El Tigre National Park and Las Guacamayas Biological Station today. The dirt road passes through wetlands and several villages until we reach the last village, Paso Caballos; these villages and wetlands are often fantastic for a variety of birds of secondary habitats. White-tailed Kite, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Vermilion Flycatcher, Purple Gallinule, Northern Jacana, Limpkin, Snail Kite, and more are all possible. From this community, we take a 25-minute boat ride along the San Pedro River to Las Guacamayas Biological Station. Upon arrival, we receive a presentation on the conservation, environmental, and social programs offered by the biological station.

Although one might expect a research station to be quite basic, this wonderful gem offers great accommodations and excellent food. After a flavorful lunch, we enjoy free time in the garden to observe and photograph wildlife. The hummingbird feeders often attract Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, White-bellied Emerald, and Wedge-tailed Sabrewing. In the late afternoon, we travel along the scenic Sacluc River in search of Agami Heron, American Pygmy Kingfisher, and Sungrebe along its forested banks. For those that choose to attend the night boat excursion, we have an excellent chance of seeing Morelet's Crocodile, Northern Potoo, Boat-billed Heron, and Mottled Owl.

*Accommodations at Las Guacamayas Biological Station (B,L,D)*

### **Thurs., Mar. 28 Las Guacamayas Biological Station**

After coffee and a light breakfast, we transfer by boat to the Waka' Perú Archaeological Site. Sitting atop an escarpment in El Tigre National Park, this site was once the capital of a Maya city-state and a major trading center between 500 and 800 AD. Today, the area hosts an important population of Scarlet Macaw. A relatively flat trail goes through Maya rainforest, along which we hope to see various forest species such as Black-headed Trogon, Tody Motmot, White-whiskered Puffbird, Chestnut-colored Woodpecker, White-collared Manakin, and Black-throated Shrike-Tanager.

We head back to the station for a delicious lunch and some down time before heading back out again to look for birds around the lodge and a nearby lookout tower. Green-backed Sparrow, Red-capped Manakin, Yellow-winged Tanager, Black-faced (Mayan) Antthrush, and Yellow-tailed Oriole are just a few of the possibilities!

### **Fri., Mar. 29 Transfer to Guatemala City**

We travel along the Sacluc River near sunrise today, exploring the riverside rainforest and oak savannahs for birds we may have not yet seen (or wish to see better). Parrots like Brown-hooded, White-crowned, Red-ored, and White-fronted should be very active overhead. By traveling along the river in the early morning, we maximize our chances to see secretive wetland birds like Sungrebe and Agami Heron. In areas where there are oaks, the colorful and inquisitive Yucatan Jay is often present.



After one last lunch at the biological station, we transfer back to Flores and board the short 45-minute flight back to Guatemala City.

*Accommodations at Clarion Suites Hotel, Guatemala City (B,L,D)*

### Sat., Mar. 30 Departures

Depart at your convenience this morning from La Aurora International Airport. Keep in mind when booking flights that you need to be at the airport approximately three hours ahead of your flight, so mid- to late-morning is far more comfortable than an early morning flight. Breakfast for those on a schedule that allows, is in the hotel. The tour ends this morning with the transfer to the international airport. (B)



### Guide Bob Meinke

Bob Meinke started birding in earnest while an undergraduate in plant science at Humboldt State University in northern California. After graduate school he went on to join the botany faculty at Oregon State University (OSU), where he's led the state's Native Plant Conservation Biology Program (in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture) for over 25 years. Bob and his graduate students conducted research on the conservation and recovery of threatened and endangered plants in the western U.S., focusing on life history and re-introduction studies, and have also discovered and named a number of plant species new to science. When not botanizing, Bob

enjoys travel with his wife Kelly (also a botanist)—never having lost their early interest in birding, Bob and Kelly have traveled extensively over the years, searching for birds and other wildlife in areas as diverse as Papua New Guinea, southern India, Fiji and Tonga, Australia, Iceland, Brazil, and southwest Africa. They share a particular interest in the avifauna of Central America, and reside with their cats in an historic neighborhood in Corvallis, Oregon, a few blocks from the OSU campus.

## Cost of the Journey

### Plan Ahead!

Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. As of January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

### Group Size

This tour has a maximum of 12 participants.

### Cost of the Journey

Cost of the journey is **\$2,750 DBL / \$3,090 SGL**, based on double occupancy, per person. The tour price includes airport transfers, seven nights' accommodations, all meals from dinner Day One through breakfast Day Eight, professional guide services, park and preserve entrance fees, and miscellaneous program expenses.

Cost of the journey does not include airfare from your home to Guatemala City or items of a personal nature, such as drinks from the bar, telephone, and local guide gratuities (at your discretion, we will give some guidelines).

## Travel Information

Please plan to arrive at your convenience on by mid-afternoon on March 23. The group officially congregates for dinner around 7:00 PM. Please plan your departure at your convenience on March 30; note that a mid- to late-morning departure is more comfortable than early morning.

## Photo Credits

Black Howler Monkey, Peg Abbott (PA); White-collared Manakin, PA; Chestnut-colored Woodpecker, Sandy Sorkin; Tikal Temple, Lori Conrad; Squirrel Cuckoo, Naturalist Journeys Stock (NJS); Guatemala Market, PA; Central American Spider Monkey, PA; Keel-billed Toucan, Doug Greenberg (DG); Morelet's Crocodile, PA; Guatemalan Fabrics, PA; Montezuma Oropendola, Tom Dove (TD); Ocellated Turkey, PA; Swallow-tailed Kite, Greg Smith; King Vulture, DG; Snail Kite, PA; Boat-billed Herons, TD; Purple Gallinule, TD; Tody Motmot, PA; Black-headed Trogon, PA; White-fronted Parrot, Robert Gallardo; Agami Heron, Irene Rodriguez, Operador Latino; White-whiskered Puffbird, PA; Vermilion Flycatcher, PA; Pygmy Kingfisher, PA.