

# Rio Grande Valley Big Bend Texas Birding Tour

If you are interested in the Rio Grande Valley, Big Bend, Texas Birding Tour, come join us at Kaiyote Tours!

## 15-day Texas Rio Grande Birding Adventure

We have a birding adventure for you! On this expanded tour, we expect to see over 200 species of birds as well as amazing wildlife, geology, and cultural sites. Springtime in Texas is full of wildflowers!

### Details

- **Price:** \$3,875 per person
- **Group size:** 3 travelers, plus guides
- **Trip Length:** 15 days (14 nights)
- **Included:** Lodging (3-nights at hotels), camping (11-nights at state parks and national park campgrounds), camping gear (tent, sleeping bag, sleeping pad, pillow, solar light), cooking supplies (stove, grill, fuel, pots, pans, plates, bowls, cups, utensils, etc. Meals: Breakfast, lunch, and dinner\* (\*dinner on nights 5, 6, 14 is not included).
- **Not included:** Airfare to Houston (IAH), entrance into federal areas (if you already have a pass, bring it along), dinner on nights 5, 6, and 14. Snacks in between meals and alcohol, not included.

**Lodging and Tents:** 3-nights will be at hotels. The other 11-nights will be at Texas State Parks. We prefer to camp because we see more birds and have a lot more fun hanging out at camp and sitting around the campfire. At most all the places we camp, you will hear owls at night and at a few locations, we will go out and find them. Our tents are roomy, and the sleeping bags and pads are cozy and comfortable. If you prefer not to sleep on a pad on the ground, we can provide a cot, so you are off the ground. We provide solar lanterns for your tent.

**Meals and Restaurants:** Three dinners (2-dinners on South Padre Island and 1-dinner in San Antonio) will be at restaurants and are not included in the price of the tour. On these 3-nights we can still eat as a group if you like, or you can be on your own for the evening. The rest of the meals: Breakfast will be cooked on the grill or on the fire at camp. Lunch will be picnic style, sandwiches, fruit, etc. Dinner will be cooked on the grill or on the fire at camp. We travel with a mini-Weber Charcoal Grill and we can grill steaks, hamburgers, chicken, or fish. Sometimes we have hotdogs and s'mores on the fire. We also travel with a Dutch Oven and cook shrimp stir-fry, pasta dishes and other delicious meals. We can accommodate **vegetarians and vegans**, no problem!

**Showers:** There are free hot showers at all of the state park campgrounds, and most are very good. There are no showers at Big Bend National Park.

**Electricity:** There will be electricity at most of the campsites. No electricity on nights 10 – 14 (2- nights at Big Bend National Park and 2-nights at Kickapoo Cavern State Park are without electricity). We travel with a lithium generator and you will have access to power for recharging your equipment.

**Campfires:** All of the state park locations permit campfires (when there is not a fire ban), but there are no fires allowed at Big Bend National Park.

**Gear you need to bring:** Outdoor clothes including hiking boots, rain jacket and pants and warm clothes, including hats and gloves. Everyone should have their own

head lamp and/or flashlight, refillable water bottle, day pack for hiking and a personal small emergency kit.

### **Major stops on this tour include:**

**Texas State Parks:** Brazos Bend, Estero Llano Grande, Falcon Lake, Garner, Goose Island, Kickapoo Cavern, Lost Maples, Mustang Island, and Resaca de La Palma,

**National Wildlife Refuges:** Aransas, Attwater Prairie Chicken, Brazoria, Laguna Atascosa, San Bernard, and Santa Ana

**National Parks and Monuments:** Big Bend National Park, and Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park

**Private Reserves:** Salineño Wildlife Preserve, and South Padre Island Nature Center

There will be many short stops for **Roadside Attractions!**

### **Itinerary**

**Day 0, Houston:** You will need to arrive in Houston (IAH) the night before the tour starts. You are responsible for booking and paying for your hotel at the San Antonio airport. You are free to book any hotel you like, but it needs to be at an airport hotel with a shuttle. Please contact us before you book your hotel.

**Day 1, Brazos Bend:** Tour begins with pick up at your hotel in Houston at 9:00am. From the Houston airport area, it is 1.5-hour drive to Brazos Bend State Park, where we will be camping for 2-nights. Brazos Bend is an excellent place for viewing birds and wildlife; numerous trails and driving routes cross through the park. Alligators and Javalina are common. There are beautiful birds to be seen just sitting at the campsite area. Dinner cooked on the grill at camp. Perhaps a steak and steamed vegetables?

**Day 2, Brazos Bend:** Close to Brazos Bend are two National Wildlife Refuges; Brazoria and San Bernard (each about 1-hour away), and we will spend the day visiting these refuges as well as birding the Brazos Bend area in the evening. Dinner cooked on the grill at camp. I lived in Wisconsin for 12 years, how about beer brats and chips with avocado dip?

**Day 3, Goose Island:** From Brazos Bend, it is a 2.5-hour drive to our final destination for the day: Goose Island State Park, where we will camp for 2-nights. Along the way, we will stop at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge to look for many birds including Whooping Cranes. In the evening at our camp at Goose Island, dinner cooked on the grill. The camping area is excellent for nighttime birding in search of owls, nightjars, and herons. Dinner at camp. Perhaps a good night for shrimp and stir-fried rice and vegetables?

**Day 4, Goose Island:** Goose Island is great for camping and birding. The campsites are wooded and secluded. The campground has a feeding area for birds, including hummingbirds. Besides birding Goose Island, we will take a drive to Mustang Island State Park (about a 1-hour drive) to see the Gulf Coast and do some birding for a variety of terns and gulls. Back at our campsite at Goose Island, dinner cooked on the grill. How about hamburgers and hotdogs?

**Day 5, South Padre Island:** After a morning of birding Goose Island, we will head to South Padre. It is a 4-hour drive to the Best Western Beachside Inn, where we will be staying for 2-nights at a hotel. There will be a short stop at the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center for birding the feeders. Hotels are a nice break from camping, but we will miss the owls singing us to sleep and morning dawn songs of the birds as we wake. You are on your own for the evening and dinner. If you would still like to eat as a group, we know a great seafood restaurant where we can all meet.

**Day 6, South Padre Island:** There are three stops for birding today: 1) Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park, this is a self-interpretive stop, but also a great birding stop, with nice walking paths through the battlefield. 2) Resaca de La Palma State Park, great birding even from the parking lot. 3) South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center. After a day of birding, you are on your own for the evening and for dinner. If you would still like to eat as a group, we know a great "Pirate Ship" restaurant for an evening cruise and dinner on the boat.

**Day 7, Falcon Lake:** From South Padre Island, it is a 3-hour drive to Falcon Lake State Park where we will be camping for 1-night. There are 3-stops along the way: 1) Estero Llano Grande State Park, great birding from the visitor center. 2) Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge. 3) Salineño Wildlife Preserve, located along the Rio Grande River. At the Falcon Lake campground, there is a small botanical garden. Dinner will be on the grill at the campsite as we bird into the evening for owls and nightjars.

**Day 8, Garner State Park:** After a morning of birding Falcon Lake campground area, it is a 4-hour drive to Garner State Park and other than stopping for re-supplying, there are no birding stops along the way. Garner State park is located in the "hill-country" of Texas. The temperatures will be cooler and a different habitat, for different birds. The campground is located along the river, which is also a good swim spot. Dinner on the grill at camp. Time for some pasta, Italian sausage, and vegetables?

**Day 9, Garner State Park:** In the morning, we will take a short excursion to the Lost Maples State Natural Area for beautiful scenery and birding, located about a 45-minute drive from our camp at Garner. For the afternoon we will be back at Garner, birding the numerous trails and park grounds. Dinner on the grill at camp. How about some grilled salmon and rice?

**Day 10, Big Bend National Park:** From Garner, it is a 6-hour drive to Big Bend National Park. There will be a couple short stops along the way. We will be camping at the Rio Grande Village campground for 2-nights, within Big Bend National Park. A short walk from our camp, is a beautiful nature trail for evening birding. Dinner on the grill at camp. The temperatures at Big Bend can be hot, how about grilled chicken and a Cesare salad?

**Day 11, Big Bend National Park:** We will have one full day to see the geology, plants, and birds of Big Bend. It is a big park, and we will try and see most of it. Dinner on the grill at camp. Another light meal of chicken and vegetables.

**Day 12, Kickapoo Cavern:** From Big Bend, it is a 5-hour drive to Kickapoo Cavern State Park, where we will camp for 2-nights. There will be one stop along the way in Langtry to visit the "Judge Roy Bean" historical center. Dinner on the grill at camp. A good night for a rib-eye on the grill and vegetables!

**Day 13, Kickapoo Cavern:** Kickapoo is a small park, but excellent for birding and owling, and home to thousands of bats. Just south of Kickapoo is the Fort Clark museum and historic site, which is both good for birds and local history. Dinner on the grill at camp. Our last grill-out, traditional hamburgers and hot dogs and chips sound good?

**Day 14, San Antonio:** From Kickapoo, it is a 2.5-hour drive to the Best Western Historic Travelers Hotel located close to the Alamo and the Riverwalk. In the afternoon there will be time to visit the Alamo Mission and Museum. You are on your own for the evening and dinner. If you would still like to eat as a group, we know a great local restaurant where we can all meet.

**Day 15, Drop off at your hotel at the Houston airport\*:** On this day we head back to Houston, and it is a 3.5-hour drive. There will be a short stop at the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge to look for birds.

\*You are responsible for booking and paying for your own hotel. You are free to book any hotel you like, but it needs to be an airport hotel with a shuttle. Please contact us before you book your hotel.