

Panama Chiriqui Highlands Special Tour

This trip will focus on the birds of the Chiriqui Highlands of Panama. We will visit two locations: Boquete and Cerro Punta. These areas also have excellent hiking trails for those who do not wish to spend the day birding. Volcán Barú is an active stratovolcano and the tallest mountain in Panama at 11,398 feet with trails to the top. And for those who are neither hikers nor birders, there are coffee and garden tours as well. The temperatures of the highland cloud forest is very pleasant and can even be chilly in the morning.

- **Group Size:** 6 travelers, plus guides
- **Trip Length:** 11 days
- **Tour Rate:** \$3,650 per person double occupancy, (\$900 extra for single occupancy)
- **Rates include:** Domestic transfers, round trip airfare from DAV to PTY, lodging, breakfast, lunch, dinner, scheduled group birding tours, park entrance fees and basic travel insurance.
- **Not included:** International airfare, customs & immigration fees and visas, alcohol, snacks, trip cancellation insurance. Tour fees, other than daily birding, are not included.
- **Adventure level:** Moderate due to the altitude. Other than that, it is an easy trip.
- **Reservations:** To reserve a spot on the trip, a non-refundable \$800 per person deposit is required, and the non-refundable balance is due six months prior to the trip.

Basic Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Panama City

Most flights from the United States arrive late in the evening. We will meet you at the Tocumen International Airport (PTY) with a shuttle to the **Riande Airport Hotel**, which is a 10-minute drive to the airport. This airport hotel is a birding hot spot with over 230 species, and we will stay for 2-nights.

Day 2: Panama Canal and Gamboa

No trip to Panama is complete without a visit to the Panama Canal, both the original Miraflores locks, and the newer Cocoli expansion locks. After a quick canal visit we will head to Gamboa where we will spend the day birding the Pipeline Road area. During WWII, a petroleum pipeline and its service road were built across the isthmus of Panama as an emergency back-up for getting across Panama in case the canal was blocked. The pipeline was never used, but the single-lane, gravel-and-dirt road persists and allows entry through the center of the incredible Soberanía National Park. According to George Angehr, "Pipeline Road is one of the best places to see tropical forest birds in the Americas, with a species list exceeding 400." Along the Pipeline Road is the Discovery Center Tower and Hummingbird feeder areas; both locations are excellent for birds and photography. Birds: Great Tinamú, Pied Puffbird, Blue Cotinga, White-necked Jacobin, Blue-chested Hummingbird and Rufous Motmot, to name a few.

Day 3: Boquete

Early morning flight on Copa Airlines (a Boeing 737) to the city of David, followed by a 1-hour drive the cloud-forest and small mountain town called Boquete, where we will spend 3-nights at the **Hotel Valle del Rio**. Our place of lodging is located outside of

town at an elevation of about 4,500 feet. A birder's paradise. Here we will find highland specialties like the Volcano Hummingbird, Maroon-Chested Ground Dove, Sooty Capped Chlorospingus, Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Silvery-fronted Tapaculo, Yellow-thighed Finch, Collared Redstart, Flame-throated Warbler, Prong-billed Barbet and Wrenthrush (Zeledonia).

Day 4: Boquete

Early morning departure to the Los Quetzales Trail which leads into the national park and offers excellent birding opportunities to view Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher, Barred Becard, Black-faced Solitaire, Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch, Black-capped Flycatcher, Buffy Tuftedcheek, Ruddy Treerunner, Blue-throated (Emerald) Toucanet, Volcano Hummingbird and other highland specialties. Other possibilities include the rare Silvery-throated Jay, Scarlet-rumped Tanager, White-throated Flycatcher, Olivaceous Piculet, Masked Yellowthroat, and numerous other species.

Day 5: Boquete

Full day Jeep tour up to the top of the volcano. We will travel slowly and view many bird species that are unique to the high cloud forest. Birds such as: Volcano Junco, Volcano Hummingbird, Sooty Thrush, and Costa Rican Pygmy Owl.

Day 6: Paraiso and the Chiriquí Lowlands

On this day we will be traveling around the base of the volcano and move to a new location on the west side of the volcano. Along the way we will stop at one of our favorite birding locations called Paradise Birding for a half day visit and lunch. Paradise birding was once a farm that had removed all the natural habit, but the owner, Misael, has made this property a birding paradise, and his eBird list now tops over 400 species including, Orange-collared Manakin, Spot-crowned Euphonia, Charming Hummingbird, Black-hooded Antshrike, Riverside Wren, Slaty Spinetail, Long-billed and Plain-capped Starthroats, Crowned Woodnymph, Snowy-bellied Hummingbird, Blue-throated Golden-tail. After lunch, we will head to the Cerro Punta area, where will spend 3-nights at the **Hotel Bambito**.

Day 7: Volcán Barú National Park

Early morning departure to Volcán Barú National Park to search for Resplendent Quetzal. Volcán Barú is an active stratovolcano and the tallest mountain in Panama at 11,398 feet. It is the one spot where you can see both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Volcán Barú National Park was established in 1976, with an area of 35,400 acres. Over 250 species of birds have been identified within the park, and the park provides habitat for all five species of big cats.

Day 8: Volcán Barú National Park

Early morning departure for birding highland species like Orange-bellied Trogon, Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Red-headed Barbet, Chiriquí Quail-Dove, White-crowned Parrot, Fiery-billed Aracari, Golden-Olive Woodpecker, Pale-billed Woodpecker and many more.

Day 9: Panama City

After some morning birding, we will head down the mountain and head to the David airport for our late afternoon flight back to Panama City. We will be staying at the **Riande Airport Hotel** for 2-nights.

Day 10: Cerro Azul

Our last day in Panama will be spent birding Cerro Azul (cloud forest). Here on the mountain, we will find colorful tanagers, such as Speckled, Emerald, Bay-headed, Rufous-wing, Hepatic, and Black-and-yellow Tanager. A variety of hummingbirds are also easily found, such as Violet-headed Hummingbird, Violet-capped Hummingbird, Purple-crowned Fairy, Violet-crowned Woodnymph, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer and Hermits, such as White-tipped Sicklebill and Green Hermit. Other birds at Cerro Azul include Yellow-eared Toucanet, the endemic Striped-cheeked Woodpecker, Black-striped Woodcreeper, White-ruffed Manakin, Scaly-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, Olive-striped Flycatcher, Blue-fronted Parrotlet, Scaled Pigeon, Spot-crowned Barbet and Slate-colored Grosbeak, Black-and-White Hawk-Eagle, Speckled Antshrike and Purplish-back Quail-Dove.

Day 11: Flight Home

Shuttle to the airport for your trip home. Most flights back to the States leave in the morning