

PANAMA

CANOPY TOWER & CANOPY LODGE

August 21 - 30, 2025

OVERVIEW

This excellent introduction to the Neotropics takes us to two of Panama's most famous birding lodges, the Canopy Tower and the Canopy Lodge. Although only a 2-and-a-half-hour flight from Miami, Panama's diversity is amazingly high – almost 1,000 bird species have been reported in this small country. The Canopy Tower, situated within Soberania National Park's lowland rainforest, sits on top of the highest hill in the region and its wrap-around observation deck provides an eye-level view of the rainforest canopy. From the Tower, we have a short drive to the Canopy Lodge, situated at a higher elevation with cooler temperatures and a different suite of species. This trip is a perfect opportunity to get to know a wide range of colorful tropical bird species as well as the chance to see some cool tropical mammals! As an added bonus, we will be visiting the area at the peak of Swallow-tailed Kite migration and will hopefully see large concentrations of these graceful raptors.

Day 1, August 21: Arrival

Arrive at Panama's Tocumen International Airport, where a representative from the Canopy Tower will meet you and provide transportation to the Tower.

Overnight: Canopy Tower (meals provided will depend on the time of your arrival)

Day 2, August 22: Canopy Tower

AM: Observation Deck and Semaphore Hill, PM: Ammo Dump Pond

You will awake this morning to the sounds of the rain forest that surrounds the Canopy Tower. The upper deck of the tower provides a prime vantage point from which to observe birds and other wildlife of the forest canopy. From the tower, the wildlife is often at eye level, and it is normal to get fantastic views of birds that would be difficult to see



Three-toed Sloth

otherwise. You don't even have to leave your bedroom to find birds! Tanagers, Toucans, and Tityras can be seen right from your window. The dining area and the roof of the tower are extraordinary for finding elusive canopy birds, as well as Howler Monkeys, Sloths, Tamarins, and other mammals. Before breakfast today, we will spend time on the observation deck searching for some of the myriad species that inhabit the surrounding forest. Some of the bird species we will look for include Green and Red-legged Honeycreepers, Green Shrike-Vireo, Palm Tanager, Blue Dacnis, Keel-billed Toucan, Collared Aracari, and many others. More than 400 species of birds have been seen in this small area! After breakfast, we will start exploring the forests of Central Panama as we walk down Semaphore Hill Road. This paved road, which serves as the entrance road to the Canopy Tower, is a little more than a mile long and passes through Soberania National Park. Here you will get a chance to see birds and mammals, such as Antbirds and Agoutis, that spend their lives close to the forest floor. The bird list of Semaphore Hill Road is extensive and includes birds from the forest interior as well as edge habitats. Western Olivaceous Flatbill and White-whiskered Puffbird, Slate-colored Grosbeak, Gray-headed Tanager, and Broad-billed Motmot are all possible. Great Tinamou and Marbled Wood-Quail are often heard but to see these secretive ground-dwellers takes some effort. The road is also great for raptors including Tiny, White, and Bicolored Hawks. When we get to the bottom of Semaphore Hill Road, we will be driven back to the top in one of the Canopy Tower's specialized vehicles. The Birdmobile and Rainfomobile were designed specifically for birding, with open air seating that allows for unobstructed views in every direction. We will enjoy lunch and a short rest before venturing out for our afternoon excursion to the Ammo Dump Pond. The Ammo Dump Pond is located just north of Gamboa, on the way to Pipeline Road. It is the best place to see the elusive White-throated Crake, as well as a host of other water birds. Wattled Jacanas, Rufescent Tiger-Heron, and American Pygmy Kingfishers are present but difficult to find. **Overnight: Canopy Tower (meals: BLD)**



White-whiskered Puffbird

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Day 3, August 23: Canopy Tower

AM: Rainforest Discovery Center, Pipeline Road entrance, PM: Summit Park

This morning we will travel in the Rainfomobile to the entrance of Pipeline Road, where we will first visit the Rainforest Discovery Center. Our first stop at the Discovery Center will be the 40-meter tower that allows us to search for canopy species as they begin their morning activities. After spending a few hours here, we'll stop at their hummingbird feeders to see some of the many species that regularly feed there: Long-tailed Hermit, White-necked Jacobin, Violet-bellied, Rufous-tailed, Snowy-bellied, and Blue-chested Hummingbirds, White-vented Plumeleteer, and Crowned Woodnymph. If we are very lucky, we might even catch a glimpse of a Rufous-crested Coquette! We will bird along a short part of the famous Pipeline Road or a trail at the Discovery Center before we head back to the Canopy Tower for lunch.

Following our midday siesta, we might visit Summit Park, a combination botanical garden and animal rehab center operated by Panama City. The park contains a Harpy Eagle exhibit with a resident Harpy Eagle in a large aviary. We'll stroll the grounds here or in some other similar park in search of more birds such as Lineated Woodpecker, Black-chested Jay, Giant Cowbird, Shiny Cowbird, Common Tody-Flycatcher, and Crimson-backed Tanager. Some uncommon species often show up, so we'll keep our eyes and ears open for any possibility. We'll return to the Canopy Tower in time for a quick shower and dinner before we venture out to experience the rain forest after dark. At night, the forest changes into a completely different world. More than eight species of owls and potoos have been seen on the roads around the Canopy Tower, and we might get to hear the descending mournful whistles of the Common Potoo in addition to seeing the bird with some luck. Many interesting nocturnal mammals inhabit the forest, including Two-toed Sloth, Night Monkey, Kinkajou, Woolly Opossum, and Rothschild's Porcupine. If we are extremely lucky, we might see one of the wild cats that inhabit this forest, Jaguarundi and Ocelot. (Our night drive will be rescheduled for another night if the weather prohibits it tonight.)

Overnight: Canopy Tower (BLD)



Crowned Woodnymph

Day 4, August 24: Canopy Tower
AM: Pipeline Road, PM: Chagres River

Today we will explore the world-famous Pipeline Road, one of the premier birding sites of the

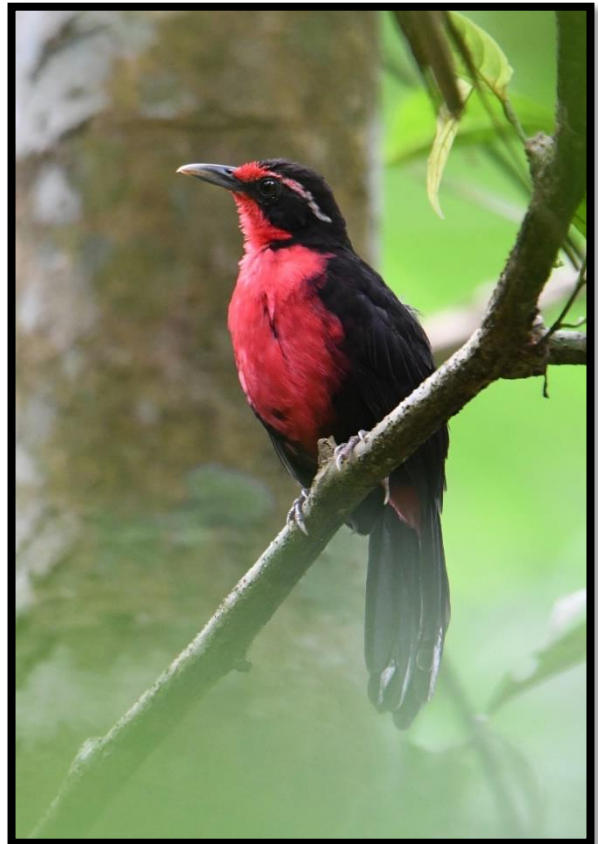
Americas. The Rainfomobile allows us to explore the second half of Pipeline Road, which offers the possibility of new species because of its overlap with the Atlantic slope species. We'll be on the lookout for ant swarms that attract nice mixed flocks as well as White-necked and Black-breasted Puffbirds, Antpittas, Great Jacamar, Black-tailed Trogon, Crane Hawk, Black Hawk-Eagle, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Black-striped Woodcreeper and many other species.



Tamandua

After lunch at the Tower and a midday siesta, we'll travel a short distance to the property of the Gamboa Rainforest Resort where we typically find a good variety of species: Yellow-tailed and Yellow-backed Orioles, Black-headed Saltator, White-bellied Antbird, Rosy Thrush-Tanager, Great Antshrike, Chestnut-backed Antbird, and Squirrel Cuckoo are but a few of the possibilities. Near the Chagres River, we'll walk along the banks to search for a variety of water birds such as Amazon Kingfisher, American Pygmy Kingfisher, Purple Gallinule, and multiple heron and egret species. Other species we might encounter include Whooping Motmot, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Gray-cowled Wood-Rail, and several species of flycatcher. Other wildlife of the area include alligators, turtles, and capybaras.

Overnight: Canopy Tower (BLD)



Rosy Thrush-Tanager

Day 5, August 25: Transfer to Canopy Lodge
AM: Chagres River, PM: Transfer to Canopy Lodge

Today, we'll spend some time on the observation deck before breakfast, enjoying one last morning overlooking the canopy. After breakfast we will descend Semaphore Hill Road to the entrance of Plantation Road. Here, we will walk for a few hours along the easy graded dirt

road that passes through a mature forest. The road follows a small creek, Rio Chico Masambi, where we have encountered nesting Sunbitterns, as well as Caimans. Golden-crowned Spadebills are regular around the creek, and White-breasted Wood-Wrens are very easy to find. In most places, the forest is clear of undergrowth, making it especially suited for observing shy, interior forest birds like Tinamous and Leaf-tossers. If we are lucky enough to come upon an Army Ant swarm, we should have good views of the birds that are attracted by the ants: Spotted, Bicolored and Ocellated Antbirds; Gray-headed Tanagers; Plain-brown, Ruddy, and Northern Barred-Woodcreepers, among others.

We will return to the Tower in time for a mid-morning departure for the Canopy Lodge, where we will spend the next four nights. If we have enough time, we will stop at the market on our way through El Valle de Anton, a lovely village nestled in the crater of an extinct volcano that exploded five million years ago. The Canopy Lodge, located in El Valle de Anton, offers a bit of luxury amid the unique scenery of the dormant volcano - a steep valley

surrounded by jagged peaks and filled with flowers, streams, and verdant forests. The lodge was built next to a lovely mountain stream and is adjacent to the protected area of Cerro Gaital Natural Monument. We plan to arrive midday and will have lunch in the lodge's open-air dining room shortly after we arrive. Once we have settled into our rooms and have had time to observe some of the birds in the garden and at the feeders, we will walk with our guides along the entrance road to the lodge to see what we can find. Some of the species we might expect to see near the lodge include Crimson-backed, Blue-gray, Dusky-



Gray-cowled Wood-Rail

faced,

and Plain-colored Tanagers; Social Flycatcher; Ruddy Ground-Dove; Barred Antshrike; Yellow-faced Grassquit; Rufous-tailed, Blue-chested, Snowy-bellied, and Violet-capped Hummingbirds; Clay-colored Robin; Gray-cowled Wood-Rail; and Orange-billed Sparrow, among others. Verbena bushes near the lodge have hosted Rufous-crested Coquettes for the last few years, so we have a good chance of spotting this cute little hummingbird.

Overnight Canopy Lodge (BLD)

Day 6, August 26: Canopy Lodge

AM: Cerro Gaital Trail, PM: Birding in Lodge vicinity AND/OR Canopy Adventure Area

Today we will wake up early and go birding around the mountain trails surrounding the crater where it is possible to find Emerald Toucanet, Orange-bellied Trogon, Spotted Barbtail, Common Bush-Tanager, Black-faced Grosbeak, Rufous-capped Warbler, Gray-headed Kite, Tawny-capped Euphonia, White-tailed Emerald, and Violet-headed Hummingbird, to name a few. If we are lucky, we might see a Scaled Antpitta or a Black-headed Antthrush.

After lunch, our guide will take us to a nearby area to find some new species. Some special birds have been sighted here, including the majestic White Hawk, the tiny Tody Motmot, the melodious Striped Cuckoo, and the elegant Sunbittern. Some colorful tanagers and honeycreepers are expected here as well, including Silver-throated, Golden-hooded and Bay-headed Tanager along with Blue and Scarlet-thighed Dacnis. This trail will offer good possibilities of seeing Brown-hooded and Blue-headed Parrots, Squirrel Cuckoo, Wedge-billed Woodcreeper, Black-chested Jay, and Crimson-crested Woodpecker.

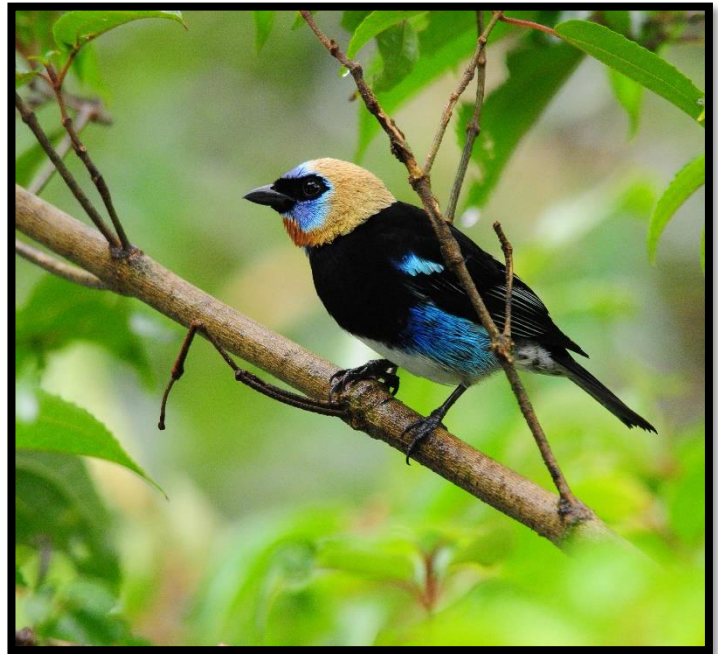
The trails at the Canopy Adventure area are a great place to search for Mottled Owl, Buff-rumped Warbler, Tawny-crested Tanager, Red-crowned Ant-tanager and is one of the best places to see the rare and spectacular Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo! During these guided nature trips, you will stop by “Chorro El Macho”—the largest waterfall in the area!

Overnight Canopy Lodge (BLD)

Day 7, August 27: Canopy Lodge

El Chirú and the Pacific Ocean

Today we will have an early breakfast and travel outside El Valle to visit a patch of dry forest just one hour away near the small village of El Chirú. The contrast with the lush and wet foothills of El Valle is dramatic. This habitat consists of relatively permanent growth of low and often straggly bushes and small trees with grass interspersed. It is a distinctive habitat of the Pacific lowlands and there is little of it left because so much of the population in Panama has settled in the Pacific Coast. We will search for Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant, Crested Bobwhite, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Brown-throated Parakeet, Blue Ground Dove, Fork-tailed Flycatcher and Pearl Kite, among other feathered residents of this scarce scrubby area. We hope to encounter the Veraguan Mango, a near-endemic species of Hummingbird, and we'll check for Lesser Yellow-headed Vultures among the Turkey and Black Vultures. When the weather heats up and morning birding slows down, we'll head to the Pacific shore where we'll enjoy lunch at a private beach house. We will take a midday break will here, and you



Golden-hooded Tanager

may choose to bring a swim suit to enjoy the warm waters of the Pacific. Magnificent Frigatebirds, Laughing Gulls, Brown Boobies, and some tern and shorebird species are possible as we relax. We'll return to the Lodge in time for a shower and a short break before dinner.

Overnight Canopy Lodge (BLD)

Day 8, August 28: Altos del Maria

Today we will take a tour to Altos del Maria, a gated mountain residential community that offers excellent accessible montane habitat at elevations of up to 3800 feet above sea level. As we enjoy a pleasant break from the heat and humidity of lower elevations, we will be on the lookout for species that prefer the cooler temperatures and the accompanying vegetation of the highlands. Black-and-yellow Tanager, Slate-colored and Black-faced Grosbeaks, Scarlet-thighed Tanager, White-vented Euphonia, Gray-breasted Wood-Wren, Ochraceous Wren, Long-billed Gnatwren, White-ruffed Manakin, Rufous-browed Tyrannulet, Tufted Flycatcher, Slaty Antwren, Yellow-eared and Northern Emerald-Toucanets, Barred Forest-Falcon, Band-tailed Barbthroat, and Snowcap are some of the species we hope to find here. This is a full-day outing with a lakeside picnic lunch at a lovely park within Altos del Maria. Again, we'll return to the Lodge in time for a shower and short break before dinner.

Overnight Canopy Lodge (BLD)

Day 9, August 29: Canopy Lodge - Panama City

After some morning birding and an early lunch at the Canopy Lodge, we will depart for Panama City. We will arrive at the Miraflores Locks of the Panama Canal in time to tour the museum and observe ships traveling through the locks.

Afterwards, we will enjoy a farewell dinner at a traditional Panamanian restaurant before going to our hotel near the airport.



Overnight Hotel Riande Aeropuerto (or Crowne Plaza), Panama City (BLD)

Day 10, August 30: Departure

This morning, participants will enjoy a buffet breakfast at the hotel before taking the hotel shuttle to the airport at a time that is convenient for their scheduled flights. **(B)**

NB! - The above itinerary will not necessarily be followed in the exact order given. We will visit most sites on the itinerary, but the guides will select the sites and the sequence we follow based on current conditions and bird sightings at the time of the tour. In addition, guides could replace scheduled sites with others if a better birding opportunity presents itself.

PRICING:

\$3,695* per person sharing

Single Supplement: \$570

***Pricing based on a minimum group size of 8 participants, a small group surcharge will be applicable to smaller groups!**

Price Includes:

- ~ Lodging
- ~ All meals as indicated
- ~ All land transportation within Panama
- ~ Airport transfers
- ~ Entrance fees
- ~ Expert bilingual birding guide(s)
- ~ Two Tour Leaders (Adam & Gina Kent)
- ~ Pre-trip customized checklist
- ~ Post-trip Trip Report and paper and electronic (eBird) version

Price does NOT Include:

- ~ International airfare to Panama City, Panama
- ~ Expenses of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls, snacks, souvenirs, etc.
- ~ Tips

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

Deposit of \$700 with registration. Balance is due April 25, 2025.

Cancellation policy:

Cancellation should be made in writing (email or snail mail)

More than 6 months prior to departure – full refund of deposit

Between 4 and 6 months prior to departure – 50% refund of deposit

Less than 4 months prior to departure – No refund of deposit

Trip insurance is recommended

You can compare prices offered by various trip insurance companies at these websites:

<http://www.quotewright.com/>

<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>

Cheepers! Africa (Pty) Ltd. 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 to take advantage of an unusual birding opportunity.

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