



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Panama

Canal Zone Birds & Wildlife

(7 Days)



Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth by George L. Armistead

Just a quick flight from Atlanta, Miami or Houston, the Canal Zone of Panama features not only one of the world's finest feats of engineering, but also a king's ransom of birds and some highly charismatic wildlife. Based just off the Panama Canal, this short, sweet trip offers iconic tropical birds like Keel-billed Toucan, Blue Cotinga and Bat Falcon, and with a week in this biodiverse hotspot, we'll have chances for up-close and personal encounters with some fascinating animals, with a particular focus on everybody's favorite, the three-toed sloth.

The birds constitute our bread and butter. About the size of South Carolina, Panama sports a list of over 1,000 birds, and a week along the Pacific side of the canal gives us a good crack at a sizeable portion of them. A dizzying array of snazzy hummingbirds, and a suite of antbirds, trogons, puffbirds, and motmots are on display, including right around our lodging. And, punctuating the spectacular avian experiences are flashy encounters with some of the fabulous Central American mammals. Here the largest rodent in the world, the odd if endearing Capybara, reaches its northern limit. During the day, we'll hope to greet the smiling face of the Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth, and are likely to cross paths with monkeys, such as Mantled Howler, Geoffrey's Tamarin and perhaps even the bug-eyed Night Monkey! A thrilling feature of this trip are the three night drives, during which we'll seek out animals like the Olingo, Kinkajou, and Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth; while we hope for several other rarely-seen critters.

Whether we are tracking an antswarm, stalking a troupe of monkeys, communing with a sloth, or gawking at birds, all the sites we visit are close, such that once you arrive in Panama there is little time in transit and lots of time watching wildlife. If you have a great circle of friends, or want to engross your family in an amazing outdoor experience, the birds and wildlife of the Canal Zone have much in store for you.

Conservation Host: Pan American Conservation Association (APPC)

The APPC (Asociación Panamericana para la Conservación) Wildlife Rescue Center is located in Gamboa, right on the Panama Canal, and just outside of Soberania National Park. The park spans 55,000 acres of tropical lowland forest and is home to an incredible wealth of wildlife. It is also only 17 miles from Panama City, so it is an area where animals come into contact with human civilization. The APPC Wildlife Rescue Center is thus well positioned to interface between the two. It receives and rehabilitates hundreds of injured, sick and orphaned animals every year, giving them special care, before returning them to their natural habitat. Since its foundation in 2005, APPC has rescued more than 3,500 wild animals, returning more than 90% of them to their natural habitat. The APPC's mission is to preserve the biological and cultural diversity of Panama for the benefit of present and future generations. Our trip focuses on the birds and wildlife of the canal zone, which is also the focus of the APPC, so we are thrilled to have the opportunity to visit the Wildlife Rescue Center and learn about their critical work. While there we'll have up-close encounters with some of their animals, and we'll have peace of mind knowing that our presence serves to support their work.

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

Day 1	Arrivals in Panama City.
Day 2	Metro Park, Gamboa, Ammo Dump Ponds, Night Drive
Day 3	Birding Chagres River; siesta, Sloth Facility, Night Drive
Day 4	Dawn atop Pipeline Road Canopy Tower; siesta, Panama Canal Museum
Day 5	Summit Ponds; siesta, Chagres River, Canopy Tower picnic dinner, Final Night Drive
Day 6	Gamboa, siesta, boat cruise on Panama Canal, farewell dinner
Day 7	Panama City, and flights home

TOUR MAP...**THE TOUR IN DETAIL...**

Day 1: Arrivals in Panama City. Today is set aside as an arrival day. This evening, we stay at our conveniently located lodging about 15 minutes from the airport. We will meet in the lobby at 6:30 pm for a welcome dinner.

Day 2: Metro Park, Gamboa, Ammo Dump Ponds, 1st Night Drive. After breakfast at the hotel, we'll set out for nearby Metro Park. Located just outside of Panama City, this urban oasis amounts to nearly 600 acres of tropical dry forest and has a growing list of birds, totaling over 380 species. Soon after we arrive, we are likely to hear Keel-billed Toucans croaking away in the canopy, and hopefully crossing open areas with their shuffling flight and absurd banana-like bill projecting ahead of them. We may also hear the low, soft hoots of the Whooping Motmot. And mixed species forest flocks are not uncommon here, and among the abundant Palm Tanagers, Lesser Greenlets, and Yellow-crowned and Thick-



Keel-billed Toucan by Adam Riley

billed Euphonias, we should find dazzling Blue Dacnis, Red-legged and Green Honeycreepers, and perhaps even Golden-hooded Tanager, or the endemic Yellow-green Tyrannulet too. As we enter the



Red-legged Honeycreeper by Rich Lindie

more dense woodlands, we are likely to hear and with luck see the striking Rosy Thrush-Tanager, and will keep our eyes peeled for Orange-billed Sparrow, and Black-bellied and Isthmian Wrens too.

We'll wrap up at Metro Park and head on another 40 minutes or so, winding along the east side of the canal until we reach our cozy Bed-and-Breakfast located in Gamboa. After we unpack and enjoy the feeders, we'll enjoy a nice family-style lunch as we settle into our home for the week. After settling in, we'll

walk to the nearby Ammo Dump Ponds, and even as we walk through the little town of Gamboa we will see quite a few birds. Tyrant-Flycatchers are always on display in the Canal Zone, and here Tropical Kingbirds and Social Flycatchers have the run of things; while the chitter-chatter calls of the flocks of Orange-chinned Parakeets seem almost incessant.

Soon we reach one of the Canal Zone's best birding sites. While water levels vary here, and the name is not especially glamorous, the Ammo Dump Ponds are nearly always a wonderful haven for birds. Decades ago, during World War II, the U.S. Government stashed ammunition in bunkers here and dug the ponds so that there was water in case of a fire. And while the U.S. government has been gone since 1999, the ponds are still here and provide super birding opportunities. Striated Herons and Rufescent Tiger Herons are regular attendees, and White-throated Crakes chatter and even occasionally strut their way into view. Wattled Jacanas awkwardly stride about the wetland vegetation, calling frequently and every so often take to the air to show their brilliant yellow wings.

After dinner, we'll set out on our first night drive. Much will depend on conditions, but we'll be on the lookout for both birds and mammals. We could see Kinkajou, or Olingo, and Tamandua is possible as well.



Tamandua by Markus Lilje

Nightbirds could include the vocal Pauraque, the eccentric Common or Great Potoos, the large and loud Rufous Nightjar, Mottled, Spectacled and Striped Owls, and perhaps Choco Screech Owl. Night drives are a big part of this tour, and with three different night drives, we'll give ourselves a great

chance to see a variety of birds and animals, even including such rarities as Rothschild's Porcupine, Tayra, or Ocelot.



Spectacled Owl by Adam Riley

Having been out in search of night critters the previous evening, and with another night drive tonight, we'll take some time to get out of the mid-day heat for some rest, a cold drink, or some photography around our feeders. After our siesta, in the mid-afternoon, we'll head over to the Sloth rehab facility for some up-close and personal time with some of the most absurdly cute animals on the entire planet. The Gamboa Wildlife Center is run by the Pan American Conservation Association (APPC). Their mission at the center is to give special care for wounded, sick and orphaned animals; caring for them before returning them to their natural habitat. Our visit here will both help support the work of the APPC, and also allow us up close and personal encounters with animals we will also seek to see in the wild, such as sloths and tamanduas. Since its founding in 2005, APPC has rescued more than 3,500 wild animals, returning more than 90% of them to their natural habitat. Our visit to their wildlife center will be a unique thrill.

Day 4: Dawn atop Pipeline Road Tower; siesta, Panama Canal Museum. Rising early today, we'll seek to experience the dawn chorus and the world-famous Pipeline Road. Heading straight for the Panama Rainforest Discovery Center, we'll visit this environmental education project administered by the [Fundación Avifauna Eugene Eisenmann](#), of which the objective is the conservation of birds through environmental sustainability. The most fantastic part of this facility is the 131-

Day 3: Birding Chagres River; siesta, Sloth Facility, 2nd Night Drive. Having been out fairly late, we'll enjoy a leisurely breakfast before we begin looking for some of the more iconic birds and animals in the area. Working the fringes of the Chagres River, we'll keep a keen eye out for our major targets of the day. These include the electric Blue Cotinga and the demure Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth. Both will require us to pay attention to distant exposed perches and dark blobs high up in the trees. The sloths love to eat emerging leaves in Cecropia and other trees. We'll hit a variety of sites in search of these two targets, and along the way will encounter new birds that could include Yellow-headed Caracara, Slaty-tailed Trogon, and White-necked and Black-breasted Puffbirds, among others.



White-necked Jacobin by George L. Armistead

foot tall observation tower that allows access to every point of the forest canopy. Incredibly, over 400 species of birds have been detected here, and as we ascend in the waking hours, the ethereal, quavering, hollow whistles of Great and Little Tinamous will flow through the forest. As the sun rises, we'll hear and likely see forest denizens such as Bright-rumped Attila, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Scaled Pigeons,



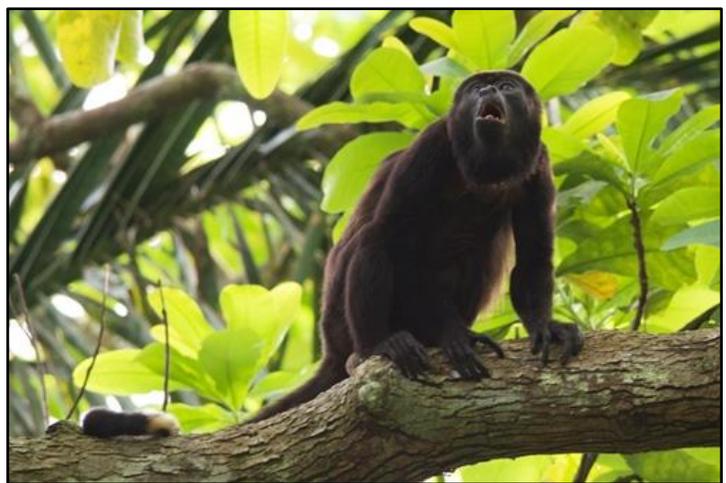
Squirrel Cuckoo by Adam Riley

Cinnamon Woodpecker and Squirrel Cuckoo. Atop the tower, we will break through the canopy, with our heads in the airspace of Short-tailed and Band-rumped Swifts, and we'll keep a keen eye out for raptors. Double-toothed and Gray-headed Kites are possible, and at times Semiplumbeous Hawks are seen as well. Five species of trogons and three species of motmots are also possible here. Many are the possibilities atop the tower, and the thunderous cries of Mantled Howler Monkeys shall remind us that we are not alone.

After a jam-packed morning on the Pipeline Road, we'll return to our lodging for lunch and a siesta before heading on to get a closer look at the inner workings of the Panama Canal. With a visit to Miraflores Locks, we will check out the Miraflores Visitor Center. A marvel of engineering, the visitor center here details the remarkable history of the canal with four exhibition halls, a 3D film, and just outside are terraces for viewing the ships moving through the canal, where we can witness the locks in action. After a busy day, we'll return to our lodging. Following a late night and an early morning, we'll be ready for a little rest and relaxation tonight.

Day 5: Summit Ponds; siesta, Chagres River, Canopy Tower picnic dinner, Final Night Drive.

First stop today is a patch of dry forest featuring a couple of watering holes. At Summit Ponds, the bird-watching is routinely fantastic. The ponds themselves may hold Anhinga, Capped Heron, Boat-billed Heron, and even on rare occasions the startling beauty of an Agami Heron. Troupes of Greater Anis, which are awkward, large, social cuckoos, often shuffle through the mid-story cover over the ponds; while the surrounding woodlands host Lance-tailed Manakins, White-bellied Antbirds, the scarce and local Jet Antbird, and the showy yet sneaky Rosy Thrush-Tanager. This is also a good area for Brown-throated Three-toed Sloths, and the squirrel-like Geoffrey's Tamarin, which is a very agile and vocal species of monkey. Canopy flocks may include Neotropical migrants, such as Bay-breasted Warblers, and adorable Dot-winged Antwrens, Golden-



Mantled Howler Monkey by Clayton Burne

hooded Tanagers, or pairs of marvelous Red-legged Honeycreepers.



White-bellied Antbird by Dubi Shapiro

We'll return to our lodging for lunch and a siesta, and then in the mid-afternoon, we'll head out again in search of more canopy and Canal Zone critters. Making stops along the Chagres River, we will give ourselves another chance at the dazzling Blue Cotinga, and also keep our eyes peeled for raptors which can be in staggering, mind-boggling numbers at certain seasons (esp. March/April, September/October). We will enjoy a sunset view of Soberania National Park from atop the tower, followed by a Barbeque dinner just outside of it. After the sun sets and our bellies are full, we will head down Semaphore Hill, slowly working our way down, searching for animals and nightbirds as we work our way back towards our accommodations.

Day 6 Gamboa, siesta, boat cruise on Panama Canal, farewell dinner. Today is a bit of a clean-up day. We will take stock of what we've seen, what we haven't, and what we might like to see more of, and then set out after them. With about 500 species of birds possible in the Canal Zone, there is always more to see! In the afternoon, we will wrap up our trip by actually

getting out onto the canal for a cruise of this most famous waterway. We'll have chances for a variety of herons and raptors, and a decent chance for seeing sloths; while, routinely, Magnificent Frigatebirds glide around overhead, and Snail Kites work the margins of the canal in search of Apple Snails. Tonight, we will enjoy a nice farewell dinner, enjoying a final evening together before we set sail for points home tomorrow.

Day 7: Panama City, and flights home. As Robert Frost once wrote, "Nothing Gold Can Stay" and so too it is with our journey to the Canal Zone of Panama. Today we bid each other adieu, perhaps planning our next adventure together.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour prices can be adjusted to accommodate different group sizes in some cases. For more info on pricing, please contact Rockjumper's Conservation Tours Department at: conservationtours@rockjumperbirding.com.

Tour Price:

Canopy Bed & Breakfast

\$3300 with group of 4

\$3200 with group of 5

\$3000 with group of 6

\$2900 with group of 7

\$2800 with group of 8

Canopy Tower LOW SEASON April 16th - December 15th

\$3500 with group of 4

\$3300 with group of 5

\$3100 with group of 6

\$3000 with group of 7

\$2900 with group of 8

Canopy Tower HIGH SEASON December 16th – April 15th

\$4500 with group of 4

\$4200 with group of 5

\$4000 with group of 6

\$3900 with group of 7

\$3800 with group of 8

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 7;
- All lodgings as per itinerary;
- Ground transportation mentioned in the itinerary;
- Reserve entrance fees;
- Gratuities for local guides and services; and
- Guiding services of local guides and Rockjumper tour leader.

This excludes:

- Any airfares;
- Any beverages;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Rates are based upon group tariffs of four to eight registrants, and these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.

b) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and/or the designated Rockjumper leader at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

On tour:

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travelers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 44lb for check-in luggage and +-18lb for hand luggage.

- It can be hot and humid, with harsh sun, so please come prepared with hats and sunscreen for protection. Lightweight clothing that dried quickly is recommended. Dress is casual throughout.
- Mosquitoes are not numerous but other biting insects (including chiggers) can be an issue at times, so it is advisable to pack a supply of insect repellent.
- Accommodation throughout the trip is comfortable and the cuisine is good and flexible to accommodate a variety of diets.
- This is not a rigorous tour, as all walking is along roads and trails, but there may be some spots that are slippery, muddy, uneven, or on a slope. Most days good trail shoes should suffice, but rain can make road conditions wet and muddy, and then waterproof footwear that protects above the ankle may be desirable. If you stay at the Canopy Tower, there is no elevator and climbing the steps there (2 flights to rooms, and another flight up to dining area), can be a challenge for some. Getting in and out of vehicles requires an average degree of mobility, and we may spend significant stretches on foot, slowly walking as we search for wildlife. Some participants find a folding field stool nice for getting off of their feet in spots where we wait for wildlife to show.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include ANY airfares. The tour will begin and end in Panama City. We recommend timing your flight to arrive into Panama mid-day or mid-afternoon, while your return flight is best after 7 am. This information on arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

Tocumen International Airport, Panama City (IATA: PTY) is the main port of entry for international flights into Panama and is well serviced by international airlines.

Rockjumper has an in-house travel agent who can assist with booking flights. Ask us for help at conservationtours@rockjumperbirding.com.

IMPORTANT: If you opt to book your own flights, please DO NOT book any international flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.

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