

ITINERARY  
**NORTHERN ARIZONA'S CANYONS & CONDOR**  
*May 17-23, 2025*



*The California Condor is one of the world's rarest and most magnificent birds. They are successfully breeding in northern Arizona, and we'll be able to visit the area where they are often seen resting. Photograph by participant Jeff Wahl.*

*We include here information for those interested in the 2025 Field Guides Northern Arizona's Canyons & Condor tour:*

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

*These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:*

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our web site)
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

**N**orthern Arizona's Colorado Plateau is well known for its unrivaled beauty of canyons, mountains, pine forests, and Red Rock formations, as well as the Painted Desert and the spectacular Grand Canyon. On this one week tour, based in the cool pines of Flagstaff at an elevation of 7000 feet, we will visit these breathtaking habitats in search of high-desert and mountain specialties, many not normally encountered in southern Arizona. Within short drives of Flagstaff we'll seek birds from the southern Arizona deserts, the Rocky Mountains, and the Great Basin desert of the north. Such species as Common Black-Hawk, Olive Warbler, Red-faced Warbler, and Painted Redstart reach the northern limits of their ranges here, while some Rocky Mountain birds such as Dusky Flycatcher, Clark's Nutcracker, and MacGillivray's Warbler breed no farther south, and Gray Vireo and Pinyon Jays are found in the Transition zone.

During our five full days of birding we'll search for these species, along with Zone-tailed Hawk, Lewis's Woodpecker, Williamson's Sapsucker, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Gray and Western (Cordilleran) flycatchers, Mountain Bluebird, Green-tailed Towhee, and Black-chinned Sparrow as well as more widespread western birds. We'll explore the Red Rock area of Oak Creek Canyon and Sedona, the San Francisco Peaks, Arizona's highest mountains at 12,600 feet, and visit the stupendous Grand Canyon, as well as the Vermilion Cliffs north of Grand Canyon where we'll seek the majestic California Condor, which was returned to the wild here in 1996 and has successfully nested on nearly inaccessible ledges in northern Arizona.

While we will attempt to see all bird species encountered, we will make a concerted effort to see the local specialties of northern Arizona. Some of these are quite common and conspicuous while others may take more time or may be the purpose of a visit to a particular locale. We may change the order of the day-to-day itinerary depending on weather, wind, and visibility on the Grand Canyon day.



*The brilliant Red-faced Warbler is one of the specialty birds of the Southwest. We've gotten some good views of them in Oak Creek Canyon. Photograph by guide Micah Riegner.*

*We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about this and be sure to fully explain your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.*

### **Physical requirements of this tour**

- **TRAILS & WALKING:** Moderate amounts of walking (up to 1.5 miles per outing) with some of it on paved walkways at Grand Canyon, but mostly on dirt or gravel roads. We will also walk through a meadow at 8500 feet of elevation with a gradual uphill and no trails where the ground is uneven and can be rocky and it is necessary to step over downed logs and fallen limbs. Lightweight hiking boots are recommended for most days.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** We cover much ground on this tour and birding sites are spread out. Searching for condors we will likely need to do a 2+ hour drive one-way with a few stops along the trip. The drive to Grand Canyon is about 1½ hours with a couple stops en route. Some days will feature shorter drives with a number of roadside birding stops with much getting in and out of vans.
- **PACE:** The Flagstaff area is not on Daylight Saving Time so it gets light early. Early mornings (usually 5:30 a.m. breakfasts), departing the hotel at 6:00-6:15 a.m., with one or two afternoon breaks during the tour. Most days will

include a full day of birding with a picnic lunch in the field or a stop in a café. On some days, we will return in time for a shower before dinner, whereas others will find us taking advantage of early evening birding and going directly from birding to dinner.

- **ELEVATION:** Birding on this tour will be at moderately high to high mountain elevations (3500-9600 feet).
- **WEATHER:** Summer weather is pleasant in central and northern Arizona. Expect temperatures in the low 50s in the morning, with days ranging from the low 70s to high 80s F and possibly into the 90s F at the lower elevations. Cool mornings warm quickly with the rising sun and evenings cool quickly with the setting sun. Rain showers are unlikely but possible.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system on all tours. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** Whenever possible, we use modern, indoor restrooms, but on occasion, participants should be prepared to make a comfort stop in nature.
- **OPTING OUT:** Since we are in the same lodging for the entire tour, participants can easily opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day.

If you are uncertain whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office. If they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with the guide.

## About the Birding Areas



**San Francisco Peaks/Flagstaff**—Founded as a logging town in the 1870's, Flagstaff now has a population of about 80,000. Surrounded by ponderosa pine forests, it is well known for its clear air and dark skies that led to the founding of Lowell Observatory where Pluto was discovered in 1930. Located just north of Flagstaff, the San Francisco Peaks are the remnants of an ancient volcano that once reached over 17,000 feet. Geologists debate as to whether the mountaintop collapsed or suffered a Mount St. Helen's-like eruption that blew off the pinnacle, leaving what is now a group of peaks that reach a height of 12,633 feet—the highest point in Arizona. The tops of these mountains are home to the only alpine tundra in the state. From the slopes of the Peaks one can see scores of volcanic cinder cones extending toward the Painted Desert to the east. We will bird these mountains and meadows for Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Lewis's Woodpecker, Red-naped and Williamson's sapsuckers, American Three-toed Woodpecker (rare), Olive-sided and Dusky flycatchers, Plumbeous and Warbling vireos, Pinyon Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Western and Mountain bluebirds, Olive Warbler, MacGillivray's and Grace's warblers, and Green-tailed Towhee among other species.

**Oak Creek Canyon/Sedona Area**—Just south of Flagstaff, the 2000-foot high Mogollon Rim forms the edge of the huge Colorado Plateau. Famous Oak Creek Canyon cuts through this rock wall forming a lush riparian gorge that empties into the drier desert lowlands and Red Rocks of Sedona. From the head of the canyon to the mouth and the surrounding area, one finds a mixture of desert, foothill, and montane birds amid the inspiring red sandstone backdrop. By searching the various habitats, we hope to track down Common Black-Hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk, Gila Woodpecker, Ash-throated and Brown-crested flycatchers, Bridled Titmouse, Canyon and Bewick's wren, Lucy's, Virginia's, and Red-faced warblers, Painted Redstart, Hepatic and Summer tanagers, Abert's Towhee, Black-chinned and Black-throated sparrows, and Hooded and Scott's orioles.

**Grand Canyon National Park**—As one of the most famous natural spots in the world, the Grand Canyon is never a disappointment. Carved by the once-mighty Colorado River, the canyon is over a mile deep, up to 20 miles across, and

about 280 miles long. It cannot be described to anyone who has not seen it and raises goose bumps on even the most regular visitors. We will make a day trip (about 80 miles) to the South Rim of the canyon. The South Rim is characterized by junipers and pinyon and ponderosa pines, and between spectacular vistas, we will look for Zone-tailed Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, White-throated Swift, Gray and Western (Cordilleran) flycatchers, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Juniper Titmouse, Townsend's Solitaire, Cassin's Finch, and Red Crossbill. California Condors were found here in prehistoric times when they were thought to feed on now extinct ground sloths and other megafauna. The first individuals were reintroduced just north of the park 1996, and there are now more than 80 condors in the vast area of northern Arizona and southern Utah. Leaving the park on the eastern end, we will make a few stops along the edge of the Navajo Indian Reservation. Here we hope to find the local Gray Vireo, Black-chinned Sparrow, Scott's Oriole, and perhaps a misplaced eastern bird.



*We'll bird in some of northern Arizona's best birding locations. Here, a Field Guides group surveys Hart Prairie, with the magnificent San Francisco Peaks as a backdrop. Photograph by guide Micah Riegner.*

## Itinerary for Northern Arizona's Canyons & Condor

**Day 1, Sat, 17 May. Arrival in Flagstaff.** Please plan to arrive in Flagstaff no later than mid-afternoon. You will be met at the Flagstaff airport by your guide. If flight times allow, we may plan to do some birding before heading to the motel. Your guide will be in touch with all about a meeting time for dinner. For those arriving earlier in the day, you will be met at the airport and transferred to the motel, then picked up to return to the airport for the final arrivals, late-afternoon birding, and dinner. Night in Flagstaff.

**Day 2, Sun, 18 May. San Francisco Peaks.** After breakfast we'll head to the slopes of the San Francisco Peaks, Arizona's highest mountain complex, to bird the meadows, mixed conifer, and aspen forests. It will be a bit cooler here but will likely warm up as the morning progresses. We will be birding along dirt roads, trails or across a grassy meadow where we will keep a slower pace at the higher elevations. Night in Flagstaff.

**Day 3, Mon, 19 May. Grand Canyon and environs.** On our way to Grand Canyon National Park this morning, we will make a couple of birding stops as well as a pit stop along the way. While taking in the splendid vistas of the Grand Canyon, we'll be watching for Zone-tailed Hawks soaring over, or in, the vastness and we could get lucky and have a California Condor sighting. After lunch we will have more time to bird the canyon and see its splendors. In the afternoon we'll bird our way back to Flagstaff with birding stops, probably stopping for dinner before getting to the motel. Night in Flagstaff.

**Day 4, Tue, 20 May. Lower Oak Creek Canyon and Sedona area.** This morning will find us heading south from Flagstaff to explore the riparian habitat along lower Oak Creek where we will bird a couple of locales. We will likely have lunch in Sedona before passing through beautiful Oak Creek Canyon. The morning will be warmer at the lower elevation but the afternoon will cool again in the narrow canyon. We will bird our way back to Flagstaff in the afternoon. Night in Flagstaff.

**Day 5, Wed, 21 May. North to Navajo Bridge and Condor searching.** In recent years California Condors have been less reliable and harder to see at Grand Canyon National Park. Because of this we are dedicating a chunk of today, if we did not see condors at Grand Canyon, to heading north to the Vermilion Cliffs area, passing through some interesting geological areas, where we hope to encounter these majestic birds. There will be a fair amount of driving, about 2+ hours one way, with a few birding stops en route. In the afternoon we will make our way back to Flagstaff. Night in Flagstaff.

**Day 6, Thu, 22 May. Upper Oak Creek Canyon; afternoon birding at Flagstaff area lakes and forests.** We will return to Oak Creek Canyon this morning to bird the upper reaches where Painted Redstart, Red-faced Warbler, and Hepatic Tanager are more likely than further down the canyon. In the afternoon we'll drive southeast of Flagstaff to bird a few lakes, getting back to Flagstaff in the late afternoon. Mormon Lake, when it has water, is Arizona's largest natural lake. Night in Flagstaff.

**Day 7, Fri, 23 May. Departure.** Departure flights may be scheduled any time today. Arrangements will be made to get you to the airport.

## About Your Guide

**John Coons** has lived in Flagstaff since he came to graduate school 40-plus years ago and found it impossible to leave for any length of time. He has been leading tours since 1985. Since then his great group skills, attention to detail, easy laugh, and unfailing sense to spot (and remember!) what's fascinating in things large and small have brought delight to innumerable Field Guides participants on tours from the High Arctic to the tip of South America and throughout Australasia. When not on tour, John enjoys exploring and birding the remote mountains, canyons, and mesas of his home in northern Arizona. His ambition of developing a completely sustainable yard of native wildflowers, grasses, trees, and shrubs is an unending goal that consumes more time than expected each spring and summer.

*"John Coons. He wasn't just good, he was damn good. He seemed to be enjoying himself, and it rubbed off on the rest of us. And his local knowledge, and knowledge of the locals, was invaluable." P.A., Arizona's Second Spring*

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for John's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

## Financial Information

**FEE: \$3025 from Flagstaff**

**DEPOSIT:** \$300 per person

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE:** November 18, 2024

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional):** \$550

**LIMIT:** 7

**All participants will be required to confirm they will have completed a full COVID vaccination course at least two weeks prior to the tour (which includes a booster for those eligible to have one).** Note too, that many travel destinations may still require proof of vaccination for entry to bypass testing delays or quarantine, and that entry requirements for a destination can change at any time. Proof of a booster shot, too, may be a requirement for some travel destinations.

## Other Things You Need to Know

**TOUR MANAGER:** The manager for this tour is Sharon Mackie. Sharon will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

**AIR ARRANGEMENTS:** Please plan to arrive in **Flagstaff** no later than **3:00 p.m. on Day 1** (arrival time in Flagstaff is dependant on flight operations, and subject to change). You may depart at anytime on Day 7. Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees. **Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.**

**LUGGAGE:** Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

**TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS:** The **tour fee** is \$3025 for one person in double occupancy from Flagstaff. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 6, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through dinner on Day 6, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from Flagstaff, airport taxes, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$550. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

**TOUR LIMITS:** Our limits are firm and we don't exceed the limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space remains open. However, on occasion, we will send along a guide in training on a tour. In these cases, one seat in the van or bus will be taken by the guide in training. Our guides will have a rotation system within the vehicle so that clients share the inconvenience equally. We hope this minor inconvenience will be more than offset by the advantages of having another guide along.

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, please contact us at [fieldguides.com/contact-us/](https://fieldguides.com/contact-us/). Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our new electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please mail your **deposit of \$300** per person, or see <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/> for our Payment Options. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or **by November 18, 2024**. **We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.**

Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

**SMOKING:** Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 180 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 179 and 90 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable.

Our cancellation policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of that insurance is not refundable, so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airline's restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

**TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE:** We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, you acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a refund when cancellation occurs outside of our cancellation policy as published in the itinerary (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive information from us regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance prior to, or within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights and in some cases, other arrangements), pre-existing conditions are covered. You may purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/> and clicking the link to CSA. The CSA webpage also includes a contact number.

**Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii.** We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance thru InsureMyTrip (<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. When purchasing insurance with a company other than CSA, you will want to understand whether the timing of your purchase will affect coverage before paying your first deposit. Insurance purchase requirements can vary from company to company, and such requirements could limit your options if you do not look into this until making your final payment for your tour. Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in

conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

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