

ITINERARY

Mexico's El Triunfo: Horned Guans and Quetzals
February 26-March 5, 2027



The Horned Guan is an endangered cracid found in the cloudforests of Chiapas and Guatemala. El Triunfo is an important protected area for this species. Photograph by guide Micah Riegner.

We include here information for those interested in the 2027 Field Guides Mexico's El Triunfo 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

After several years of being closed, Reserva El Triunfo has reopened, and we are more than thrilled to be taking Field Guides groups there! Many consider El Triunfo to be the crown jewel of Neotropical birding. It just doesn't get much better than this. Picture walking outside of your cabin at the base camp, a ring of misty cloud forest surrounds the clearing where Baird's Tapirs cross, and a cacophony of birds welcomes the day—birds like Yellow-throated Nightingale-Thrushes, Guatemalan Yellow Grosbeaks, Middle American Leaf-tossers, Scaly-throated Foliage-Gleaners, Highland Guans, Barred Forest-Falcons, Northern Emerald Toucanets and Black-throated Jays all sound off. Soon the mist rises, and you see a male Resplendent Quetzal in a display flight above the canopy, its meter-long tail snaking behind it. You walk a short distance from camp and hear the deep booming of a Horned Guan reverberating through the moss and tree ferns. You look up and there it is, just overhead in an avocado tree, totally unafraid! This colossal bird, with a velvet black face, goofy

white eye, silver-streaked chest, and waxy red horn, is the last of an old lineage of cracids just hanging onto this cloud forest ridge. *Bienvenidos a El Triunfo!*

For this short, week-long tour, we'll start in Tuxtla Gutiérrez. We'll drive to Jaltenango and spend the night there so that we can get an early start up El Triunfo the next day. From Jaltenango, we'll drive in enclosed 4x4 trucks along a winding dirt road until we reach the coffee-growing village of Santa Rita. Here begins the **7-mile hike** up to the El Triunfo base camp cabins. The first 5.2 miles of the trail is steep, with an elevation gain of 2,600 feet. The final mile or so descends into the valley of the campamento. Thankfully, a crew with horses will take all our luggage and food up the mountain so you only need to carry your daypack and binoculars. Once there, we will spend three days exploring the various trails that radiate from camp, enjoying the sights and sounds of the cloud forest, and the delicious meals prepared by the local cooks. We will hike back down and drive to Jaltenango, then drive back to Tuxtla, so there will be **no need for camping**, which is a requirement if you go down the Pacific side. From Tuxtla you can fly home or join us for the *Enchanted Chiapas* tour to see the rest of the specialties of Southern Mexico.



*The trail to reach the camp at El Triunfo can be steep, and walking sticks are highly encouraged.
Photograph by guide Jorge Montejo-Díaz.*

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:** To get to the El Triunfo Campamento, we will need to **hike 7 miles** on a narrow mountain trail. The first part of the trail is a 5.2-mile climb, switchbacking up the mountain with an elevation gain of 2,600 feet. The final mile or so is downhill. **Participants should be able to spend all day on their feet.** We highly recommend good hiking boots and hiking sticks since most of the trails are steep, narrow and uneven.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** The **7-mile hike** to the base camp will be the most demanding of the tour. Once there, we will bird the radiating trails at a birder's pace, stopping regularly to work through mixed species flocks and call things into view. This is where a folding stool could come in handy. The campamento is rather rustic, with a total of 4 shared rooms with 2-3 beds each. Sleeping bags are provided but you will need to bring your own towel and camp pillow. There are two shared bathrooms, one for men, one for ladies. Each has 2 shower stalls with hot water. Electricity for charging is available in the rooms, but since it is solar, it is only available during the

day. Please note that there is neither cell reception nor Wifi available at the base camp. One can pick up signal from an overlook, which is about a 45-minute walk away.

- **PACE:** We will meet at dawn at the Campamento clearing to listen to the dawn chorus with a mug of hot coffee or tea, followed by breakfast at 7:00, then birding until lunchtime. After a siesta break in the afternoon, we will bird again until dinner.
- **WEATHER:** Temperatures range from the low 40s in the early mornings to lower 80s, so be prepared for a range of conditions. A warm jacket is recommended for early mornings. Be prepared for rain at any time!
- **ELEVATION:** The El Triunfo Campamento sits at 7,000 feet in elevation, where it can be quite chilly at night and in the early mornings.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** There are only 3 driving days on the tour, however, so that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system. 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. While we are on the trails, we will ask participants at the front of the line to rotate to the back of the line every 20 minutes or so.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** Whenever possible, we use modern, indoor restrooms, but on most days, participants must be prepared to make a comfort stop in nature.
- **OPTING OUT:** If you wish to stay back a morning or afternoon and remain at the base camp clearing you are more than welcome to do so. You might even see a quetzal fly by!

If you are uncertain about 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 for the tour.

This tour may be combined with our MEXICO: ENCHANTED CHIAPAS tour, March 5 – 14, 2027.



About the Birding Areas

Our tour starts and ends in **Tuxtla Gutiérrez**, the bustling capital city of Chiapas. We will stay at a nice hotel in town with decent birding around the hotel grounds. In the evenings, numerous White-fronted and Red-lored Parrots fly by to roost. Keep an eye out for Russet-crowned Motmots too!

We will spend one night in the town of **Jaltenango**, then continue the next morning to **Reserva El Triunfo**. Created back in 1990, El Triunfo protects 119,000 hectares of forest along the Sierra Madre de Chiapas. There are ten “life zones” or forest types in the park, starting with tropical deciduous forest in the Pacific lowlands at 1,800 feet in elevation going up to the cloud forest at 6,400 feet.

El Triunfo is one of the largest cloud forest protected areas in Mexico and Central America, and one of the most biodiverse reserves in Mexico, with 400 species of birds, 112 mammals, 63 reptiles, 22 amphibians, 588 butterflies, and 977 plants, several of which are endemic. Here's a list of some key bird species to whet your appetite: Horned and Highland Guan, Resplendent Quetzal, Black-throated Jay, Fulvous Owl, Azure-rumped Tanager, Singing Quail, Barred Parakeet, Northern Emerald Toucanet, Black-crested Coquette, White-throated Flycatcher, Blue-throated and Tody Motmots, Spotted Woodcreeper, Middle American Leaf-tosser, Guatemalan Tyrannulet, Blue-crowned Chlorophonia, Yellow-throated Nightingale-Thrush, Mountain Thrush, the Guatemalan form of Yellow Grosbeak, and Chestnut-capped Brushfinch.



Yellow-throated Nightingale-Thrush is a cloud-forest species with a limited distribution. They're rather common in the El Triunfo camp area. Photograph by guide Jorge Montejo-Díaz.

Itinerary for Mexico's El Triunfo: Horned Guans and Quetzals

Day 1, Fri, 26 Feb. Arrival in Tuxtla Gutiérrez. Please plan to arrive in Tuxtla Gutiérrez (TGZ) by 5:00 pm today. You will be met at the airport by a driver with a Field Guides sign and driven to the hotel, about 45 minutes away. We will meet at the hotel lobby at 6:30 pm and walk to a nearby restaurant for dinner. Night in Tuxtla Gutiérrez. For those arriving early, we recommend visiting the Tuxtla Zoo.

Day 2, Sat, 27 Feb. Birding around Tuxtla and drive to Jaltenango. We will spend the early morning birding at a site outside of Tuxtla, then we'll have brunch at the town of Chiapa de Corzo before continuing on to Jaltenango, about 3 hours away. We'll do some more birding around Jaltenango in the afternoon. Night in Jaltenango.

Day 3 Sun, 28 Feb. Drive to Santa Rita and hike to El Triunfo. We'll get an early start and drive 20 miles along a dirt road in 4x4 trucks to the foothills of the Sierra Madre de Chiapas. We will get dropped off at Finca Prusia, an old German coffee plantation at the town of Santa Rita, and start the 7-mile hike to the El Triunfo base camp. The first 5.2 miles will be a rather steep climb on a narrow trail to reach the pass. From there, the trail descends gradually into the basin towards the base camp. A crew of horses will take up all our luggage, so all you need to carry will be your binoculars and a daypack with your water bottle. Along the hike, we will be looking for species like Green Shrike Vireo, Tody Motmot, Lesson's Motmot, Emerald-chinned Hummingbird, and as we gain altitude, we will be looking for Blue-throated Motmot, Guatemalan Tyrannulet and Middle American Leaf-tosser. We could even see Horned Guan and Resplendent Quetzal this first afternoon. Night at El Triunfo base camp.

Days 4-6, Mon-Wed, 1-3 Mar. Birding at El Triunfo. These three days we will dedicate to birding the various trails at El Triunfo, looking for Horned Guans, Resplendent Quetzals, Blue-throated Motmots, Fulvous Owls, Northern Emerald Toucanets, Black-throated Jays, and Yellow-throated Nightingale-Thrushes, among numerous other cloud forest specialties. Even Scaled Antpitta is a possibility along the narrow forest trails. We will begin birding at 6:00 a.m. in the main clearing, then do breakfast and walk one of the many trails that radiate from camp. All our meals will be at camp, prepared by the local cooks. Nights at El Triunfo base camp.

Day 7, Thu, 4 Mar. Hike back to Jaltenango, drive back to Tuxtla. After an early breakfast, we will hike back down to Jaltenango, birding along the way. We will have lunch in Jaltenango, then drive back to Tuxtla in time for dinner. Night in Tuxtla.

Day 8, Fri, 5 Mar. Flights home. Plan to fly home at any time this day. Your guides will arrange transportation to the airport. If you will be staying on to join us on the Enchanted Chiapas tour, we will meet for dinner at the hotel lobby at 5:30 for some afternoon birding before heading to dinner.



*Blue-throated Motmots are found in the high elevations of Chiapas. El Triunfo is a great place to see them.
Photograph by guide Micah Riegner.*

About Your Guides

Micah Riegner grew up exploring the Central Arizona Highlands and was fortunate to have parents who took him along on college field courses ranging from the coast of Mexico to the mountains of Costa Rica, where encounters with tinamous, barbets, and jacamars launched him into the birding world at a young age. During his time at Prescott College, he made annual pilgrimages to Amazonia, where he worked as a guide and participated in expeditions, mostly in Brazil. For his master's, he studied the foraging ecology of Amazonian woodcreepers. When he's not in the field, he tries to make time to paint birds and other creatures that spark his interest.

Micah guided tours with Bret Whitney, John Coons, Dan Lane, and Tom Johnson before joining Field Guides full time in 2019. Micah is a generous guide with an easy laugh and is eager to share his love of birds and nature in the years to come. We know you will have a great time traveling with him, too!

"Micah is a real bird finder and a delightful guy. He obviously knows the country and the culture well. He provided us with some really great owling, too." P.B., Central Mexico & Baja: Birds, Butterflies & Whales 2022

Jorge Montejó-Díaz was born in Yucatan, Mexico and developed a passion for nature from a very early age, exploring the surroundings of his native Merida, where he began to observe birds and learn how to trap them! His interest in birds and nature continued to grow during his college years in Veracruz, when Jorge and a group of friends “discovered” the great coastal migration in the state, now known as the Veracruz River of Raptors. Since the late 90’s, Jorge has guided birding tours throughout Mexico.

His explorations have taken him across Mexico and to other parts of the world, including Venezuela, Brazil, and much of the US and Canada. Because of both the beauty and importance of birds, he considers the opportunity to watch them and share his passion with others a great honor, as well as a great responsibility. On the rare occasions when he is not in the field, Jorge shares his bird observations with his partner, Amy, from their base in the city of Xalapa, set in the foothills of central Veracruz.

“Jorge was absolutely indispensable by virtue of his local knowledge, negotiation ability, and birding acumen and his expertise in the design of this tour. The choices were excellent and his access to local landowners and conservation efforts made the trip more meaningful. Jorge was great!” M.H., Mexico: Veracruz's River of Raptors 2021

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for complete tour schedules for Micah and Jorge; just click their photos.

Financial Information

FEE: \$4550 from Tuxtla Gutiérrez (Please note that the tour begins and ends in Tuxtla Gutiérrez.)

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$150 (If we have a full group, we cannot guarantee singles at the El Triunfo base camp.)

DEPOSIT: \$450 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: August 30, 2026

LIMIT: 8

Other Things You Need to Know

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

DOCUMENTS: Be sure to verify the latest entry requirements for each country you will visit or transit.

Passport: A current passport is required for U.S. citizens to re-enter the United States. It should be in good condition, valid for at least 6 months beyond your return date, and have at least one blank page for each country on your itinerary.

If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Mexican consulate nearest you for entry requirements.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: This tour begins and ends in Tuxtla Gutiérrez (TGZ). Flights are available to Tuxtla Gutiérrez via Mexico City.

Arrival: Tuxtla Gutiérrez (TGZ), Friday, February 26, by 5:00 p.m.

Departure: Tuxtla Gutiérrez (TGZ), March 5, any time.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager before 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.

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.

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.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The tour fee is \$4550 for one person in double occupancy from Tuxtla Gutiérrez. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 7, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through dinner on Day 7, all ground transportation including airport transfers, 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 Tuxtla Gutiérrez, airport taxes, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, breakfast on Day 8, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

Due to the limited rooms at the El Triunfo base camp, we **cannot** guarantee a **single accommodation**.

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.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact us at 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 electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please send your deposit of \$450 per person; 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 August 30, 2026. 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 full 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 full tour fee is non-refundable, which would include the full deposit if the final payment has not yet been paid. 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 purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to protect your investment in case of injury or illness to you or an immediate family member before or during a trip. Because we must remit early and substantial deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer refunds for cancellations outside of our Cancellation Policy. If a participant is unable to join or continue a tour due to illness, all related expenses will be their responsibility, and no refunds can be issued for missed days. Please wait to purchase insurance until we notify you that the tour is confirmed to operate, as most policies are non-refundable.

For full details, visit our Trip Cancellation Insurance page at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/>.

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.

MR 7/25

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