

ITINERARY  
**NEW MEXICO: BIRDING THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENT**  
*February 1 - 8, 2025*



*One of the desert specialties we'll seek is the lovely Pyrrhuloxia. While the species is fairly widespread in the American southwest and northern Mexico, they can be hard to find. Photograph by guide Cory Gregory.*

We include here information for those interested in the 2025 Field Guides New Mexico: Birding the Land of Enchantment 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

New Mexico, is called the land of enchantment with good reason. Between its beautiful Chihuahuan Desert, the lovely forested wildernesses of the Sandia and Sangre de Cristo Mountain ranges, its rugged petroglyph-filled rose-colored deserts, and its expansive native grasslands, there is no shortage of awe-inspiring settings. On this tour, based in the cool high desert of central New Mexico, we will visit many of these breathtaking habitats. A couple of the main avian targets will be the wintering Rosy-Finch fiesta (four varieties in one location!) in the Sandias, as well as the huge spectacle of Sandhill Cranes and Snow and Ross's Geese wintering around Bosque Del Apache. In addition to these two headliners, we will be seeking high-desert residents such as Cactus Wren and Crissal Thrasher, mountain west breeders like Green-

tailed Towhee, Williamson's Sapsucker, Pinyon Jay, and Juniper Titmouse, birds with a more southwestern feel, like Phainopepla and Pyrrhuloxia, and some of the denizens of the western grasslands and prairies, like Ferruginous Hawk, Prairie Falcon, and multiple species of Longspurs.

We'll also have a chance to have a bit of a window in the rich art scene and cultural history of Santa Fe, with a few hours spent exploring the quaint and fascinating downtown of New Mexico's capital city.



*Pinyon Jay is one of the western species that we'll look for in the mountains near Albuquerque.  
Photograph by guide Doug Gochfeld.*

*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 2 miles per outing), some of it on paved, dirt, or gravel roads, some on fairly wide trails, and some on uneven or narrower trails with obstacles such as rocks, fallen limbs, or tree trunks. Snow and ice is a distinct possibility (indeed it is almost certain on our couple of visits to the mountains). No steep trails, but participants should be able to walk up to 2 miles over undulating, sometimes uneven terrain (lightweight hiking boots recommended). Some slowly-paced walking at higher elevations (likely including some packed snow) should be expected, but is not guaranteed, and can be opted out of.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** We cover much ground on this tour, and some days will feature long periods of time in the vans roadside birding with a bit of getting into and out of vans.
- **PACE:** Early mornings (6:30-7:00 a.m. breakfasts), with both morning and afternoon birding sessions but one or two afternoon breaks during the tour. On some afternoons, we will be in transit between lodgings. Most days will include a full day of birding with a lunch stop in a café or restaurant. We will usually return to the hotel in time for a shower before dinner, but on a few days, we may go directly from birding to dinner.
- **ELEVATION:** Birding on this tour will be from 4,000 feet to 10,500 feet.
- **WEATHER:** Winter weather in New Mexico is brisk. Expect temperatures in the low 30s in the evening, with days ranging from the low 30s to mid-50s F. It frequently will get into the 20s overnight, and in some places the all-time low temps are as low as 5 degrees F (exceptionally the highs can be into the 70s in the lowest elevation places,

but it tends to be on the colder side of the aforementioned temperature range. Rain and snow showers, and gusty winds are possible.

- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system this tour. 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 a couple of occasions, participants should be prepared to make a comfort stop in nature.
- **OPTING OUT:** Where we are staying multiple days in the same lodging, participants can easily opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day. This will not be possible on days when we are changing locations.

While we will attempt to see all bird species encountered, we will make a concerted effort to see the local specialties of New Mexico at this season. 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.

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



**Albuquerque and the Sandia Mountains**—The largest city in New Mexico will be where tour begins and ends, but there is also some excellent birding to be had here. Not only are there some good high desert habitats here, but the Sandia Mountains loom over the east side of town, giving us access to several habitat types from 5,000 feet (the elevation of Albuquerque) and over 10,000 feet (Sandia Crest). We will bird a few open spaces and refuges on the outskirts of town where we'll see a nice cross-section of residents including Cactus Wren, Juniper Titmouse, Woodhouse's Scrub-ay, Black-throated Sparrows, Rufous-crowned Sparrows, Canyon Towhees, and Curve-billed Thrashers, and we'll also have a shot at Sagebrush Sparrow, Crissal Thrasher, and Scaled Quail. Pure flocks Ross's Geese and Cackling Geese are also on the table here. In the Sandia Mountains themselves, the highlight will be the Rosy-Finch show. We have a good chance to see all four taxa of Rosy-Finches that occur here: Black, Brown-capped, and Gray-crowned (including the "Hepburn's" subspecies), and we should also see Steller's Jay, Mountain Chickadee, and "Gray-headed"

Junco. We may do some birding in the Pinyon-Juniper habitat on the east side of the mountains, where during some winters there can be Pinyon Jay, irruptive winter finches like Evening Grosbeak, and Juniper Titmouse.

**Bosque Del Apache NWR and the Socorro area**—Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge houses one of the most famous wildlife spectacles in the nation. A tremendous number of Sandhill Cranes and white geese (Snow Geese and Ross's Geese) pass through here each fall, and a large number stick around for the winter. We'll hope to see some nice roost fly-outs or fly-ins of these masses of birds, and then tour the refuge itself which has fantastic habitat throughout, especially for waterfowl. It's also great for mammals, such as Collared Peccary, Bobcat, and Elk. The nearby Magdalena Mountains may hold Chestnut-collared Longspur, Townsend's Solitaire, Pygmy Nuthatch, Golden Eagle, and a nice variety of woodpeckers including Acorn Woodpecker and Williamson's Sapsucker.

**Elephant Butte Reservoir area**- This is one of the largest bodies of water in the state, and also one of the best places around to compare Clark's and Western Grebe side-by-side. We have a chance to see just about any waterbird that can turn up in New Mexico here. The areas near here and to the south offer chances at some species of the lower southwestern desert, including Verdin, Pyrrhuloxia, Phainopepla, and are also excellent migrant traps, regularly having birds from both the east and the west overwintering.

**Santa Fe-** The capital of New Mexico has a rich culture and tradition in the arts, and in addition to birding in the area, we'll also have some time to explore the downtown area, which has many art shops and several interesting museums including the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum and the New Mexico History Museum. The nearby Jemez Mountains and Sangre de Cristo Mountains are another chance at the higher elevation species which we may not have picked up, (ones that don't occur farther south, such as Clark's Nutcracker and Canada Jay, are scarce but possible in these ranges), and the Pinyon-Juniper foothills and Ponderosa Pine-filled canyons could give us more chances for Pinyon Jay, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Juniper Titmouse, and Williamson's Sapsucker.



*The Greater Roadrunner is the state bird of New Mexico, and a western icon.  
Photograph by participant Paul Beerman.*

## Itinerary for New Mexico: Birding the Land of Enchantment

**Day 1, Sat, 1 Feb. Arrival in Albuquerque.** Please arrive at our hotel no later than 5:00 p.m. We will meet in the lobby of our hotel at 6:00 p.m. for introductions and to head over to dinner. Night in Albuquerque.

**Day 2, Sun, 2 Feb. Sandia Crest.** After breakfast we'll head out and bird one or two lower lying locations around Albuquerque, perhaps looking for Pinyon Jay, Sagebrush Sparrow, and Evening Grosbeak (if it is a finch year – some years there are 0, and in some good years they are somewhat common in appropriate habitat), before we climb up into the Sandia Mountains, ascending all the way to Sandia Crest. Here we'll hope to find Rosy-Finches at the feeders- some of the southernmost Rosy-Finches in the world! It may be very cold at the peak (10,000 feet) though sunny mornings can feel warmer than it is. We may go for a short walk in the conifer forest near the crest to try and pull out some other high elevation birds as well, and perhaps also check some of the lower elevations along the mountain road for species not found at the summit. We will be birding along dirt trails or roadsides today, but there may be snow or ice up high, so you're your footwear accordingly. Night in Albuquerque.

**Day 3, Mon, 3 Feb. Albuquerque to Socorro.** We will leave Albuquerque and head south towards Bosque Del Apache NWR perhaps having another shot at the birds in the foothills of the Sandias like Pinyon Jay and Juniper Titmouse if we missed them the day prior. We will be birding open lands on the way down (some combination of agricultural areas and grasslands), where we'll especially keep our eye out for Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk, Golden Eagle, and if we're lucky, Chestnut-collared and McCown's Longspurs (both longspurs are difficult to see in the region, but could be around). If we get into Socorro early enough, we may continue right down to the refuge, to get our first taste of the Sandhill Cranes coming in to roost. Night in Socorro.

**Day 4, Tue, 4 Feb. Bosque Del Apache NWR to Percha Dam.** We will head south, birding Elephant Butte Reservoir, where we hope to get good studies of the closely related Clark's Grebes and Western Grebes, as well as other interesting waterbirds utilizing the lake, and perhaps getting as far south as Percha Dam, part of Caballo Lake State Park. We may also have the opportunity to bird along a riparian corridor and great migrant trap looking for overwintering oddities as well as Phainopepla, Pyrrhuloxia, and Black Phoebe. Then we will head back north, and we may have some time to take another (or our first) trip to Bosque del Apache NWR, where we may enjoy the refuge visitor's center (with gift shop) and bird feeders, as well as a bit of the extensive and waterfowl-filled auto loop. Night in Socorro.



*We'll see many Snow Geese at Bosque del Apache, and among them will be a few of the "Blue Goose" variant.  
Photograph by participant Paul Beerman.*

**Day 5, Wed, 5 Feb. Bosque del Apache NWR to Santa Fe.** This will be a very early morning, as we want to be at the refuge with a chance to see the Geese and Cranes flying around at sunrise. What we see will be greatly impacted by where on the refuge the birds are roosting, as they are sometimes in closed parts of the refuge, but there should be some kind of a spectacle of lots of birds flying around that we can avail ourselves of. We will continue birding locally in the Bosque del Apache area (and likely on the refuge auto loop) once again, with our exact itinerary depending on conditions and what birds have been around. As we make our way north, we'll be able to look for a couple of other miscellaneous species, depending on what has been seen in the region and what we have so far seen. We will continue through Albuquerque to the state capitol, Santa Fe. Night in Santa Fe.

**Day 6, Thu, 6 Feb. Sangre de Cristo Mountains and Santa Fe.** We will start off by driving up towards the "Atomic City", Los Alamos, northwest of Santa Fe. Our exact itinerary will depend on local trail and birding conditions, as well as what we have and haven't experienced. Between the Jemez Mountains, which overlook Los Alamos, and the canyons in and around the city, we will have chances for a wide array of species, including Williamson's Sapsucker, Pygmy Nuthatch, Red Crossbill, Lewis's and Acorn Woodpeckers, and perhaps Pinyon Jay and American Three-toed Woodpecker. Depending on how expediently our birding goes, we may have a couple of hours in the afternoon to explore some of the cultural attractions in the city of Santa Fe. Night in Santa Fe.

**Day 7, Fri, 7 Feb. Santa Fe to Albuquerque.** We will bird our way down towards Albuquerque, with the day's itinerary being determined by what we have and haven't seen, and what birds of interest have been reported along our route. We will arrive back in Albuquerque in the late afternoon or evening for dinner. Night in Albuquerque.

**Day 8, Sat, 8 Feb. Departure.** You may schedule your flight home at any time today, with the images of crowds of cranes, gaggles of geese, and swarms of rosy-finches still filling your brain. Bon Voyage!

## About Your Guide

**Owen Hilchey** grew up in the desert southwest of Albuquerque, NM where his birder grandmother, Sondra, primed him for a life in nature from a young age. At 11 years old, standing in the frigid cold morning of Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in southern New Mexico, he became entranced by the cacophony of wintering Snow and Ross's Geese as they exploded into the sky to the backdrop of a fiery sunrise over the high desert. Ever since, he has had a pair of binoculars strapped across his chest.

In the years that followed, birds took Owen on many paths - from researching shorebirds in the Alaskan wilderness, to backpacking the remote mountains of Mexico to catalog bird life, to leading birding trips all over North and Central America. These days Owen wears three hats, one as a biologist conducting environmental impact evaluations for wind and solar energy developments, another as a part time veggie farmer in his native Albuquerque, and last, but certainly not least, one as a bird guide!

Domestically, Owen has led trips all across the United States including California, Alaska, Ohio, Texas, Colorado, Arizona, and New Jersey. And internationally he has taken groups to Belize, Costa Rica, Panama, Honduras, Guatemala, and most especially Mexico.

*"Owen Hilchey is an excellent addition to the Field Guides staff. We found him to be an extremely knowledgeable birder and an excellent compiler of the eBird list. He also has a great sense of humor." D.C., Florida's Mangroves & Migrants*

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

## Financial Information

**FEE: \$3250 from Albuquerque**

**DEPOSIT: \$325**

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE: August 5, 2024**

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$675**

**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 Nicole Cannon. Nicole will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her at 512-900-7792 or email her at [ncannon@fieldguides.com](mailto:ncannon@fieldguides.com).

**AIR ARRANGEMENTS:** Please plan to arrive at our hotel in Albuquerque no later than 5:00 p.m. on Day 1 (February 1). Participants may depart on Day 8 (February 8) at any time. 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 \$3250 for one person in double occupancy from Albuquerque. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 7, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 8, 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 Albuquerque 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 \$675. 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 \$325** 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 August 5, 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.

**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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