

ITINERARY  
**PANAMA'S CANOPY LODGE: EL VALLE DE ANTON**  
*December 29, 2018 - January 5, 2019*



*A Spot-crowned Barbet sits in a light rain-shower. These striking birds are found in lowland forests in Panama and northwestern Colombia. We'll watch for these tropical beauties near the lodge. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.*

We include here information for those interested in the 2018 Field Guides *Panama's Canopy Lodge* 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

*Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:*

- 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 reference list
- 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

**F**or a short birding holiday, wrapped in an extremely pleasant climate, you can't do better than a visit to the Canopy Lodge, Panama's fine lodge and a model, we hope, for more to come. Familiar with the Canopy Tower? Expect the same level of service, cuisine, and hospitality, finer accommodations, richer birding right on the grounds, and cooler days. Unacquainted? Expect some real cool birding!

Situated along a lovely stream at the edge of picturesque El Valle at about 2100 feet in the province of Coclé, the Canopy Lodge was conceived and designed by Raul Arias, famous for his other successful lodges at the Canopy Tower and Canopy Camp. The Canopy Lodge opened in the fall of 2005 with great anticipation by all aware of its construction and involved in the site-selection and the early planning stages. Field Guides conducted our first tour there as an extension to our Wild Panama tour in the spring of 2006. It was such an impressive area for relaxed birding that we felt this foothill destination would be ideal site for a short, stand-alone tour. We have enjoyed many tours there since, with several over New Year's.

At the Canopy Lodge each day is pleasantly cool early and late, and pleasantly warm mid-day. The habitats are varied, the birds diverse and numerous, the accommodations splendid and tastefully appointed, the food tasty and creative, and the pace—well, holiday. The stream draws numerous species within a few feet of the dining area, including Sunbittern, Green Kingfisher, waterthrushes, and occasionally Neotropical River Otter. Hummingbird feeders and banana feeders positioned in places where one can relax in hammocks or chairs while enjoying the birds and obtaining excellent photographs make for another carefully planned feature of the grounds. On all but two days at the Lodge we will have lunch in the open dining room, thereby dividing the birding into morning and afternoon outings. That makes it possible to take off for an afternoon when one wishes. The other two days are spent in beautiful areas, one known as Altos de Maria, the other, Rio Indio. Since these two areas are a fair distance from the Lodge, we'll picnic for lunch on these days.

This location is such a splendid base for our birding that Panama's Canopy Lodge makes a perfect tour for spouses who might be "lite" birders. And it will certainly make a superb introductory tour to Neotropical birds, and an exciting tour for birders who have birded some in Middle America but are still looking for their first Tody Motmot or Rosy Thrush-Tanager, and for those who have birded widely but who are still looking for their first Black-crowned Antpitta or Rufous-browed Tyrannulet while at the same time looking to relax a bit on a birder's holiday.



*The Black-crowned Antpitta is a large and colorful antpitta, found in a restricted range from northwestern Colombia to northeastern Costa Rica. Panama is a major part of the range of this uncommon bird. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.*

**About the Physical Requirements & Pace:** Our Canopy Lodge tour is not physically demanding and will operate at a relaxed pace throughout. Whereas we will have down time on at least three, perhaps four days after lunch at the Lodge, we will not return for lunch on our two driving days, where we plan to picnic in the field. There will be some time, however, to take a brief nap or to rest in the vehicles after lunch when the birding activity has slowed down a bit. Some participants simply find long days to be taxing; if you find two uninterrupted days of birding tiresome, you may choose to bird Altos del Maria the first day, then take off the second day (or vice versa) in favor of some relaxation and enjoyment of birds around the lovely Lodge. Breakfast hours on this tour are "birding civilized," with most set for 6:00 or 6:30 a.m. We aim to be in the field about 7:00 a.m. On the Altos del Maria days, we usually eat at 5:30 and leave about 6:00 a.m. since it takes about an hour to reach our first birding site.

Participants should be able to walk up to two miles in a day at a "birder's pace"—mostly in short walks from the vehicle. Conveyance will be in a minibus, for the most part, but smaller four-wheel drive vehicles are required to negotiate the Altos del Maria. Participants will need to be able to climb in and out of these vehicles that make for an uncomfortable ride, though for no longer than about one hour. Most of our birding will take place along roads or wide tracks, and some "standing around" will be required; so a light collapsible stool might reduce the strain. The lovely temperatures of the foothills are sure to invigorate us. Very little climbing is required to properly bird the area, but some hills behind the Lodge hold birds that we would not want to miss, and unhurried walking uphill will be desirable in order to see some species in a



few of the areas. Our main purpose is for all to see well and enjoy a rich diversity of species, but emphasis will be given to indigenous birds special to Panama and Costa Rica and to learning about representative groups of Neotropical birds rather than rarities to Panama.

Playback or imitation of bird vocalizations will be used sensitively with the aim of bringing into view otherwise difficult-to-see species—for example, furtive species, canopy species, nightbirds—or flock-leaders whose response will often attract a number of species at once. Occasionally we use playback to investigate the presence of a target species in a mixed-species flock or on historic territories.

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.



## Itinerary for Panama's Canopy Lodge

**Day 1, Sat, 29 Dec. Flight to Panama City; transfer to Country Inn, Panama Canal.** If you arrive before 9:00 p.m., you will be contacted by your guide to go over plans for the following morning. If you arrive after 9:00, your guide will leave a note for you at the front desk. Be sure to ask for it when you check in. Night: Country Inn & Suites, Panama Canal.

**Day 2, Sun, 30 Dec. To El Valle and the Canopy Lodge.** After breakfast, we will be picked up at 7:00 a.m. by our driver and will bus to nearby Metropolitan Park where we'll bird until it warms up (usually about 9:00 a.m.), then proceed for about a two-hour drive to the lovely Canopy Lodge. (We'll make a rest stop along the way.) On arrival we will likely have lunch and see what all is visiting the stream running in front of the dining area and to enjoy the remarkable show at the banana feeders and the sugar water. Bring your cameras!

After lunch, we'll have time to get situated in our rooms, then reassemble to bird a waterfall area behind the Lodge known as Chorro de Macho. With some luck, we may see Tody Motmot and a roosting Mottled Owl. On our walk back to the Lodge, we will have time for late afternoon birding along the road. We will certainly celebrate Año Viejo and Happy New Year. Five nights at the Canopy Lodge!

**Day 3-6, Mon - Thu, 31 Dec – 3 Jan. Canopy Lodge environs.** Over the next few days we will explore several areas with the aim of maximizing the diversity of species seen. Closer to the lodge, we will bird at the higher elevations leading to La Mesa. We will also make a couple of full day excursions to the productive habitats found at the Altos del Maria.

**La Mesa; Cara Iguana.** A short distance from the Lodge, the Cerro Gaital Trail begins at the main road in La Mesa. This area is protected as part of Cerro Gaital Natural Monument. Leading through prime cloudforest habitat, the trail starts out flat and wide. This first portion of the trail is often very birdy, with foraging flocks of tanagers and other species. Flowering

trees along the trail attract Green-crowned Brilliant and the occasional Green Thorntail among the more common hummingbird species. The next portion of trail ascends more steeply and deeper into the cloudforest. Higher up, the trail levels out again and weaves through excellent cloudforest habitat. Here we will be watching for Black Guan, White-ruffed Manakin, Gray-breasted Wood-Wren, Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch, and even Blue Seedeater in addition to other species. Rarities here include Red-faced Spinetail, Spotted Barbtail, and Black-headed Antthrush. Managing to see just a couple of these would be a real feat. This area can be good for Barred Hawk and Red-shouldered Parrotlet. Beyond this point, the trail becomes rather rough as it ascends to the summit of Cerro Gaital (1200 meters); this is a good area to see White-tailed Emerald and Purple-throated Mountain-Gem. How far we go will be determined by our pace, which is usually determined, in turn, by how active the birding has been.

After lunch, we will bird the Cara Iguana area above El Valle. Here, we will seek some of the specialties of the dry Pacific forest, for example: White-bellied Antbird, Lance-tailed Manakin, Rufous-and-white Wren, and the beautiful Rosy Thrush-Tanager, and we will have another look for Tody Motmot well as the possibility of finding a Spectacled Owl on a day roost.



*The large Spectacled Owl might be found on a day-roost. Photograph by participants Andrew and Rebecca Steinmann.*

**Altos del Maria.** Set in the mountains on the continental divide east of El Valle, the Altos del Maria provide a spectacular birding venue near the Canopy Lodge. Departing early in the morning from El Valle in 4x4 vehicles, we will head into the mountains over some steep roads. As the sun rises over the highlands ahead of us, spectacular mountains, vast valleys, and towering cliffs will be revealed. We will climb a ridge to our destination for the morning, an expansive area of cloudforest at 3500 feet above sea level. Early morning birding will take us along some of the wide, gravel roads in the area.

We'll concentrate our effort along the ridge above Mata Ahogado. This ridge is blanketed in an impressive shroud of mature cloudforest. Birding mostly from the roadside, we will search for Double-toothed and Gray-headed kites, White Hawk, Brown-hooded Parrot, Violet Sabrewing, Green Thorntail, Northern Emerald Toucanet, Red-faced Spinetail, Spotted Barbtail, Russet Antshrike, Tufted Flycatcher, Rufous-browed Tyrannulet, White-throated Spadebill, Eye-ringed Flatbill, Pale-vented Thrush, and Black-and-yellow, Dusky-faced, and Tawny-crested tanagers. Rarer species, including Snowcap, Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser, Brown-billed Scythebill, and the spectacular Black-crowned Antpitta, occur in this area. Later in the morning, we will explore at least one

trail, perhaps including a fairly steep, but well-maintained path to a lookout. Here we will have additional chances for secretive species of the forest interior. Because of the foothill altitude (up to 1200 meters, or 4000 feet), the temperatures frequently remain cool late in the day and mid-day birding can be surprisingly good. After a picnic lunch, we'll bird until mid-afternoon and then start back for the Lodge.

**Day 7, Fri, 4 Jan. Pacific lowlands at Juan Hombron, lunch at Playa Santa Clara; return to Panama City.** The lowlands of Juan Hombron can be exceptionally birdy. We will seek out Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, a large assortment of flycatchers, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Savanna Hawk, Plain-breasted Ground-Dove, Wattled Jacana, a mix of herons and egrets, and hopefully Veraguan Mango and Sapphire-throated Hummingbird. We will then head to Playa Santa Clara for a picnic lunch at a beach house with Magnificent Frigatebirds and distant Blue-footed Boobies. After a final lunch, we will return to Panama City. We will have a farewell dinner tonight. Mind you, three favorite birds will be difficult to come up with! Night: Country Inn & Suites, Panama Canal.

**Day 8, Sat, 5 Jan. Transfer to Panama's International Airport for flights home.** We will be transferred to the international airport for your flights home—after breakfast for those who do not leave too early.

## About Your Guide

**Chris Benesh** grew up studying natural history in California, where he was inspired by his father to take up birding as a teenager. After earning a degree in zoology from UC Santa Barbara in 1987, Chris moved to Austin to join the Field Guides staff. Since then, his life has undergone a wonderful transformation. The intervening years at Field Guides have taken him to many corners of the world and across both the Arctic and Antarctic circles!

Chris takes an interest in nearly anything that flies, and you might catch him sneaking a peek at a passing aircraft or stopping to examine a butterfly or odonate. You might also notice him getting especially excited at the sighting of a rare or wonderful mammal (heck, he can get excited about a squirrel).

Chris's passion for education has led to his serving on the Arizona Bird Committee, leading the occasional workshop, presenting at birding conventions, and—we must add—thoroughly explaining in admirable detail the nuances of flycatchers to tour participants and colleagues alike. These days, most of his “down time” is spent at home in Tucson watching his two wonderful kids, Sean and Linnea, grow.

*“Chris Benesh is a superb guide and leader, great at finding the birds and great at getting all members of the group good views of the birds.”  
W. B., Spring in South Texas*

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/guides> for Chris’s complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

## Financial Information

**FEE:** \$3475 from Panama City

**DEPOSIT:** \$350 per person

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE:** August 31, 2018

**LIMIT:** 8

## Other Things You Need to Know

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

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** Accommodations will be very good in Panama City and excellent at the Canopy Lodge.

**DOCUMENTS:** US Citizens traveling by air to and from Panama must present a valid passport when entering Panama or re-entering the United States. You will be issued a tourist card by the airline to be filled out before arrival.

If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Panamanian consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey. Some countries require a blank page for their stamp and as a precaution it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit.

**AIR ARRANGEMENTS:** 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 \$3475 for one person in double occupancy from Panama City. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 7, all meals from breakfast on Day 2 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 Panama, airport taxes, visa fees, 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.

Single rooms are available at the Canopy Lodge for no additional charge. These are slightly smaller than the rooms used for double occupancy and each has a private bath. Should you prefer to stay in one of the double rooms, you may do so for an additional charge. In both instances, single rooms will be assigned for the nights in Panama City.

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$350** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by August 31, 2018. We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 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.

**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.

**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 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour fees (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 the 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 airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. 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, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (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 from us a brochure 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, 24-hour accident protection, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance when making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights), pre-existing conditions are covered. The CSA brochure includes a contact number; you may also purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.html> and clicking the link to CSA. 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 reverse side of 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. Field Guides Incorporated accepts no responsibility 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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