

ITINERARY

PANAMA'S CANOPY LODGE: EL VALLE DE ANTON

December 29, 2024 - January 5, 2025



The Rosy Thrush-Tanager has an odd distribution that may indicate that more than one species is involved. Nevertheless, this lovely bird can be found in Panama, and we'll do our best to find one. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.

We include here information for those interested in the 2024 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

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

For a short birding holiday, wrapped in an extremely pleasant climate, you can't do better than a visit to Panama's Canopy Lodge. Familiar with the Canopy Tower? Expect the same level of service, cuisine, and hospitality, finer accommodations, cooler days, and rich birding right on the grounds. Unacquainted? Expect some really cool birding!

Situated at about 2100 feet, along a lovely stream at the edge of picturesque El Valle in the province of Coclé, Canopy Lodge was conceived and designed by Raul Arias, famous for his other successful lodges at the Canopy Tower and Canopy Camp. Field Guides conducted our first tour there only a few months after it opened, as an extension to our Wild Panama tour in the spring of 2006. It was such an impressive area for relaxed birding that we decided this foothill destination would be ideal site for a short, stand-alone tour, and we have enjoyed many tours here since.

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, Gray-cowled Wood-Rail, Green Kingfisher, Buff-rumped Warbler, 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'll have lunch in the open dining room, thereby dividing the birding into morning and afternoon outings. That makes it possible to take an afternoon off if one wishes. The other two days will be spent in beautiful areas, one known as Altos del 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, or 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 spectacular Sunbittern can often be seen from the dining area of the Lodge. That would be a great way to kick off a new year-list, for sure! Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.

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 (1-2 miles in morning, 1-2 miles in afternoon), mostly on roads or wide dirt trails. Several walks near the Lodge require going up and down a moderate grade over uneven surfaces for a short distance, and at Altos del Maria, trails may have stretches that are uneven, slippery, or somewhat steep. Some of the rooms at the Canopy Lodge are up a flight of stairs.

- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** We will likely stand for long periods to observe flocks of birds. Participants will need to be able to climb in and out of 4x4 trucks used for the visits to Altos del Maria, where the rough roads can make travel rather bumpy.
- **PACE:** Early starts (5:30 to 6:30 a.m. breakfast) followed by birding until lunch. On most days, there is a break after lunch and optional afternoon birding. On two days, we'll spend the entire day in the field and take a picnic lunch with us.
- **WEATHER:** Temperatures range from the low 60s in the early morning to the low 90s F later in the day. Rain is likely, and the climate is humid.
- **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 must be prepared to make a comfort stop in nature.
- **OPTING OUT:** As we stay in the same lodging throughout this tour, participants can easily opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day.

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, Sun, 29 Dec. Flight to Panama City; transfer to Panama City hotel. If you arrive before 9:00 p.m., you'll be contacted by your guide to go over plans for the following morning. If you arrive after 9:00 p.m., your guide will leave a note for you at the front desk; be sure to ask for it when you check in. Night in Panama City.

Day 2, Mon, 30 Dec. To El Valle and the Canopy Lodge. After breakfast, we'll 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 9:30 a.m.). We'll then proceed on a roughly two-hour drive to the lovely Canopy Lodge, with a rest stop along the way. Upon arrival, we'll likely have lunch and will have time to see what is visiting the stream running in front of the dining area and to enjoy the remarkable show at the banana feeders and the hummingbird feeders. 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'll have time for late afternoon birding along the road. Night at the Canopy Lodge.

Days 3-6, Tue-Fri, 31 Dec–3 Jan. Canopy Lodge environs. Over the next few days, we'll 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'll also make a couple of full day excursions to the productive habitats found at Altos del Maria or a Caribbean slope road to Rio Indio. All nights at the Canopy Lodge.



This Masked Tityra was seen at Cara Iguana on a recent Field Guides tour. This is the most widespread of the tityras, and we've seen them well at several locations. Photograph by participant Paul Beerman.

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 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'll 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 Barred Hawk, Red-faced Spinetail, Spotted Barbtail, and Black-headed Antthrush. Managing to see just a couple of these would be a real feat. 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 look for the rare 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'll bird the Cara Iguana area above El Valle. Here, we will seek some of the specialties of the dry Pacific forest, including White-bellied Antbird, Lance-tailed Manakin, Rufous-and-white Wren, and the beautiful Rosy Thrush-Tanager, and we'll have another look for Tody Motmot as well as the possibility of finding a Spectacled Owl on a day roost.

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 in 4x4 vehicles, we'll head into the mountains over some steep, rough 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 efforts along the ridge above Mata Ahogado – a ridge 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, Green Thorntail, Northern Emerald Toucanet, Red-faced Spinetail, Spotted Barbtail, Russet Antshrike, Tufted Flycatcher, Rufous-browed Tyrannulet, White-throated Spadebill, Pale-vented Thrush, and Black-and-yellow, Dusky-faced, and Tawny-crested tanagers. Rarer species, including Snowcap, Brown-billed Scythebill, and the spectacular Black-crowned Antpitta, also 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'll 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 into the day and mid-day birding can be surprisingly good. After a picnic lunch, we'll bird until mid-afternoon and then start back to the Lodge.



The Rufous-browed Tyrannulet is a small flycatcher found in the humid highland forests of Panama and neighboring Costa Rica. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.

Rio Indio and Jordanal. This area harbors a good variety of Caribbean-slope forest birds. Some of the characteristic species of this forest include White Hawk, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Gartered Trogon, Barred Puffbird, Spot-crowned Barbet, Black-cheeked Woodpecker, Buff-throated Foliage-gleaner, Long-tailed Tyrant, Black-crowned Tityra, Tawny-capped and Fulvous-vented euphonias, Buff-rumped Warbler, Red-throated Ant-Tanager, Shining Honeycreeper, Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, and many beautiful tanagers.

Day 7, Sat, 4 Jan. Pacific lowlands at Juan Hombron, lunch at Playa Santa Clara; return to Panama City. After an early breakfast (and having packed up and paid our bills), we'll be off to bird the Pacific lowlands. The dry forests, agricultural fields and scattered lagoons around Juan Hombron can be exceptionally birdy. We'll 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. After a morning of birding, we'll head to Playa Santa Clara for a lunch at a beach house, with Magnificent Frigatebirds and distant Blue-footed Boobies visible from its shady porches. After lunch, we will return to Panama City, this time staying at a very nice hotel close to the international airport. We will have a farewell dinner tonight. Mind you, three favorite birds will be difficult to come up with! Night in Panama City.

Day 8, Sun, 5 Jan. Transfer to Panama's International Airport for flights home. The hotel offers a free shuttle to the international airport for flights home—after breakfast for those who do not leave too early.

About Your Guide

John Coons combines birding excellence with a natural ability as a tour guide. 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 a goal that consumes more time than expected each spring and summer.

"John Coons was a terrific guide, very tuned in to his client's abilities and needs, all the while making every effort to show us as many species as possible (especially our target birds). I am very happy that I'm signed up for the Panama's Canopy Tower and Lodge trip with John Coons. I get excited thinking about it." B.M.; Arizona: Birding the Border

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

Financial Information

FEE: \$4575 from Panama City

DEPOSIT: \$450 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: July 2, 2024

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$250

LIMIT: 8

Field Guides has opted to limit our Panama tours to just 8 participants. In addition to the Field Guides staff leader, we will have a local Panamanian guide. We feel this provides the best overall experience as some trails are narrow and any more participants make it difficult for everyone to get good, satisfying looks at the birds. This has an impact on the tour fee, but we feel the quality of your experience is well worth expense.

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 Ruth Kuhl. Ruth 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 \$4575 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; this is covered by the listed single supplement price.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$250. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; 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 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 new electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (Note that we are no longer accepting a paper version.)

Please mail your **deposit of \$450** 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 July 2, 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.

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 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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