

ITINERARY

PANAMA'S CANOPY LODGE: EL VALLE DE ANTON

December 27, 2026 - January 3, 2027



*The Spot-crowned Barbet is a bird with a limited distribution. They are said to be dependent on lowland forests, where they feed on fruits and insects, and occasionally follow army ant swarms. They've also been seen at the Canopy Camp feeders.
Photograph by participant Eric Gustafson.*

We include here information for those interested in the 2026 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.



*Gray-cowled Wood-Rails come to the feeder at the lodge, so we should get good views of them.
Photograph by participant Eric Gustafson.*

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 and Rio Indio, 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.



About the Birding Areas

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, and Spotted Barbtail. 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 or Las Mozas areas near 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.



The Tody Motmot is a much-wanted bird with a sparse distribution in Central America. We've been able to find this secretive little bird near El Valle. Photograph by participant Eric Gustafson.

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 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 paved 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, Emerald, 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.

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 Violaceous-Trogon, Barred Puffbird, Spot-crowned Barbet, Black-cheeked Woodpecker, 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.



The feeders at the Canopy Lodge are well-known for attracting a wide variety of birds. Here, a Keel-billed Toucan is enjoying the buffet. Photograph by participant Eric Gustafson.

Itinerary for Panama's Canopy Lodge

Day 1, Sun, 27 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, 28 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 fruit 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, 29 Dec–1 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.

Day 7, Sat, 2 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, 3 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

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 peak 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.

“Chris was a fantastic guide - he brought a supreme birding knowledge and wealth of guiding experience along with patience and a sense of humor. He made the trip fun as well as informative.” R. H.; Panama's Canopy Lodge.

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

Financial Information

FEE: \$4875 per person from Panama City

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$250

DEPOSIT: \$500 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: June 30, 2026

LIMIT: 8

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.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: This tour begins and ends in Panama City, Panama (Tocumen International Airport, PTY).

Arrival: Panama City (PTY) on December 27 at any time.

Departure: Panama City (PTY) on January 3 at any time.

Please wait to purchase airline tickets until we notify you that the tour is confirmed to operate. At that time, we'll be glad to assist with your flight arrangements at no service fee.

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

Passport: A valid passport is required for international travel. It should be in good condition, valid for at least 3 months beyond your return date, and have at least one blank page for each country on your itinerary.

Visa: U.S. and Canadian citizens are not required to obtain a visa for a short tourist visit. Non-US citizens should consult the consulates of each destination for current entry requirements.

You will be issued a **tourist card** by the airline to complete before arrival; please keep it in a safe place, as you may need to present it upon departure.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The tour fee is \$4875 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.

The single supplement is \$250 for those requesting a single room. 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).

Please note: Single rooms are available at the Canopy Lodge at no additional charge. These are slightly smaller than the double-occupancy rooms and each has a private bath. You may choose to stay in a double room for an additional charge. For the nights in Panama City, single rooms will be assigned and are included in the listed single supplement.

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. (Note that we are no longer accepting a paper version.)

Please send your deposit of \$500 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 June 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.

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. **Please note:** we have limited this tour to just 8 participants, plus the Field Guides leader(s) and a local guide, to ensure the best overall experience and satisfying birding on narrow trails. This affects the tour fee slightly, but we believe the intimacy and expertise are well worth it.

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.

3/26 CB; 3/26 RK; mz; 4/26peg