

Trip Report — Mexico's El Triunfo: Horned Guans and Quetzals 2026

March 2-8, 2026 with Micah Riegner & Jorge Montejo-Diaz



Nothing represents El Triunfo better than the Horned Guan, for many of us, the main reason we were on the trip! This was the first individual we saw as we reached the pass after the long climb from Santa Rita. Photo by guide Micah Riegner.

This short tour was designed to run back-to-back with our *Enchanted Chiapas* tour to provide an even more thorough coverage of southern Mexico's diverse and spectacular avifauna. After almost 5 years of being closed due to the pandemic and various other factors, El Triunfo finally reopened, allowing us to take our first Field Guides group there. It was a long hike in and out, but the Horned Guans in the treetops, the eight male Resplendent Quetzals displaying over the clearing, the Singing Quail in the

scope, and the Fulvous Owl at dusk and the flock of Black-throated Jays made it 100% worth the effort.

We gathered at the hotel lobby at 5:00 a.m., where we watched the rich orange lunar eclipse, marking an auspicious start to the grand adventure ahead. Heber, our local guide, picked us up and we were off to Jaltenango. The drive was about 3 hours and it seemed like we hit a speed bump every 30 seconds. Reaching Jaltenango, we had a wonderful buffet breakfast laid out for us, complete with pancakes, French toast, chilaquiles and scrambled eggs—fuel for the big hike ahead. We then loaded into an open truck and drove the windy dirt road up to the coffee-growing community of Santa Rita, the last of civilization we'd see for a while. We began our ascent while Heber and the crew loaded our luggage onto the mules. Apparently, the normal trailhead wasn't reachable because of some fallen trees, so we had to take an alternate route, which was super steep and mostly exposed, through some coffee plantations. Reaching the shade of the submontane forest was a relief. There, we saw our first Northern Emerald Toucanets and some Emerald-chinned Hummingbirds lekking.

Further up, at one of the miradors, a King Vulture soared by, then, shortly after crossing the pass in the cloud forest, we encountered our first Horned Guan, peacefully watching us from a mossy limb. What a prize! We descended into the valley as darkness engulfed the cloud forest and the hoots of Blue-throated Motmots closed out the day. We reached campamento and had dinner waiting for us, hot on the comal (woodfire stove) prepared by Doña Rosi and Vitalina. The hot showers felt great after the long hike.



We were treated to multiple male Resplendent Quetzals doing flight displays over the clearing. Photo by guide Jorge Montejo.

Our first full day up at El Triunfo, we gathered at dawn and birded the clearing until breakfast. Yellow-throated Nightingale-Thrushes scampered on the wet grass while Blue-crowned Chlorophonias and Yellow Grosbeaks warmed themselves in the treetops. A Barred Forest-Falcon called nearby but remained out of view. After a breakfast of eggs, black beans, and hand-made corn tortillas we walked the Palo Gordo trail crisscrossing the creek. We had surprisingly good views of both Scaly-throated and Ruddy Foliage-Gleaners, Black Thrush and Yellowish Flycatchers. On our way back we saw our first Resplendent Quetzals moving through the woods. We came back to the clearing and saw Smith's Arboreal Alligator Lizard, a gorgeous green endemic, peeking out from one of the sheds, then a Godman's Montane Pit Viper sunning on some rocks. We had lunch, then took an afternoon break, which was interrupted by eight male quetzals doing display flights over the clearing, backdropped by an oncoming thunderstorm. What a dramatic show! As it began to rain, we ducked under the roof of one of the buildings. Pebble-sized hail began to fall. We were glad we weren't out on one of the trails. After the storm cleared, Doña Rosi made us some hot chocolate and

we birded more around the clearing. We walked along the start of the Costa Trail and called in a Fulvous Owl right at dusk. After dinner we did a night walk and found several rats with our heat scopes around the clearing.



The omnipresent Yellow-throated Nightingale-Thrushes were always fun to watch around the main clearing. I can't think of a better place to see this species. Photo by tour participant Steve Rannels.

The next day, we followed the same routine of birding the clearing in the early morning before breakfast. This time, Gray Silky Flycatchers were out on the treetops along with some active Tufted Flycatchers. We had breakfast then walked the Finca Prussia Trail, the trail that we came in on. We almost saw the Middle American Leaf-tosser but it managed to evade us in the dense understory. We heard another Horned Guan calling from up the slope, but it didn't show. On our way back, however, we encountered one right at eye level and we all watched it as it got up and flew down into the valley. We came back for another wonderful lunch prepared by Rosi—enchiladas in salsa verde, then we spent the afternoon birding along the Sendero Costa, where we saw Ruddy-capped Nightingale Thrush. Back at the clearing several Chestnut-collared Swifts were swirling overhead.



Our first Field Guides group to visit El Triunfo. Tripod set by guide Micah Riegner.

This was our final full day at El Triunfo. We birded the clearing again, seeing Hooded Grosbeaks and a Hammond's Flycatcher among the usual suspects. After breakfast we walked the Costa Trail to the mirador where we saw Banded Forest-Falcon nice and close, Blue-throated Motmots, Blue-crowned Chlorophonias at a possible nest, and a pair of Singing Quail that walked right out into the open. I saw Mountain Thrush, but it took off before anyone else got on it, unfortunately. We birded the clearing again in the afternoon and had great looks at the Resplendent Quetzals again doing their flight displays. At one point we saw a tree with 3 males and 5 females all clustered together. Pretty remarkable. We had our final dinner and celebrated Steve's 77th birthday. Doña Rosi made a cake with pancakes and Nutella in the middle. I decorated it with the image of a Horned Guan.



A Singing Quail walked right out into the open for us along the Costa Trail. Photo by guide Micah Riegner.

Sadly, it was time to leave our home in the cloud forest and return to civilization. On the way down the mountain, we heard both Highland and Horned Guans, and we finally saw some Black-throated Jays, after having heard them on previous days. We heard some Azure-rumped Tanagers too, but they didn't show. In the montane forest on the way down, we saw some Green Shrike-Vireos and a pair of Tody Motmots right before reaching the coffee plantation. Out in the plantation, we saw Mexican Violetear and Lesson's Motmot, two new birds for the trip. We got through the coffee plantations then onto the truck back to Jaltenango for a late lunch. Along the drive we saw Common Black Hawk and Vaux's Swifts, also new for the trip. From Jaltenango, we continued to Tuxtla where we wrapped up our tour back at our cozy hotel. Jorge and I had a great time birding with all of you—we look forward to our next adventures ahead!



Tour participant Steve Rannels set his moth light out every evening, attracting a wide array of moths. Interestingly, each night there was a totally different set of species, which speaks to the diversity of El Triunfo. Steve then put together this wonderful poster after the trip.

Mammals

Deppe's Squirrel (*Sciurus deppei*)

Cacomistle (*Bassariscus sumichrasti*)

Reptiles

Smith's Arboreal Alligator Lizard (*Abronia smithii*) We saw one hanging out in one of the sheds.

Godman's Montane Pit Viper (*Cerrophidion godmani*) This gorgeous pit viper was sunning itself one morning at the edge of the clearing.

You can see my complete trip report on eBird at this link: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/490187>

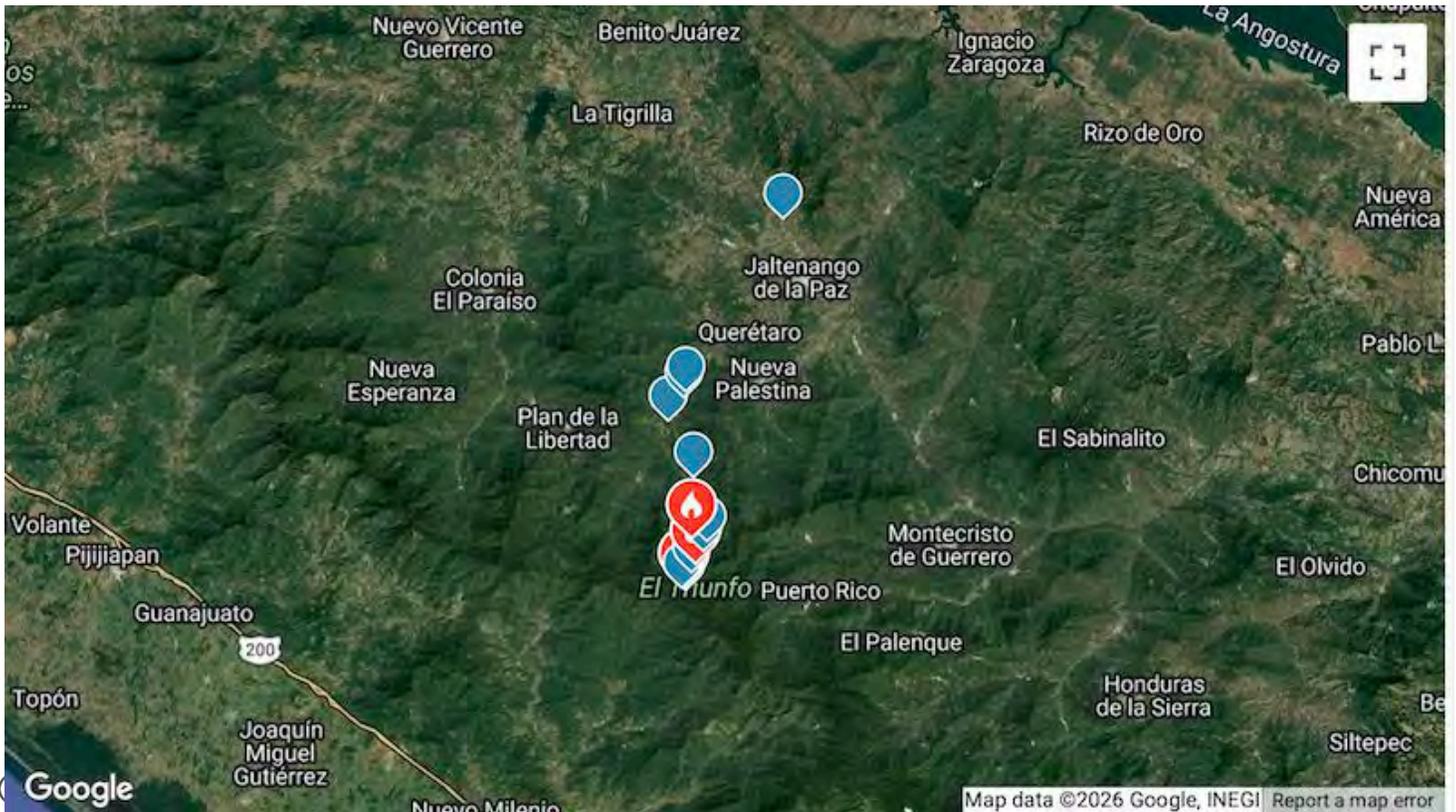
You can see my iNaturalist report of non-avian taxa at this link: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/field-guides-el-triunfo-tour-2026>

Micah and Jorge

Field Guides Birding Tours--EL TRIUNFO: HORNER GUANS AND QUETZALS 2026 (with Micah Riegner and Jorge Montejo)



2 – 8 Mar 2026 (7 days) Link-only



 **Chiapas, Mexico**

Angel Albino Corzo | La Concordia

 Micah Riegner



For a narrative summary of this tour, including a Field Guides photo gallery and additional...

 90

Species Observed

 21

Checklists

Species Observed

[Show all details](#)

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 13 | Highland Guan <i>Penelopina nigra</i> | ▶  6 |
| 4 | Horned Guan <i>Oreophasis derbianus</i> | ▶  3 |
| 6 | Singing Quail <i>Dactylortyx thoracicus</i> | ▶  4 |
| 13 | Band-tailed Pigeon <i>Patagioenas fasciata</i> | ▶  5 |
| 1 | Ruddy Ground Dove <i>Columbina talpacoti</i> | ▶  1 |
| 2 | White-tipped Dove <i>Leptotila verreauxi</i> | ▶  2 |
| 9 | White-faced Quail-Dove <i>Zentrygon albifacies</i> | ▶  4 |
| 69 | Chestnut-collared Swift <i>Streptoprocne rutila</i> | ▶  3 |
| 42 | White-collared Swift <i>Streptoprocne zonaris</i> | ▶  2 |
| 8 | Vaux's Swift <i>Chaetura vauxi</i> | ▶  1 |

- 1 **Mexican Violetear** *Colibri thalassinus* ▶  1
- 6 **Green-throated Mountain-gem** *Lampornis viridipallens* ▶  6
- 7 **Emerald-chinned Hummingbird** *Abeillia abeillei* ▶  2
- 1 **King Vulture** *Sarcoramphus papa* ▶  1
- 1 **Black Vulture** *Coragyps atratus* ▶  1
- 3 **Turkey Vulture** *Cathartes aura* ▶  1
- 1 **Ornate Hawk-Eagle** *Spizaetus ornatus* ▶  1
- 1 **Common Black Hawk** *Buteogallus anthracinus* ▶  1
- 3 **Gray Hawk** *Buteo plagiatus* ▶  2
- 1 **Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl** *Glaucidium brasilianum* ▶  1
- 4 **Fulvous Owl** *Strix fulvescens* ▶  4
- 29 **Resplendent Quetzal** *Pharomachrus mocinno* ▶  7
- 1 **Gartered Violaceous Trogon** *Trogon caligatus* ▶  1
- 1 **Mountain Trogon** *Trogon mexicanus* ▶  1
- 3 **Collared Trogon** *Trogon collaris* ▶  3
- 2 **Tody Motmot** *Hylomanes momotula* ▶  1
- 6 **Blue-throated Motmot** *Aspatha gularis* ▶  5
- 2 **Lesson's Motmot** *Momotus lessonii* ▶  1
- 19 **Northern Emerald-Toucanet** *Aulacorhynchus prasinus* ▶  8
- 1 **Acorn Woodpecker** *Melanerpes formicivorus* ▶  1

- 1 **Golden-fronted Woodpecker** *Melanerpes aurifrons* ▶  1
- 1 **Hairy Woodpecker** *Leuconotopicus villosus* ▶  1
- 1 **Golden-olive Woodpecker** *Colaptes rubiginosus* ▶  1
- 3 **Collared Forest-Falcon** *Micrastur semitorquatus* ▶  3
- 8 **Barred Forest-Falcon** *Micrastur ruficollis* ▶  7
- 2 **Barred Parakeet** *Bolborhynchus lineola* ▶  1
- 2 **Middle American Leaf-tosser** *Sclerurus mexicanus* ▶  2
- 4 **Spotted Woodcreeper** *Xiphorhynchus erythropygius* ▶  3
- 4 **Spot-crowned Woodcreeper** *Lepidocolaptes affinis* ▶  4
- 6 **Scaly-throated Foliage-gleaner** *Anabacerthia variegaticeps* ▶  6
- 3 **Ruddy Foliage-gleaner** *Clibanornis rubiginosus* ▶  2
- 2 **Masked Tityra** *Tityra semifasciata* ▶  1
- 1 **Rose-throated Becard** *Pachyramphus aglaiae* ▶  1
- 1 **Eye-ringed Flatbill** *Rhynchocyclus brevirostris* ▶  1
- 2 **Greenish Elaenia** *Myiopagis viridicata* ▶  2
- 4 **Guatemalan Tyrannulet** *Zimmerius vilissimus* ▶  3
- 6 **Tufted Flycatcher** *Mitrephanes phaeocercus* ▶  3
- 1 **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** *Empidonax flaviventris* ▶  1
- 3 **Hammond's Flycatcher** *Empidonax hammondii* ▶  3
- 8 **Yellowish Flycatcher** *Empidonax flavescens* ▶  5

- 1 **Social Flycatcher** *Myiozetetes similis* ▶  1
- 1 **Rufous-browed Peppershrike** *Cyclarhis gujanensis* ▶  1
- 1 **Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo** *Vireolanius melitophrys* ▶  1
- 1 **Green Shrike-Vireo** *Vireolanius pulchellus* ▶  1
- 4 **Plumbeous Vireo** *Vireo plumbeus* ▶  3
- 2 **Brown-capped Vireo** *Vireo leucophrys* ▶  2
- 12 **Black-throated Jay** *Cyanolyca pumilo* ▶  4
- 2 **Green Jay** *Cyanocorax yncas* ▶  1
- 7 **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** *Stelgidopteryx serripennis* ▶  3
- 2 **Black-capped Swallow** *Atticora pileata* ▶  1
- 4 **Rufous-browed Wren** *Troglodytes rufociliatus* ▶  2
- 14 **Gray-breasted Wood-Wren** *Henicorhina leucophrys* ▶  8
- 15 **Brown-backed Solitaire** *Myadestes occidentalis* ▶  10
- 3 **Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush** *Catharus frantzii* ▶  3
- 7 **Yellow-throated Nightingale-Thrush** *Catharus dryas* ▶  5
- 1 **Swainson's Thrush** *Catharus ustulatus* ▶  1
- 5 **Black Thrush** *Turdus infuscatus* ▶  4
- 1 **White-throated Thrush** *Turdus assimilis* ▶  1
- 5 **Clay-colored Thrush** *Turdus grayi* ▶  4
- 11 **Gray Silky-flycatcher** *Ptiliogonys cinereus* ▶  4

- 1 **Elegant Euphonia** *Chlorophonia elegantissima* ▶  1
- 16 **Blue-crowned Chlorophonia** *Chlorophonia occipitalis* ▶  9
- 4 **Hooded Grosbeak** *Hesperiphona abeillei* ▶  2
- 22 **Common Chlorospingus** *Chlorospingus flavopectus* ▶  7
- 2 **Chestnut-capped Brushfinch** *Arremon brunneinucha* ▶  2
- 11 **Rufous-collared Sparrow** *Zonotrichia capensis* ▶  6
- 10 **Melodious Blackbird** *Dives dives* ▶  5
- 2 **Louisiana Waterthrush** *Parkesia motacilla* ▶  2
- 2 **Black-and-white Warbler** *Mniotilta varia* ▶  2
- 2 **Crescent-chested Warbler** *Oreothlypis superciliosa* ▶  2
- 1 **Nashville Warbler** *Leiothlypis ruficapilla* ▶  1
- 7 **Townsend's Warbler** *Setophaga townsendi* ▶  5
- 1 **Black-throated Green Warbler** *Setophaga virens* ▶  1
- 6 **Golden-browed Warbler** *Basileuterus belli* ▶  4
- 2 **Golden-crowned Warbler** *Basileuterus culicivorus* ▶  1
- 6 **Wilson's Warbler** *Cardellina pusilla* ▶  5
- 15 **Slate-throated Redstart** *Myioborus miniatus* ▶  6
- 6 **Flame-colored Tanager** *Piranga bidentata* ▶  4
- 15 **Yellow Grosbeak** *Pheucticus chrysopleus* ▶  6
- 1 **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Pheucticus ludovicianus* ▶  1

