



CHEESEMAN'S ECOLOGY SAFARIS

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Panama

Avian Jewels

March 18 to April 1, 2023



Golden-hooded Tanager
© Mike Danzenbaker

SAFARI OVERVIEW

Explore a variety of habitats in a country with incredibly accessible biodiversity, including many beautiful birds and captivating mammals; we are offering this special trip in cooperation with our local operator and guide Paco. Ascend a canopy observation tower in the rainforest to take in breathtaking views over the tops of the trees while watching birds weaving their way through the foliage. Experience exquisite mammal-viewing opportunities in the wetlands and rainforest of central Panama's Canal Zone. Trek along the world-renowned Pipeline Road to discover avian wonders such as motmots, antwrens, and antshrikes. Travel to the cool foothills of Cerro Azul and Cerro Jefe to search for the endemic violet-capped hummingbird and other higher-elevation species. Get away to the picturesque Anton Valley to enjoy flora and fauna of the misty cloud forest. Finish the trip exploring the unique dry tropical forest of Cocles Province. Come discover many birds and some mammals in a beautiful country with an astounding diversity of flora and fauna.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Watch flocks of migrating raptors and canopy species from the Discovery Center's Canopy Observation Tower.
- Explore many ecosystems, from pastures and ponds to misty jungles, to find tanagers, honeycreepers, hummingbirds, and many other colorful birds.
- Marvel at mixed bird flocks following army ant swarms through the forest to get a delectable treat.
- Look out for monkeys, kinkajous, and sloths, and search the landscape for agoutis and caiman.
- Visit the famous Panama Canal!

LEADERS: Paco Madrigal with Euclides "Kilo" Campos.

DAYS: 15, including estimated travel time.

GROUP SIZE: 10.

COST: \$4,790 per person, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See the *Costs* section on page 5.

| Date | Description | Accommodation | Meals |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Mar 18 | Arrive in Panama City, Panama. | Summit Rainforest Resort, Panama City | D |
| Mar 19 | Explore Soberanía National Park via Pipeline Road and the Rainforest Discovery Center. | | B, L, D |
| Mar 20 | Visit Metropolitan Nature Park to search for sloths and birds. | | |
| Mar 21 | Drive up through the cool foothills of Cerro Azul and Cerro Jefe to a tanager paradise. | | |
| Mar 22 | Another trip up the famous Pipeline Road for wildlife sightings. | | |
| Mar 23 | Bird Semaphore Hill and Ammo Dump. | | |
| Mar 24 | Habitat-hop among Plantation Road, Summit Ponds, and Old Gamboa. | | |
| Mar 25 | Day trip to Eastern Panama/Bayano Lake. | | |
| Mar 26 | Decide as a group what favorite location to revisit. | | |
| Mar 27 | Drive to Anton Valley. | | Los Mandarinos Hotel, Anton Valley |
| Mar 28 | Discover the bird diversity in the Macho Falls region of the Anton Valley. | | |
| Mar 29 | Bird watch on Cerro Gaital and along Mesa Road. | | |
| Mar 30 | Explore the wildlife of Anton Valley. | | |
| Mar 31 | Survey the tropical dry forests of Cocles Province, and then drive back to Panama City. | Riande Aeropuerto Hotel, Panama City | B, L |
| Apr 1 | Fly home. | | B |

LEADER

Paco Madrigal

Paco has over 20 years of experience guiding wildlife, natural history, and birding tours throughout his native Costa Rica. He has been leading tours in Panama since 2014. He studied English and Ornithology at the University of Florida then worked at Costa Rica's La Selva Biological Station before following his dream of starting his own tour company. His deep knowledge and charming personality make him one of our best leaders.



Euclides "Kilo" Campos

Though he holds a Nature Tourism degree from the National University in Panama, is involved with numerous national and international projects such as Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania, has a confirmed record of sighting 778 birds in Panama's 2019 Big Year, and comes fully equipped with Swarovski Optics, Kilo has a natural rapport with visitors as if going birding with a friend. He speaks fluent English and exhibits attentiveness and patience as he enjoys sharing his knowledge and his ability to recognize sounds and identify birds with people from all around the world.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Mar 18 ~ Fly to Panama City, Panama

Fly to Panama City where our local agent will transfer you from the airport to the resort. Many of the best birding areas are within an hour of Panama City, so you'll use the resort as your basecamp for the next several days.

Mar 19 ~ Pipeline Road, Rainforest Discovery Center

Explore world-renowned Pipeline Road, a Panamanian birding hotspot traversing Soberanía National Park. You'll stop along the road to scout the diverging forest trails for songbirds such as trogons, antshrikes, and manakins. When you arrive at the Rainforest Discovery Center, climb the 32-meter tall Observation Tower for spectacular 360-degree panoramic views of the rainforest canopy, enjoying a unique bird's-eye view. In the distance, you will see the Panama Canal and Centennial Bridge. During this time of year, you may witness the wonders of hawk migration as they funnel northward along this land bridge connecting the Americas. At the base of the tower, enjoy hummingbird feeders frequented by long-billed hermits and white-necked jacobins.



White-faced Capuchin
© Marc Lombardi

Mar 20 ~ Metropolitan Nature Park

Metropolitan Nature Park, conveniently located within the city limits, contains a surprising variety of birds and other wildlife. As you make your way through the forest you will discover hidden avian treasures including lance-tailed manakins, rosy thrush-tanagers, and yellow-rumped caciques. While exploring the forest you will also look for mammals including coatimundi (coati), three-toed sloth, and the endemic and adorable Geoffrey's tamarin – the only tamarin species in Central America – feeding on its favorite fruits of the cecropia tree.

Mar 21 ~ Cerro Azul and Cerro Jefe

Today you travel east of Panama City for about two hours to a protected cloud forest within Chagres National Park. As you summit Cerro Azul and Cerro Jefe, at 2,500ft and 3,300ft above sea level, respectively, you will encounter trees dripping with epiphytes and orchids and discover dazzling new species for the trip. Enveloped in the cool mists, you will encounter a wide array of tanagers among the mixed-species flocks; if lucky, you will see emerald, speckled, rufous-winged, golden-hooded, silver-throated, bay-headed, hepatic, olive, and black-and-yellow tanagers! The ornate hawk-eagle inhabits this forest, as well as the scale-crested pygmy-tyrant and the endemic stripe-cheeked woodpecker.



Golden-collared Manakin
© Mike Danzenbaker

Mar 22 ~ Pipeline Road

You will spend a second day at Pipeline Road to revisit favorite wildlife hotspots and look for species you missed on your earlier visit.

Mar 23 ~ Semaphore Hill and Ammo Dump

At Semaphore Hill, wind along a jungle road in search of wildlife in this section of Soberanía National Park. Army ants commonly swarm here, drawing in mixed flocks of antbirds and woodcreepers. This area hosts other forest bird species such as the slaty antwren, great tinamou, and the spectacular rufous motmot. You may also encounter troupes of white-faced capuchins as you travel through these forests.

The pond at Ammo Dump is an excellent place for spotting waterbirds, including resident rufescent tiger-heron and American pygmy kingfisher. With some extra searching, you may encounter the striated heron or the capped heron. The surrounding fields and trees contain raptors, landbirds, and shorebird, including collared forest falcon, Southern lapwing, and yellow-tailed oriole.

Mar 24 ~ Plantation Road, Summit Ponds, and Old Gamboa

Today you will visit a variety of habitats with wonderful opportunities for spotting a plethora of wildlife. Plantation Road runs through both old-growth and secondary forest, and its relative lack of undergrowth increases your chances of viewing birds of the forest floor such as tinamous and the aptly named leaftossers. You may also encounter avian jewels such as the blue-crowned motmot, golden-crowned spadebill, and white-breasted wood-wren.

As you travel along the access road to Summit ponds, you have a chance to see the gray-headed chachalaca, buff-throated saltator, and other edge-associated birds. The ponds are home to an assortment of herons and kingfishers; all six species of kingfishers of the Americas have been spotted here! Scrub and grassland habitats along Old Gamboa Road contain more open-habitat species, including kiskadees and manakins.

Mar 25 ~ Day trip to Bayano Lake in Eastern Panama

During this day trip towards the east, you will visit Eastern Pacific lowland forests around Bayano Lake for bird specialties such as the black antshrike and the dazzling orange-crowned oriole.

Mar 26 ~ Free day to revisit a favorite location

As a group, you will decide which locations you would like to revisit for birds or mammals that you missed before or would like to see again!

Mar 27 ~ Drive to Anton Valley

Traveling into cloud forest country, discover exciting new flora and fauna while enjoying cooler temperatures and misty mountain landscapes. Along the way, look for colorful birds, including the flame-rumped tanager, blue-gray tanager, and red-crowned ant-tanager. The vocal and acrobatic chestnut-headed oropendula hang from high-up branches, swinging among their colony members and pendulous nests. In the afternoon, you will settle into the lodge and have time to explore this quaint mountain village nestled in the crater of an extinct volcano.

Mar 28 ~ Anton Valley Birding, Macho Falls

Spend the day scouting the lively forests around Macho Falls. Enjoy the breathtaking cloud forest and impressive diversity of wildlife as you seek the black-chested jay, white-throated robin, and other flora and fauna of the region.

Mar 29 ~ Cerro Gaital and Mesa Road

As you ascend the mountain to Cerro Gaital, lookout for the shiny cowbird and streaked saltator. With this rise in altitude you have the opportunity to see the orange-bellied trogon and blue-throated toucanet. You may encounter many of the resident raptors, such as the black hawk-eagle, gray hawk, and barred forest falcon. Much of the day will be spent enjoying nature along Mesa Road. With its mix of habitats, from forest to pasture, you will see many birds!

Mar 30 ~ Anton Valley Birding

Spend the day enjoying the incredible flora and fauna of Anton Valley. The route will depend on the weather and your preferences. The group may choose to journey to the Altos de Maria highlands or to traverse the birding trails closer to the hotel. Wherever you travel, you are sure to see a spectacular variety of wildlife.

Mar 31 ~ Tropical Dry Forests of Cocles Province

On your drive back to Panama City, spend a good part of the day exploring the dry tropical forests of the Pacific coast lowlands. Some of the spectacular inhabitants of this area include the lesser yellow-headed vulture, the sapphire-throated hummingbird, and the rare Veraguan mango, a splendidly colored small hummingbird of Panama and Costa Rica. You will end the day at the hotel in Panama City, where you can enjoy dinner on your own at the hotel or in Panama City.

Apr 1 ~ Fly home

COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

Cost

| Type | Cost per Person |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Trip Cost, double occupancy | \$4,790 |
| Single Supplement | \$990 |

Costs are per person, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See *Included* and *Not Included* sections for more details.

If you are a single traveler, we will find a roommate for you, but if we cannot find you a roommate, we may charge you a single supplement. Single rooms cost extra and are subject to availability.

Payment Schedule

| Payment | Due Date | Amount per Person |
|---------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| Deposit | Due now to reserve your space | \$500 |
| Second | April 30, 2022 | \$1,000 |
| Final | October 1, 2022 | Remaining balance |

Payments are due based on the schedule above. All reservations require a deposit to confirm reservation of your space.

Cancellations

Until the Final Payment due date, deposits are refundable except for a cancellation fee of \$150 per person, which can be applied toward another trip if reserved within six months of the cancelled trip's departure date. Cancellations are non-transferrable. No refunds are given after the Final Payment due date.

Included

- All leaders, transport, park entry fees, and permits for all activities unless described as optional.
- Transfers from the Panama City Airport to the Summit Rainforest Resort on March 18 and from the Riande Aeropuerto Hotel to the Panama City Airport, via complimentary hotel airport shuttle, on April 1.
- Accommodations for the nights of March 18 through March 31.
- Meals from dinner on March 18 through breakfast on April 1, except meals listed in *Not Included* section.
- Gratuities for group meals.
- Panama Canal visit during one of the days you are staying in Panama City.
- Trip Materials – information about flights, packing, entry and departure requirements, airport transfers, gratuities, etc.

Not Included

- All airfare, airport and departure taxes, and excess baggage fees. Round-trip airfare is approximately \$600 to \$1,200 between the US and Panama City, depending on origin.
- Passport and visa fees.
- Dinner on March 31.
- Gratuities – tipping is always discretionary. However, we suggest budgeting about \$15 to \$25 per participant per day for March 18 to March 31 (about \$210 to \$350 total *per participant*).
- Mandatory emergency medical and evacuation insurance. For more information see www.cheesemans.com/travel-insurance.
- Optional trip cancellation insurance. For more information see www.cheesemans.com/travel-insurance.
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone calls, medical costs or hospitalization, room service, alcoholic and other beverages, items not on the regular menu, etc. If you have special dietary needs, please indicate them on your Reservation Form.

SIGN UP

Please contact us first to check availability, reserve your space, and obtain a Reservation Form. To confirm your reservation, we require a deposit and signed form from each participant.

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

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OTHER DETAILS

Climate

Temperatures vary greatly. The Pacific coast is often hot, while the cloud forests can be surprisingly cool. In March, the average daily temperature in the Panama Canal Zone and cloud forest of the Anton Valley are in the mid-80s°F (28°C), with highs up to low 90s°F (33°C); the evenings are typically in the low 70s°F (22°C). Although March is considered the dry season, it can still rain.

Fitness Level

Minimal fitness level required. You may walk two to three miles per day at a slow pace, stopping for observation and photography. Most walking is on relatively level ground or gradual slopes. Please contact us if you have any health concerns that may make this trip challenging.

Transportation

You'll travel in spacious air-conditioned vehicles.

Flights

Airfare is not included in trip costs. Detailed logistical information and the contact information for our recommended flight-ticketing agent are included in the Trip Materials we will send you. Please let us know if you are arriving earlier or staying later as we are happy to assist you with any extra overnights that you might want to arrange.

Flights you (or a travel agent) book: Arrive in Panama City, Panama (PTY) by 4:00pm on March 18. Depart from Panama City, Panama (PTY) anytime on April 1.

Terms and Conditions

Read our current Terms and Conditions at <https://cheesemans.com/terms-and-conditions>.

Conservation

Our company ethos has always regarded conservation as inseparable from responsible tourism. We struggle with the dilemma that traveling worldwide expends climate-changing carbon. However, we wholeheartedly believe that traveling with us will cultivate your passion for conserving our beautiful world, while stimulating each destination's local economies.

We take you to amazing destinations, navigating far and wide, and when we do, we recognize that the world pays a steep price. Taking this into account, we have made each trip carbon neutral (<https://cheesemans.com/carbon-neutral>).

And, by signing up with us, you pledge to offset your carbon emissions to and from your trip, either through your favorite offsetting organization or by using our handy carbon calculator (<https://cheesemans.com/carbon-calculator>).

FAQS

I'm not an expert bird watcher; will I enjoy Panama?

Birds are the main focus, so it is geared toward bird watchers. That being said, you only need to enjoy bird watching to fully appreciate this trip. Our leader, Paco Madrigal, is really great with both beginner and advanced birders. You will also see mammals, reptiles, and beautiful plants and insects on this trip.