

Two Great Eco-Lodges: Chan Chich & Pico Bonito With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

January 12 – 20, 2018

866.900.1146

800.426.7781

520.558.1146

naturalistjourneys@gmail.com

www.naturalistjourneys.com

or find us on Facebook at
Naturalist Journeys, LLC



Naturalist Journeys, LLC / Caligo Ventures PO Box 16545 Portal, AZ 85632 PH: 520.558.1146 / 800.426.7781
Fax 650.471.7667 www.naturalistjourneys.com / www.caligo.com info@caligo.com / naturalistjourneys@gmail.com

Two Great Eco-Lodges: Chan Chich & Pico Bonito With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



Relax on this wonderful Central American nature tour at two absolutely stunning eco-lodges, each with fantastic birding and wildlife, as well as all the creature comforts and warm hospitality. A short flight connects the two.

The journey begins in Belize at Chan Chich Lodge (Mayan for “little bird”), one of the premier birding lodges in the world. Here, we are quickly introduced to quintessential neotropical bird families like toucans, parrots, and trogons, all within easy reach of the comforts of the lodge where we stay for four nights. Chan Chich is remote, accessed typically by small plane, so it retains its wild character and full ecological medley of mammals and large gamebirds, including three rare wild cat species: Jaguar, Jaguarundi, and Margay. Flocks of Ocellated Turkey often stroll through the grounds and over fifty bird species are possible from the lodge clearing in just one morning!



After Chan Chich Lodge, we have booked a flight for you on Tropic Air to Honduras, for a smooth travel day to the luxurious Pico Bonito Lodge for four more nights. Nestled at the base of a mountain range near the northern coast of Honduras, Pico Bonito Lodge combines first-rate accommodations, excellent dining, and superb birding opportunities. The wide assortment of feeders, flowering plants, and fruiting trees right around the cabins entice a profusion of hummingbirds, warblers, tanagers, and orioles. A strategically built tower offers a lofty vantage point from which to scan for the electric blue Lovely Cotinga, the signature species of the lodge. These are two of the finest birding lodges in the Americas — we hope you are part of the adventure!



Tour Highlights

- Enjoy two of the best eco-lodges in the Americas at a great pace, with time to relax and explore
- Take night excursions in search of owls, other night birds, and maybe even a Jaguar!
- Wake to the noisy chorus of tinamous, forest-falcons, and motmots calling just outside your door
- Traverse lodge trails through numerous habitats in search of trogons, parrots, toucans, and more
- Enjoy the colorful bird species of the forest canopy from the observation platform at Pico Bonito Lodge, with an excellent chance of seeing the lodge’s signature species — the Lovely Cotinga
- Explore the labyrinth of rivers, lagoons, and mangroves by boat at Cuero y Salado Wildlife Refuge
- See the Honduran Emerald, Honduras’ only endemic bird species, in the arid Aguan Valley

Two Great Eco-Lodges: Chan Chich & Pico Bonito With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



Tour Summary

9-Day / 8-Night Central American Birding Tour with [Carlos Sanchez](#)

\$4590, from Belize City, Belize, departing San Pedro Sula, Honduras

Airport is Philip S.W. Goldson International (BZE) / Ramón Villeda Morales International Airport (SAP)

Fri., Jan. 12 Arrival in Belize / Chan Chich Rain Forest Lodge

After arriving at Philip S.W. Goldson International Airport in Belize City, we take a short 30-minute flight to Gallon Jug where we are whisked away to the beautiful Chan Chich Lodge, deep within the 250,000-acre Rio Bravo Wilderness Conservation Area in northwestern Belize.

Chan Chich Rainforest Lodge is set in a Mayan Plaza dating from the Classic Mayan Period of 250 – 800 AD. The comfortable lodge and its twelve cabañas are made of local materials and are attractively furnished. From your porch, you are likely to see Ocellated Turkey parading through the plaza, hear howler monkeys calling from above, and see various small songbirds, like Northern Waterthrush and Blue Bunting, feeding on the lawns.

This rich forest is home to over 350 species of birds, including Great Curassow, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Purple-crowned Fairy, White-whiskered Puffbird, Keel-billed Toucan, and more. The iridescent Rufous-tailed Jacamar and cute, yet elusive, Tody Motmot are also possibilities on our birding walks through the rainforest. The extensive trail network could reveal secretive Great Tinamou, acrobatic Red-capped Manakin, and Royal Flycatcher, along with a host of colorful trogons, tanagers, and aracarís.

As the morning air warms, birds of prey like King Vulture, White Hawk, Black Hawk-Eagle, and Plumbeous Kite soar over the cabañas. In winter, the bird population swells as local nesting birds are joined by numerous migrants familiar to those of us from the USA and Canada: a wide assortment of warblers, vireos, tanagers, orioles, and flycatchers all spend the winter here. It is a pleasure to be here!



Two Great Eco-Lodges: Chan Chich & Pico Bonito With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

Mammals like Yucatan Black Howler Monkey, Central American Spider Monkey, Central American Agouti, and Gray Fox are commonly seen, and five felines, including Ocelot and Jaguar, have been found here. The possibility of seeing secretive wild cats adds to the excitement of being here!

You can visit Mayan burial chambers with stucco friezes still intact, canoe on Laguna Verde or swim in a nearby stream, where you might be joined by a playful River Otter. Chan Chich also has a new swimming pool and spa in an exquisite jungle setting.

Once settled, we begin our exploration with a short afternoon hike to the Upper Plaza and the King's Tomb Trail. Mounds that have formed over unexcavated ruins provide nest sites for Lesson's Motmot, which are frequently seen around the lodge clearing. Montezuma Oropendola, which nest in colonies around the lodge, are fun to watch as they tumble and bugle in courtship display.

Accommodations at Chan Chich Lodge (B,L,D)

Sat., Jan. 13 – Mon. Jan. 15 Chan Chich Rain Forest Lodge

Waking up at Chan Chich Lodge is worth the whole trip! The nighttime serenade of Common Pauraque quickly blends into a dawn chorus of tinamous, wrens, and woodcreepers, ushering in our early morning walks. With luck we find an assortment of dazzling tropical tanagers, woodpeckers, euphonias, and honeycreepers near fruiting trees. Each day we choose a different trail for this optional early morning.

After a delicious breakfast, we then venture into the forest, past manakin leks and the territories of dueting Spot-breasted Wren. Some days we are on trails right from the property, while other days we venture out by van to explore the surrounding areas. You can also choose an afternoon horseback ride one day if you enjoy riding.

Chan Chich is known for its extensive trail system, from short loop trails to longer enticing pathways. All are well-maintained. One of our favorites (and the place we saw Jaguar in 2016) is to walk north on the gravel Sylvester



Two Great Eco-Lodges: Chan Chich & Pico Bonito With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



Village Road through a couple of forest types, good for birds and butterflies (when sunny). To the east enjoy the secretive River Trail, which skirts wetter habitats. At one lovely spot, you can watch hummingbirds bathe!

Another productive option is to walk the forest east on the main road leading from the lodge to the suspension bridge over Chan Chich Creek. Here, Blue Morpho flit by, Cinnamon Becard whistle from the trees, and any fruiting trees may attract Black-crowned Tityra, Black-cheeked Woodpecker, Golden-hooded Tanager, and maybe a wintering Yellow-throated Vireo. Some spotting scope work at the bridge could produce several species of dragonflies and damselflies, including one of the red-eyed dancers, or the colorful Caribbean Yellowface.

One trail takes us to a lower open and moist tinal forest where regionally endemic specialties include Rose-throated Tanager, Gray-throated Chat, and Yucatan Flycatcher. On a recent visit to the tinal, a Pheasant Cuckoo sang endlessly. Here we have a greater chance of encountering shy birds like Ruddy Quail-Dove, Great Curassow, and Scaly-throated Leaftosser, that are unlikely to venture into the lodge clearing.

Other activities during our stay here may include a motorized excursion, with a visit to an escarpment, good for birds of prey (including Bat Falcon and Ornate Hawk-Eagle) or a stop at a lagoon that may produce a Bare-throated Tiger-Heron or Pinnated Bittern. Passing through open country around Gallon Jug, we seek birds like Tropical Pewee, Giant Cowbird, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, and Laughing Falcon. On this excursion, we take lunch with us and stay out much of the day.

Most days, we return to the lodge and break for lunch (or perhaps a brief siesta or a swim), and then head out in the late afternoon, as the forest cools and life stirs. Mealy Parrot and Olive-throated Parakeet are noisy and are often seen as they come to their evening roosts. Those interested in archeology can enjoy a trail leading to ruins on the property, which are not yet fully excavated. Or, choose an all-day adventure (additional cost) to some of



Two Great Eco-Lodges: Chan Chich & Pico Bonito With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



the region's Mayan sites of note, including Xunantunich, also known as the "Maiden of the Rock" which is the second tallest Mayan ruin in Belize. It stands 130-feet high, giving a panoramic view of the Cayo District, nearby Guatemala, and the Mopan River.

By 5:30 PM, the afternoon is turning to dusk and we can enjoy camaraderie and armchair birding before the lodge's traditional happy hour and dinner. Or, we may venture down to the suspension bridge, which seems to be a hotspot at this time of day, to see what we can find.

Chan Chich is known for its creative menu, from which you can sample many local foods — not to mention the excellent homemade ice cream. Many like to linger over meals outside on the porch, where birds are attracted to a water feature.

On several evenings, a night drive is available. We include one with your stay, and if you wish, you can add more. This is one of the few sites where you may actually see a Jaguar, Jaguarundi, Margay, or Ocelot in the wild. More frequently seen are White-tailed Deer, Northern Tamandua, Four-eyed Opossum, Gray Fox, and nightbirds like Common Pauraque, Mottled Owl, and Northern Potoo.

Accommodations at Chan Chich Lodge (B,L,D)



Tues., Jan. 16 Chan Chich Rain Forest Lodge / Flights to Honduras / Lancetilla Gardens / Pico Bonito

Today, we leave Chan Chich and return to the airport in Belize City via flight out of Gallon Jug, connecting to our flight to San Pedro Sula, Honduras.

After clearing customs in Honduras, we meet our local guides and start our scenic drive to Pico Bonito Lodge. En route we visit Lancetilla Gardens, a site not far from the Caribbean coast. Founded in 1925 by the United Fruit Company as a station where tropical fruit and wood trees were studied for commercial value, this tropical mosaic of secondary forest and edge habitats provides superb and relatively easy forest birding.

Islands of forests and their environs are home to Squirrel Cuckoo, Black-headed Trogon, Collared Trogon, Lesson's Motmot, and Rufous-tailed Jacamar while lower, denser edge habitats are home to both Great and Barred Antshrike.



Two Great Eco-Lodges: Chan Chich & Pico Bonito With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



Feeding flocks are a regular feature of birding in the rainforest. Since the trees are lower here, it is much easier to get a good look at these smaller songbirds such as Yellow-bellied Tyrannulet, Lesser Greenlet, Yellow-winged Tanager, Crimson-collared Tanager, and Yellow-throated Euphonia. Woodcreepers, toucans, woodpeckers, manakins, motmot, and migrant warblers all add splashes of both color and form to this fantastic site. The plant life is as vibrant as the birds.

We arrive to watch sunset from the porch of lovely Pico Bonito Lodge.
Accommodations at Pico Bonito Lodge (B,L,D)

Wed., Jan. 17 Pico Bonito

Our first full day at the Lodge at Pico Bonito begins with an early breakfast on the spacious front deck of the lodge's Itzama Restaurant. During breakfast, feeders right by our dining tables often attract White-necked Jacobin, Violet Sabrewing, and Rufous-tailed Hummingbird.

Over the next few hours, a guided walk throughout the lodge grounds and over to the "Toucan Tower" observation platform should yield numerous new sightings that can include heart-stopping views of the coveted Lovely Cotinga, the clown-like Collared Aracari, vibrant Green, Shining, and Red-legged Honeycreepers, up to a dozen species of hummingbird, and several species of trogon — all within short distance of the world-class Pico Bonito Lodge.

After lunch at the lodge, we ascend the lodge's loop trail system in search of shyer species of the forest interior, such as Scaly-throated Leafhopper, Tody Motmot, Yellow-eared Toucanet, and Central American Pygmy-Owl.



Two Great Eco-Lodges: Chan Chich & Pico Bonito With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

The loop trail system also passes several overlooks along the Rio Coloradito, providing excellent views of the foothill forest and possible views of raptors like White Hawk.

After dinner, we take a night walk around the lodge's gardens in search of Great Potoo, Mottled Owl, Vermiculated Screech-Owl, and Black-and-white Owl.

Accommodations at Pico Bonito Lodge (B,L,D)

Thurs., Jan. 18 Pico Bonito / Cuero y Salado Wildlife Refuge

We meet at the lodge restaurant early for breakfast, departing from the lodge by 6:30 AM to visit the Cuero y Salado Wildlife Refuge. This 35,000-acre refuge protects a productive estuary system of brackish lagoons, mangroves, and riverine habitat that attracts a large number of wetland bird species, as well as Black Howler Monkey, White-faced Monkey, Green Iguana, and American Crocodile.

The journey there is part of the fun! We board a century old, motorized train which tracks through bird-rich ranchlands, marshes, and plantations. Once at the refuge, we travel by boat. With the keen eyes of our guides and the expertise of the boat handlers on how to approach certain species to get a closer look, we have the opportunity to observe such tantalizing species as Agami Heron, Boat-billed Heron, Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Jabiru, American Pygmy Kingfisher, and Sungrebe.

We arrive back at the lodge just in time for lunch. This afternoon is devoted to relaxation, a visit to the lodge's butterfly farm, or birding from the lodge's decks or gardens.

Accommodations at Pico Bonito Lodge (B,L,D)

Fri., Jan. 19 Water Day or Aguan Valley / Pico Bonito

Today you have a choice. Option one is to join an all-day venture to a secluded island for a day of swimming and snorkeling. From the coast it is an hour's boat ride to a wonderful and healthy area of coral reefs.

Alternately, our bird enthusiasts can venture out early (4:30 AM) to visit the arid Aguan Valley. This secluded valley is stuck in a rain shadow. Because of its markedly drier climate, this valley functions as an island of dry, thorny deciduous forest instead of verdant rainforest. As a result, many of the



Two Great Eco-Lodges: Chan Chich & Pico Bonito With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



birds in the valley are more typical of the dry Pacific-slope of Mexico and Central America; Lesser Roadrunner, Lesser Ground-Cuckoo, White-bellied Wren, Altamira Oriole, and others all thrive in this habitat. However, the main goal of our trip in this valley is the critically endangered Honduran Emerald, the country's only endemic bird species.

Although it is endangered, the Honduran Emerald is still relatively common within healthy patches of remaining habitat. Salvin's Emerald, White-lored Gnatcatcher, and Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet are also typical species of this small region. We enjoy lunch in the nearby ranching town of Olanchito and return to the lodge by 4:00 PM. *Accommodations at Pico Bonito Lodge (B, L, D)*

Sat., Jan. 20 Return to San Pedro Sula / Departures

After breakfast and perhaps some final farewells to all the wonderful birds in this paradise, we depart the Lodge at Pico Bonito for San Pedro Sula International Airport to catch international flights back home. Sound too good to leave? Stay on for a few more days at leisure...

Cost of the Journey

Plan Ahead!

Protect yourself with [Allianz Travel Insurance](#). Their website will show a grid of tour cost and your age category for you to make selections. As of January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

Cost of the Journey

Cost of the journey is \$4590 DBL / \$5745 SGL (limited availability) from Belize City, departing San Pedro Sula, per person.

Cost includes: all accommodations; all meals as stated in the itinerary; group airport transfers; in-country charter flights, ground transportation within Belize and Honduras; professional guide services; park, preserve, and other activity fees; lodge tips; and miscellaneous program expenses. Tour price does not include: roundtrip airfare to Belize City and from San Pedro Sula, or items of a personal nature such as laundry, portage, telephone charges, or alcoholic beverages. Gratuities for your local lodge guides in Belize and Honduras are not included, these are at your discretion, but highly appreciated and recommended. Please note that the cost of the journey is based on a minimum of 6 participants, with a limit of 12 persons.

Two Great Eco-Lodges: Chan Chich & Pico Bonito With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

Travel Information

Please plan to make air travel plans only after the minimum group size has been reached. Please arrive in Belize City at the Philip SW Goldson International Airport no later than 3:00 PM on January 12. If you need to arrive a day early, we can help with hotel suggestions.

Please note that for the departure date, we have a 2.5 hour drive back to the San Pedro Sula airport, so it is best to plan outbound flights no earlier than NOON on January 20. If you find a flight close to noon, please inquire. If staying on in Honduras, we can help you make plans.

Naturalist Journeys, LLC is an equal opportunity service provider and committed to the goal of ensuring equal opportunity for all in employment and program delivery.

Photo Credits

Collared Aracari, James Adams (JA); Chan Chich Lodge, courtesy chanchic.com; White Hawk, Naturalist Journeys Stock (NJS); Golden-hooded Tanager, Peg Abbott (PA); Pico Bonito Lodge, JA; Lovely Cotinga, JA; Boa, Robert Gallardo (RG); Black Howler Monkey, NJS; Keel-billed Toucan, Narca Moore-Craig (NMC); Oscellated Turkey, PA; Central American Spider Monkey, PA; Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, PA; Tody Motmot, PA; Group Birding, PA; Chan Chich Pool, PA; Chan Chich Grounds, PA; Jaguar, PA; Gartered Trogon, PA; Cinnamon Becard, PA; Glasswing Butterfly, NJS; Basilisk Lizard, PA; Blue Morpho Butterfly, RG; Striated Heron, NMC; Exploring on Chan Chich Swing Bridge, PA; Laughing Falcon, PA; Birding Chan Chich, NJS; Common Potoo, Mike Boyce; Gallon Jog Air Strip, NJS; Black-headed Trogon, PA; Pico Bonito Porch, JA; White-necked Jacobin, Rich Wagner | WildNaturePhotos; Toucanet, Steve Wylie; Green Iguana, PA; American Crocodile, NJS; Jabiru, PA; Altamira Oriole, Tom Dove; Lesser Road Runner, David McKay; White-bearded Manakin, PA; Black Howler Monkey, PA; Red-capped Manakin, PA.

