

# Veracruz, Mexico: River of Raptors With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



**Sept. 25 – Oct. 5, 2019**

866.900.1146

800.426.7781

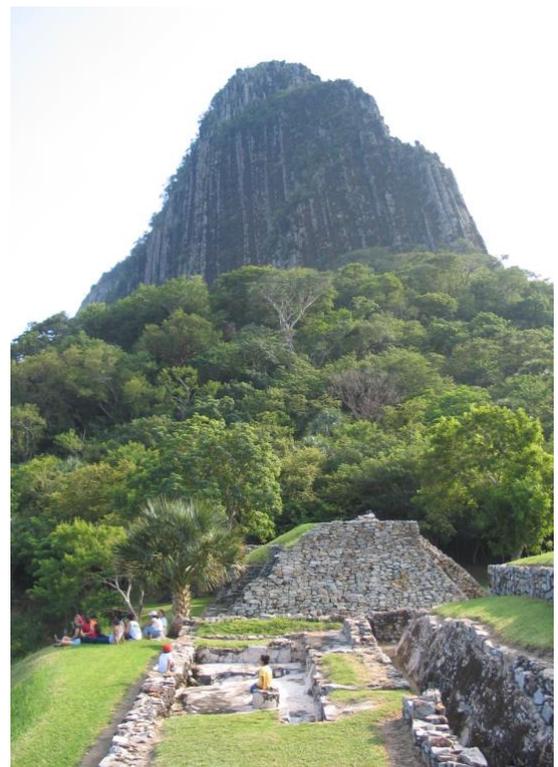
520.558.1146

[naturalistjourneys@gmail.com](mailto:naturalistjourneys@gmail.com)

[www.naturalistjourneys.com](http://www.naturalistjourneys.com)

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## Tour Summary

11-Day / 10-Night Veracruz Migration Tour  
w/ David Mehlman  
\$3790 from Veracruz  
Airport is Veracruz International (VER)

## Tour Highlights

- ✓ Witness the spectacle of migration, with potentially millions of individual raptors, swallows, pelicans, butterflies, dragonflies, and more
- ✓ Learn from local conservationists about the exciting habitat protection and restoration work being done in Veracruz
- ✓ Visit the ancient Totonac archeological sites of Cempoala and Quiahuixtlan
- ✓ Explore the fabulous Museum of Anthropology in Xalapa
- ✓ Tour the first house of Hernan Cortez in the new world and the old town of La Antigua, site of the oldest church in the Americas
- ✓ Explore diverse habitats such as coasts and beaches, rivers, savannah, pine-oak forest, and cloud forest
- ✓ Take a late evening boat ride down La Antigua River to look for shorebirds, gulls, terns, and herons
- ✓ Bird, sample coffee, and eat a classic Mexican lunch at an old coffee hacienda
- ✓ Learn about the tropical rainforest and its diverse bird community in the Los Tuxtlas/Catemaco region

Join Naturalist Journeys on this new excursion to Veracruz, Mexico, the migration crossroads of the Americas, the intersection of diverse biological realms, and a site of historical encounters between peoples of the old and new worlds. The State of Veracruz is one of Mexico's most diverse, with elevations spanning from snow-capped volcanic peaks to sandy beaches on the Gulf of Mexico. Explore the wide variety of habitats found in the area of Central Veracruz with the chance to discover the world-renowned Veracruz River of Raptors, the largest hawk migration site on the planet. We explore archeological and cultural sites, including the Totonac sites of Cempoala and Quiahuixtlan and the ruins of Hernan Cortez' first house in the new world. Additionally, we learn about the rewards and challenges of bird and habitat conservation being done by conservation partners in Veracruz.

In addition to raptors (over 1,000,000 individual hawks and vultures have been counted here daily!), Veracruz is a major migration pathway for passerines, butterflies, and dragonflies. The region is diverse in bird species and is located at the northern edge of many subtropical and tropical species' range. We also spend time at higher elevation pine-oak and cloud forests to explore the diverse avifauna of Veracruz; visit a shade-coffee plantation to enjoy birds, excellent coffee, and a traditional Mexican lunch. A highlight of the visit is a tour of the renowned Museum of Anthropology in Xalapa, with its extensive collection of pre-colonial Mexican artifacts.

We also travel south to explore the Los Tuxtlas/Catemaco region, the northernmost extent of true tropical rainforest on the east coast of the Americas. Here we add many more bird species that simply do not occur further north.

Join us for this fun and educational trip to one of the most fascinating parts of Mexico. While we emphasize birding and observing the migration spectacle, we are sure to spend time learning about the ancient and modern cultures of the region, meeting the friendly local people, and enjoying excellent cuisine.

## Itinerary



### **Wed., Sept. 25 Arrival in Veracruz**

Welcome to Mexico! Arrive today at Veracruz International Airport. You can arrive at your leisure; a representative from our local operator transfers you from the airport to our hotel. Dinner tonight is at your leisure, but please feel free to get acquainted with others on the tour through an informal dinner.

*Accommodations at Hotel Mocambo Veracruz*

### **Thurs., Sept. 26 Morning Birding | Cempoala Archeological Site**

We gather this morning for our first formal group meal. For those interested, we can enjoy an early morning bird walk on the hotel grounds before our sumptuous breakfast. We may find Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, gulls, terns, seabirds, and songbirds along the beach and in the hotel gardens.

After breakfast, we travel to the town of Cardel, our base for the next few days, where we concentrate on the raptor migration. We hope to see large numbers of Broad-winged Hawk, accompanied by Mississippi Kite, Turkey Vulture, and Swainson's Hawk. Also present in migration can be numerous Anhinga, American White Pelican, Wood Stork, kingbirds, and swallows. We also visit several of the surrounding lowland dry thorn-forest sites, coastal lagoons, and beaches — often all included at the same site. In the afternoon today, we visit the archeological site of Cempoala, an important pre-Columbian Totonac site.

Dinner tonight is in a local restaurant, followed by an evening program on the *Rio de Rapaces* project, which includes an introduction to the migrating raptors.

*Accommodations at Hotel Bienvenido, Cardel (B,L,D)*

### **Fri., Sept. 27 Coastal Birding | Afternoon Hawk Watching**

We enjoy breakfast at the hotel this morning. As with all of our migration tours, the specific agenda for today may vary, particularly depending on the magnitude of the raptor migration as the day develops. In the morning, we may visit the archeological site of Quiahuiztlan (a beautiful Toltec site overlooking the coast) or one of several coastal birding areas such as Playa Juan Angel, Playa Chalchihuecan, or La Mancha Biological Station. After lunch, we visit Hernan Cortez' house in the village of La Antigua; here we also see the first church in the Americas and take a delightful river boat trip on La Antigua River, ending at sunset.



Dinner tonight is at an open-air restaurant in La Antigua. Tonight, and at many of our other restaurant stops on the trip, we have the chance to enjoy excellent local seafood from the Gulf of Mexico, deliciously flavored Mexican-style, and quite different from what you may expect from your local Mexican restaurant in the US!

After dinner we go over our list for the day. Birding highlights may include many of the local raptor species such as Grey Hawk, Roadside Hawk, Hook-billed Kite, Great and Common Black Hawk, and Aplomado and Laughing Falcons. Additionally, other local species provide a great introduction to tropical birding with species that include Altamira Oriole, the very local Rufous-naped Wren, Black-headed Trogon, Rose-throated Becard, Black-headed Saltator, all five kingfisher species, Montezuma Oropendola, Aztec Parakeet, and Masked Tityra. At each of the sites, we also hope for a spectacular passerine and water bird migration. The butterfly and dragonfly migration can be spectacular as well.

*Accommodations at Hotel Bienvenido, Cardel (B,L,D)*

### **Sat., Sept. 28 Coastal Birding | Afternoon Hawk Watching**

After breakfast at the hotel, we explore another of Veracruz' fabulous coastal birding areas. We spend the morning here exploring, then head to a restaurant for lunch. Then, it's back to raptor watching! We spend the afternoon watching the river of birds fly overhead, on either the Hotel Bienvenido's roof or at the Chicicaxtle Bird Observatory, depending on where today's flight is the strongest.

*Accommodations at Hotel Bienvenido, Cardel (B,L,D)*

### **Sun., Sept. 29 Shade-Coffee Plantation, Xalapa**

After breakfast in Cardel we say goodbye to our accommodations and we head inland to visit the historic El Mirador certified shade-coffee hacienda for some delightful birding followed by a traditional Mexican lunch. Many forest specialties like Ivory-billed Woodcreeper, Tropical Parula, Gartered Trogon, and more are possible.

After a short siesta, we head to the higher elevations of Xalapa, the capital city. We stay for two nights here, just a short ride up the mountains from Cardel. This colonial city is quite lovely, with beautiful architecture, a pleasant climate, and very fine Mexican cuisine, quite different from the coast. Here we visit several sites in the surrounding cloud forest and pine-oak forest, including taking the time to explore around a beautiful waterfall and witness a spectacular 2000-foot canyon. The habitat of the higher elevations here supports many endemic species as well as migrants and other residents, especially of mixed-species flocks. We are joined at dinner tonight by staff of Pronatura Veracruz, a local conservation organization headquartered in nearby Coatepec, to informally discuss the opportunities and challenges of doing conservation in the region.

*Accommodations at Posada del Cafeto, Xalapa (B,L,D)*



### **Mon., Sept. 30 Forest Birding | Anthropology Museum**

We have an early morning bird walk in Macuiltepetl Ecological Park, a preserved forest located on an ancient extinct volcano in the center of the city. We seek the many resident species that may be found here, including the Blue Mockingbird, Brown-backed Solitaire, Rufous-capped Brush-finch, Blue-crowned Motmot, and Green Jay. After brunch in town, we travel to the world-renowned Museo de Antropología to view its excellent collection of Mexican archeology, particularly the Olmec exhibits. In the late afternoon, we travel to Xico to view historic waterfalls and see resident swifts and possibly Bat Falcon and parrots. Dinner tonight is at a local restaurant before we return to Xalapa for the evening.

*Accommodations at Posada del Cafeto, Xalapa (B,L,D)*

### **Tues., Oct. 1 High Elevation Birding | Cardel**

We enjoy an early breakfast this morning, then spend the morning heading higher in elevation to bird the high elevation pine forests of Las Minas and La Joya that surround Xalapa. Possible montane species include Gray Silky-Flycatcher; Red, Crescent-chested, Olive, Hermit, Townsend's, and Golden-browed Warblers; Russet Nightingale-Thrush, White-eared Hummingbird, and many others. After lunch, we return down the mountains to Cardel, stopping in Chichicaxtle to enjoy a late afternoon of hawk-watching and to visit with conservation staff to learn more about conservation efforts on behalf of migrating birds at the bird observatory. Tonight we are back in our Cardel hotel.

*Accommodations at Hotel Bienvenido, Cardel (B,L,D)*

### **Wed., Oct. 2 Las Barrancas | Tlacotalpan | Catemaco**

We pack up early this morning, and after breakfast at the hotel we travel south to spend the morning at Las Barrancas grasslands south of Veracruz City. We keep a special eye peeled for Double-striped Thick-Knee, Yellow-headed Vulture, Snail Kite, Limpkin, American and Pinnated Bittern, Common Tody-Flycatcher, swallows, and other marsh birds. We stop to have lunch in Tlacotalpan, a World Heritage town along the Papaloapan River. We arrive to Catemaco, our final destination today, in the late-afternoon. We spend the remainder of the day enjoy birding on the outskirts of Los Tuxtlas forest. We then check into our hotel and enjoy even more local birding and an evening along the shore of beautiful Laguna Catemaco.

*Accommodations at La Finca, Catemaco (B,L,D)*

### **Thurs., Oct. 3 Morning Birding | Los Tuxtlas | Sontecomapan Lagoon**

After breakfast and some early morning birding around the hotel for orioles and tanagers, we explore Los Tuxtlas Forest Reserve for beautiful White Hawk, Keel-billed Toucan, Collared Aracari, Violaceous Trogon, and other forest birds, including Bat Falcon. We do plan to take a mid-day trip on Sontecomapan Lagoon in a guided

boat to find Sungrebe, Gray-necked Wood-Rail, Violet Sabrewing, Pygmy Kingfisher, and Bare-throated Tiger-Heron. We return to the hotel in the afternoon for another enjoyable evening along the shore of Laguna Catemaco.

*Accommodations at La Finca, Catemaco (B,L,D)*

### **Fri., Oct. 4 Ruiz Cortines | Veracruz**

After breakfast this morning, we travel to Ruiz Cortines and bird in the cloud forest and highlands northeast of Catemaco. Wintering migrants abound here, as well as resident birds such as Tuxtla Quail-Dove, Long-tailed Sabrewing, and numerous orioles, honeycreepers, woodpeckers, and woodcreepers. In the afternoon, we head back to Veracruz City where by mid-afternoon we check into our downtown hotel and visit the waterfront and zócalo (central city square) to enjoy the atmosphere and to shop for souvenirs. We enjoy a final celebratory dinner tonight at a restaurant on the zócalo.

*Accommodations at Hotel Colonial, Veracruz (B,L,D)*

### **Sat., Oct. 5 Departures**

You can depart at your leisure this morning.

### **Guide Dave Mehlman**



Dave is a naturalist with interests in birds, migration, ecosystems and natural disturbances, plants, and gardening. He holds a PhD from the Univ. of New Mexico. Dave worked for The Nature Conservancy for 25+ years as Director of its Migratory Bird Program. He has researched, implemented conservation projects, and led tours in Latin America and the Caribbean. An avid birder, Dave enjoys teaching about natural habitats and local cultures. He has published papers in scientific and popular journals.

## **Cost of the Journey**

### **Plan Ahead!**

Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. Please note, starting in January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

### **Travel Information**

Please plan to make air travel plans only after the minimum group size has been reached. Please arrive at Veracruz International (VER) at your leisure on September 25. You can depart at your leisure on October 5.

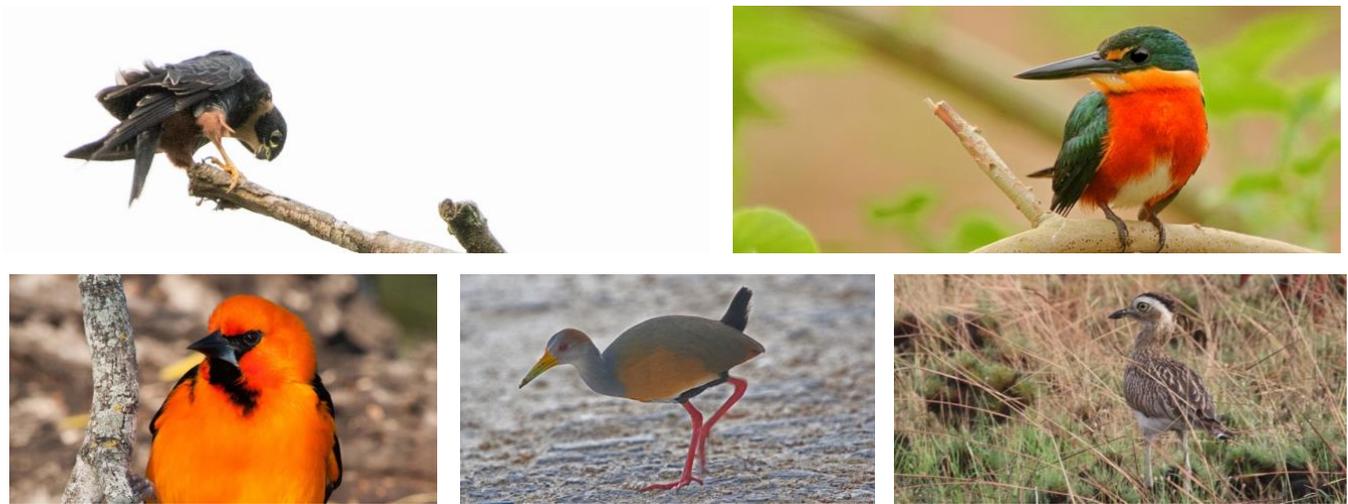
### **Cost of the Journey**

Cost of the journey is **\$3790 DBL / \$4290 SGL** per person, based on double occupancy, from Veracruz. Cost includes: all accommodations; all meals as stated in the itinerary; group airport transfers; ground transportation within Mexico; professional guide services; park, preserve, and other activity fees; and miscellaneous program expenses.

Tour price does not include: roundtrip airfare to and from Veracruz, Mexico, or items of a personal nature such as laundry, portage, telephone charges, or alcoholic beverages. Gratuities for maids or porters, and other hotel staff, as well as your guides are not included but are appreciated.

## Photo Credits

Migrating Raptors, Dave Mehlman (DM); Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Mike Boyce; Swainson's Hawk, Greg Smith (GS); Gartered Trogon, Peg Abbott (PA); Archeological Site, DM; Violet Sabrewing, Sandy Sorkin; Broad-winged Hawk, PA; Migrating White Pelicans, courtesy Pronatura; Archeological Site, DM; Wood Stork, Barry Ulman; Group Birding, DM; Mississippi Kite, Bob Hill; Laughing Falcon, Cliff Hensel; Rose-throated Becard, Tom Dove (TD); Montezuma Oropendola, TD; Raptor Watching, DM; Common Black Hawk, GS; Blue-crowned Motmot, PA; Collared Aracari, James Adams; Olive Warbler, PA; Snail Kite, PA; Green Jays, Bob Behrstock; Bat Falcon, Hugh Simmons Photography; Pygmy Kingfisher, PA; Altamira Oriole, TD; Grey-necked Wood-Rail, Steve Gantlett, courtesy Operador Latino; Double-striped Thick-Knee, PA.



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