

# Southeast Arizona: Winter Sky Island Sampler With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



**January 4 – 10, 2020**

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January is a stunning time to visit Arizona's Sky Island mountain ranges; a wonderful escape from cold weather that's timed for you to relax after the holidays. What could be more rejuvenating than a week at the welcoming Casa de San Pedro?

Unpack once, and choose from options that include birding, hiking, a bit of history, and sampling of regional wines as we enjoy fun local restaurants. While we can't promise to be back for the Casa's famous pies, it's our intention. We aim for nice days afield, but at a pace not too busy so you can enjoy the inn and all its charms. Our focus is on the birding and natural history of the region. Our popular birding guide, Bob Meinke, is joined by his wife Kelly Amsberry, who share our favorite walks and a bit of local exploring, adding in her blend of botany expertise and hiking.

You can do as much or as little as you wish! If you would like a longer break, we suggest you add on some extra time in Tucson to enjoy the area's saguaros, sunshine, Mexican restaurants, art galleries, and museums.

## Itinerary

### Sat., Jan. 4 Arrival in Tucson | Amerind Foundation

Our tour starts at 1:00 PM in Tucson where we can pick you up at the airport or a nearby airport hotel. We head east, leaving the city behind, and immediately the shapes of multiple Sky Islands appear—we are surrounded by a series of small but fascinating mountain ranges.

### Tour Highlights

- ✓ Visit hotspots like Ramsey and Miller Canyons, the feeders at Ash Canyon, the San Pedro River, and more
- ✓ Marvel at the spectacle of tens of thousands of overwintering Sandhill Cranes! Watch them fly in to roost at sunset and also observe them feeding during the day
- ✓ Experience prime time for finding a good number and variety of wintering raptors in the Sulphur Springs Valley around Whitewater Draw. Sparrows abound; last year a small pond had three species of longspurs!
- ✓ Enjoy scenic trails that average three to four miles at Coronado Memorial, area canyons, and the Arizona Trail
- ✓ Explore Bisbee, a colorful, historic mining town; enjoy lunch and the chance to shop or check out the Smithsonian-affiliated museum
- ✓ Learn something new! History buffs can enjoy the museum at Fort Huachuca; those with a curious mind might want to venture underground to see stunning (and safe!) cave features at Kartchner Caverns State Park
- ✓ Find camaraderie at catered meals and dining at our favorite local restaurants (if you have room after homemade pie at the Casa)

### Tour Summary

7-Day / 6-Night Arizona Nature Tour w/ Bob Meinke  
\$2590 from Tucson  
Airport is Tucson International (TUS)



We reach the Casa de San Pedro in time for late-afternoon pie and tea or coffee, settle into our rooms, and then enjoy some social time and a catered dinner at the Inn. Those driving may wish to just meet us at the Inn today.  
*Accommodations at Casa de San Pedro (D)*

### **Sun., Jan. 5 Coronado Memorial | San Pedro River**

This morning we have two options, including a delightful ridgeline hike of three miles from Montezuma Pass down to the visitor center at Coronado National Memorial. For this we arrange a car shuttle. After dropping us off, our birders look for specialties of the grasslands and oak woodlands found at the memorial and then head down to feeders in Miller and Ash Canyons to look for hummingbirds, Arizona Woodpecker, and other species.

We all then return to the Casa for lunch and a break. Mid-afternoon, we visit the San Pedro House, a bit north of the Inn on the San Pedro River. Our hikers can enjoy a series of river trails while birders search for birds of the cottonwood riparian areas, adjacent mesquite woodlands and grasslands, in search of sparrows, Abert's Towhee, Curve-billed and Crissal Thrashers, wintering birds of prey, and more.

Tonight enjoy dinner at a favorite local restaurant.  
*Accommodations at the Casa de San Pedro (B,L,D)*

### **Mon., Jan. 6 Ramsey Canyon | Kartchner Caverns or Local Birding**

Our early birds can check the Casa's backyard of riparian cottonwoods and mesquite grassland for species like Scaled Quail, Gila Woodpecker, and Abert's Towhee, while others can enjoy a more leisurely "lie-in."

We have breakfast at 8:00 AM and then head off to The Nature Conservancy Preserve at Ramsey Canyon—one of the first well-known birding sites in Southeast Arizona. Here, Ramsey Creek descends through oak woodlands, its banks lined with massive sculptured trunks of Arizona Sycamores. We hope to see Wild Turkey, some wintering warblers such as Black-throated Gray, Hutton's Vireo, and perhaps a Blue-throated Hummingbird at close range. Walk the trails, browse the bookstore and gift shop, or park yourself under a tall, bending sycamore to wait for the birds to come to you!

We have lunch at a restaurant in Sierra Vista. From there you can return to the Casa for a free afternoon, or to enjoy some local birding. If you let us know in advance (so we may reserve tickets) you may instead want to turn



your attention to geology and see what happens when water meets limestone over a period of 330-million years. Our plan is to head underground to tour a living cave at Kartchner Caverns. This is a very comfortable cave to visit—not cold, well-lit, and on a well-surfaced walking trail. The cave has fabulous formations, state of the art interpretation, and an inspiring story of a well-kept secret when it was first found.

We rendezvous back in Bisbee for an early dinner either at one of Bisbee’s many great restaurants or at a local steakhouse quite close to the Casa.

*Accommodations at Casa de San Pedro (B,L,D)*

## **Tues., Jan. 7 Sulphur Springs Valley | Whitewater Draw | Or, Hike Chiricahua National Monument Trails**

Our birders require a couple of passes to do justice to the extensive Sulphur Springs Valley and the low wetland area of Whitewater Draw. After breakfast, we depart to explore areas productive for sparrows, longspurs, and raptors around Elfrida and north to Kansas Settlement. The entire valley is a major wintering ground for raptors and some of the northern species such as Ferruginous Hawk can be found. There are wonderful chances to observe Sandhill Cranes feeding in the fields.

Our hikers can enjoy some of the charismatic larger bird species as they drive through Sulphur Springs Valley over to Chiricahua National Monument, a veritable wonderland of rock. A loop trail through Echo Park lets us get down into the rock hoodoos and we pick a warm spot to enjoy our picnic lunch.

Tonight enjoy dinner at the Casa.

*Accommodations at Casa de San Pedro (B,L,D)*

## **Wed., Jan. 8 Elgin Grasslands | Patagonia | Sonoita**

After a great breakfast at the Casa de San Pedro we head out toward Patagonia and the grasslands. Our birders can enjoy a number of areas good for wintering sparrows such as Vesper, Grasshopper, Black-throated, and, with much luck, Baird’s, Horned Lark, and perhaps some longspurs and raptors. Our hikers can enjoy walking some miles on the Arizona Trail.

We have lunch at a café in Patagonia. We then check out what’s happening at feeders at the Paton Center for



Hummingbirds and other sites of interest. There is a nature trail winding through mesquite woodlands and riparian areas that connects to the local Nature Conservancy Reserve for those that wish to wander.

As we return through Sierra Vista, we can stop for dinner at Pizzeria Mimosa.  
*Accommodations at Casa de San Pedro (B,L,D)*

## **Thurs., Jan. 9**

### **Whitewater Draw | Sulphur Springs Valley & Sandhill Cranes | Bisbee**

This morning, after another scrumptious Casa de San Pedro breakfast, those who enjoy birding can head out to Whitewater Draw Wildlife Area. Many of the wintering Sandhill Crane have arrived (numbering some 35,000 birds at the peak of winter!), and we watch them in ponds and farm fields where they feed on corn. Depending on water levels, Whitewater may be one of the only local sites hosting shorebirds and, with luck, we see the area's resident Great-Horned Owl, Lark Bunting, or a lingering Vermilion Flycatcher.

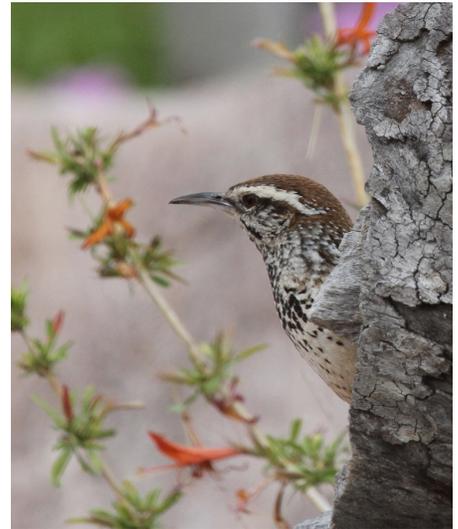
Birders can enjoy this and some other local hotspots for the morning and then head into Bisbee to join the others for some lunch and free time. Those that chose to relax at the Inn for the morning can meet us mid-day in town. Bisbee has an excellent museum, with displays interpreting the region's rich mining history.

It's easy to spend time exploring Bisbee and several from our group may want to remain in town for shopping or walking through the historic neighborhoods. Our birders can return to the valley after lunch, driving a series of dirt back roads where raptors congregate. In previous years, we have seen four species of falcons this day: Prairie, Peregrine, Merlin, and American Kestrel. In some years, acrobatic White-tailed Kite can be around. The surrounding shrubby flats are home to Bendire's Thrasher, Black-throated Sparrow, Cactus Wren, Scaled and Gambel's Quails, Roadrunner, and Pyrrhuloxia. We also watch for Lark, Brewer's and Vesper Sparrows.

We plan to be present for the Sandhill Crane coming in to roost; this usually occurs from about 4:00 to 5:30 PM. We then go to dinner in Bisbee, our final night dinner at the wonderful Café Roka.  
*Accommodations at Casa de San Pedro (B,L,D)*

## **Fri., Jan. 10 Departures from Tucson**

After a final delicious breakfast, we head to the airport with plans to arrive by 10:30 AM for flights out after noon. (B)



### Guide Bob Meinke

Bob Meinke started birding in earnest while an undergraduate in plant science at Humboldt State University in northern California. After graduate school he went on to join the botany faculty at Oregon State University (OSU), where he’s led the state’s Native Plant Conservation Biology Program (in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture) for over 25 years. Bob and his graduate students conducted research on the conservation and recovery of threatened and endangered plants in the western U.S., focusing on life history and re-introduction studies, and have also discovered and named a number of plant species new to science. When not botanizing, Bob enjoys travel with his wife Kelly (also a botanist)—never having lost their early interest in birding, Bob and Kelly have traveled extensively over the years, searching for birds and other

wildlife in areas as diverse as Papua New Guinea, southern India, Fiji and Tonga, Australia, Iceland, Brazil, and southwest Africa. They share a particular interest in the avifauna of Central America, and reside with their cats in an historic neighborhood in Corvallis, Oregon, a few blocks from the OSU campus.

## 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.

**Group Size**  
Maximum of 12, minimum four participants.

**Cost of the Journey**  
Cost of the journey is **\$2,590 DBL / \$3,130 SGL** from Tucson, AZ. This cost includes accommodations for six nights, meals as specified in the itinerary (B=breakfast, L=lunch and D=dinner), professional guide services, other park and program entrance fees and miscellaneous program expenses.  
  
Cost does not include: round-trip airfare to and from Tucson, items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone, drinks from the bar, or gratuities for luggage handling or personal services.

## Travel Information

The airport for this tour is Tucson International (TUS). Our tour starts 1:00 PM on Sat., Jan. 4; we can pick you up at any of the airport hotels if you have opted to come in early, or we will pick you up at the airport. On Fri., Jan. 12, we plan to have a nice breakfast, then head to the airport, arriving there by 10:30 AM for flights out after noon.

## Photo Credits

Cave Creek Canyon, Steve Wolfe (SW); Rivolli's (Magnificent) Hummingbird; Greg Smith (GS); Gambel's Quail, Peg Abbott (PA); Gila Woodpecker, Janice Petko, Gila Monster, John Roser; Burrowing Owl, GS; Sandhill Cranes & Snow Geese, PA; Chiricahua Mountains, SW; Casa de San Pedro, PA; Broad-billed Hummingbird, Evelyn Earlougher (EE); Harris's Hawk, PA; Roadrunner, EE; Montezuma Quail, PA; Black-throated Gray Warbler, PA; Group, Naturalist Journeys Stock (NJS); Grassland Hike, NJS; Vermilion Flycatcher, SW; Coati, PA; Black-throated Sparrow, PA; Crested Caracara, PA; Cactus Wren, PA; Saguaro Scenic, NJS; Bob Behrstock, Karen LeMay; Peg Abbott, Bud Ferguson.

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