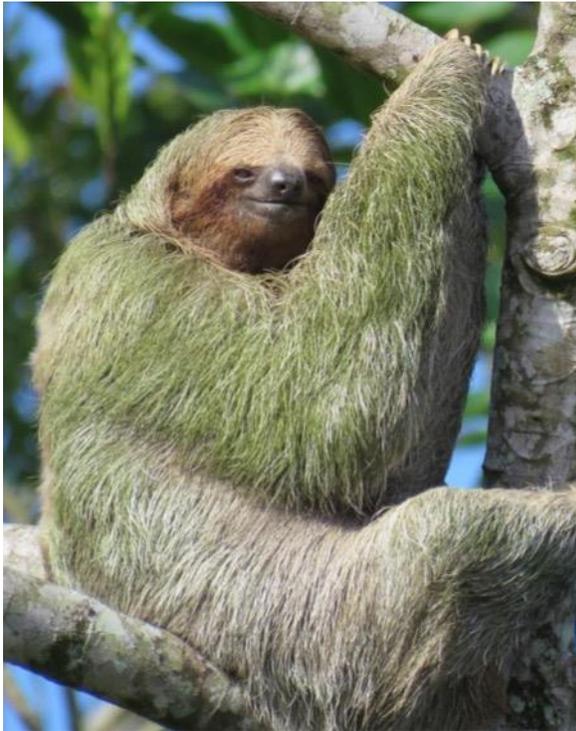


# Panama: Intro to Tropical Biodiversity With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



October 14 – 22, 2019

866.900.1146

800.426.7781

520.558.1146

naturalistjourneys@gmail.com

www.naturalistjourneys.com

or find us on Facebook at

Naturalist Journeys, LLC



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Tropical environments and ecosystems are extremely diverse in comparison to their temperate counterparts. In Panama, we sit within close distance of distinct biomes and ecosystems, teeming with plant and animal life. Location, elevation, and climate influence these environments and the plants and animals within, all part of an intricate and delicate web of interactions. When you first step into a tropical forest, you may be overwhelmed by the sights, sounds, and smells around you. From the towering canopy above to the soil beneath your feet, there is life lurking around every nook and cranny.

Naturalist Journeys is excited to partner with The Canopy Family to offer a special nature package, featuring guest scientists Dr. Howard Topoff and Dr. Carol Simon, formerly of the American Museum of Natural History and City University in New York, as they bring their expertise on tropical environments and biodiversity to us! As an introduction to tropical biodiversity, we spend our days exploring the forests in search of birds, mammals, frogs, insects, and fascinating trees and plants; every evening features an informative presentation by our guest scientists, on a wide variety of tropical biodiversity topics. Lodging is at the world famous Canopy Tower, surrounded by the lowland tropical forests of Soberania National Park, and the Canopy Lodge, in the picturesque foothills of El Valle de Anton, both perfect locations for exploring tropical ecosystems.

## Tour Highlights

- See Red-lore Parrot, Keel-billed Toucan, and Palm and Golden-hooded Tanagers right from Canopy Tower
- Watch Geoffroy's Tamarin, Mantled Howler, and Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth in the surrounding forests
- Search for Broad-billed Motmot, White-whiskered Puffbird, Gartered Trogon, South American Common Toad, Northern Tamandua, and more along Plantation Road
- Spend time at the Summit Botanical Gardens, which houses more than 100 non-releasable animals — a great way to study many species difficult to see in the wild
- Walk the famous Pipeline Road, which boasts over 500 species of birds, as well as hundreds of mammals, reptiles and amphibians, and even more insects and trees and plants
- Visit the BioMuseo along the Amador Causeway in Panama City, and explore its several halls that focus on the biodiversity of the isthmus of Panama
- Explore by boat on Gatun Lake, looking for Lesser Capybara, West Indian Manatee, and more
- Enjoy an afternoon at the Panama Canal, learning its history and watching cargo ships go through the locks
- Enjoy time at the Canopy Lodge, with cool mountain breezes and incredible birds on feeders and trails
- Learn about the herps that live in Panama's forests during a presentation by guide Carol Simon called "Poisonous Reptiles and Amphibians of the Rain Forest"
- Visit Cerro Gaital to learn more about the butterflies of the region, from the large Blue Morpho to the pretty little Passion Vine butterflies

## Tour Summary

9-Day / 8-Night Panama Biodiversity Tour with Carol Simon & Howard Topoff

\$2699, from Panama City

Airport is Tocumen International (PTY)

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## **Mon., Oct. 14 Arrival & Orientation**

Welcome to Panama! You will be met at the airport and transferred to the Canopy Tower Eco-lodge and Nature Observatory, just a short 45-minute drive through Panama City to the lush lowland rainforests along the Panama Canal! As you enjoy a cold drink, we suggest you make your way up to the observation deck overlooking the vast forest canopy of Soberania National Park, and you may see Red-shouldered Parrots fly by in pairs, Keel-billed Toucans in the treetops and charismatic Palm and Golden-hooded tanagers feeding in the Cecropia trees beside the Tower. Geoffroy's Tamarins, Mantled Howlers and Brown-throated Three-toed Sloths may be seen in the rainforest canopy. Down at ground level, White-necked Jacobin, White-vented Plumbeateer, Blue-chested and Violet-bellied hummingbirds feed energetically at the nectar feeders. This afternoon, we will gather for an orientation and introduction to the tour, to meet your guides and our guest scientists. We will meet in the lounge for cocktails and appetizers before dinner and enjoy our first presentation, entitled "Introduction to Tropical Rainforests", with great insight to the wondrous forests around us! DINNER AT CANOPY TOWER.

## **Tues., Oct. 15 Plantation Road / Summit Gardens & Harpy Eagle Exhibit**

As we awake to the roars of Mantled Howler monkeys in the distance, breath in the fresh air and make our way up to the observation deck at dawn. This is the best time of day to observe the canopy, not only for the beautiful sunrise but the waking bird activity is at its peak. With a warm coffee or tea in hand, we will watch for Scaled Pigeon, Red-shouldered and Mealy parrots, Keel-billed Toucan, Black-cheeked Woodpecker, Masked Tityra, Green Honeycreeper and dozens of other species of birds as they actively communicate and feed in the treetops. Palm Tanager, Fulvous-vented Euphonia and Tropical Gnatcatcher are common up here. We will hope to see Black-breasted Puffbird, or the electric blue plumage of a male Blue Cotinga in the treetops. After breakfast, we will board one of the Canopy Tower's specialized nature-watching vehicles and head slowly down Semaphore Hill Road, scanning the understory of the forest for animals. This morning we will take an introductory walk along Plantation Road, one of the trails of Soberania National Park. Through the forest with its towering forest giants (Ceiba and Cuipo trees), we will spend the morning searching for animals from tiny leafcutter ants on the ground to large raptors in the treetops. Broad-billed Motmot, White-whiskered Puffbird, Gartered Trogon, South American Common Toad, Northern Tamandua and so much more can be found along this trail. The jungle is so full of life! After our morning walk we will make our way back up to the Canopy Tower in time for lunch. LUNCH AT CANOPY TOWER.

After a delicious lunch there will be some time to rest before heading out for the afternoon tour. You may want to keep your eyes on the skies above, as it is the peak of raptor migration season in Panama! Potentially thousands of migrating Turkey Vultures, Swainson's and Broad-winged hawks could be passing over the Tower at any time. We will prepare to head out again this afternoon to Summit Municipal Park and Botanical Gardens. Here, among many great birds and wildlife found on the property, including Central American Agouti, Laughing Falcon, Tropical Mockingbird, Giant Whiptail, Crimson-backed Tanager and hundreds of species of birds recorded here, we can visit some of the enclosures of Panama's native fauna. In the 1960s, Summit Botanical Gardens started receiving injured and non-releasable animals from all over Panama. Now, this facility houses over 100 animals including macaws, spider monkeys, tapirs, jaguar, puma and Panama's national bird, the Harpy Eagle. We will make a stop to visit "Panama", a non-releasable Harpy Eagle living at this wildlife refuge. It is a great opportunity to see some species that are rather difficult to encounter in the wild in Panama.

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Back at the Canopy Tower, we will meet at cocktail hour for Howard and Carol's evening presentation about one of the rainforest's most interesting inhabitants: THE PRIMATES. After the entertaining presentation, we can fill our stomachs with some great food and enjoy a blend of Panamanian and international fare! DINNER AT CANOPY TOWER.

## **Wed., Oct. 16 Pipeline Road / BioMuseo**

After a hot breakfast on the Canopy Tower's 3rd floor dining room, surrounded by the forest canopy, we will board the birdmobile once again and head to the world famous Pipeline Road—once an access road built during WWII to serve a pipeline installed as a precautionary measure for the Panama Canal, now surrounded by mature secondary lowland forest and protected within the boundaries of Soberania National Park. Pipeline Road boasts incredible biodiversity—over 500 species of birds have been recorded in these Caribbean slope forests, as well as hundreds of mammals, reptiles and amphibians, and even more insects and trees and plants. As we walk the first part of the gravel road, we will watch for 5 species of trogons, Whooping and Rufous motmots, Cinnamon and Crimson-crested woodpeckers, 3 species of manakins, hummingbirds, raptors, peccaries, lizards, butterflies, insects and more. We can hope to come across a swarm of army ants, where many species of birds attend the feeding frenzy! Central American Whiptail and Striped Rocket Frog may be seen along the road. Our list will no doubt be extensive from the morning alone! After our full morning in this superb forest, we will make our way back to the CANOPY TOWER for LUNCH.

This afternoon we will visit the recently opened BioMuseo along the Amador Causeway in Panama City. This spectacular and unique building, designed by renown architect Frank Gehry, features several halls focusing on the biodiversity of the isthmus of Panama—from its geological beginnings through to modern day culture, the great faunal interchange over the land bridge and other fascinating exhibits. Our visit will no doubt open our eyes further to the incredible biodiversity of Panama! And don't forget your binoculars, as we may see Brown Pelicans and Magnificent Frigatebirds flying over the Pacific entrance to the Panama Canal!

Back at the Canopy Tower, we will meet in the lounge for cocktails and appetizers before dinner and Howard will share some insight about his specialty, the social insects of the rainforest, focusing on the complex natural history of termites and ants. Dinner will follow, and we will listen for owls and potoos after dark, and scan the canopy with the spotlight for Western Night Monkey, Kinkajou, Olingo and other nocturnal wildlife, right from the Canopy Tower windows.

## **Thurs., Oct. 17 Jungle Boat Tour / Embera Village Visit / Chagres River / Gamboa Resort Grounds**

After breakfast this morning, we board a small boat for a spectacular tour on the Panama Canal. Most of the Canal is actually an artificial lake, Gatun Lake, and our tour will take you from Gamboa—just 15 minutes from the Canopy Tower—to the edges and inlets of this large lake! We will start our boat tour exploring the edges of the mighty Chagres River, where Common and Purple gallinules, Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Amazon Kingfisher and Spectacled Caiman may be found. Along the way to Gatun Lake along the Panama Canal we will pass huge cargo ships and ocean liners; American Crocodiles may be seen basking along the beaches. We will also visit hidden coves and beautiful inlets with fascinating fauna and flora. We will search for White-faced Capuchins and Mantled Howlers along the water's edge. On the way back we will visit a village where we'll encounter the Embera Indians. This unique opportunity allows us

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to learn about their culture, their way of living and their knowledge of rainforest plants, a science known as ethnobotany. Furthermore, this village has a unique history along the Panama Canal. They'll serve us a traditional Embera meal, hot fish and green plantain. We are also welcome to admire and purchase their variety of handcrafts. LUNCH AT CANOPY TOWER.

Here, along the banks and in the accompanying forest edges, Orange-chinned Parakeet, Whooping Motmot and Cinnamon Woodpecker, Cinnamon & White-winged Becards and Flame-rumped Tanager are resident. We could also see species like Lineated Woodpecker, Gartered Trogon, Red-capped Manakin, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Wattled Jacana, White-throated Crake and Anhinga. Occasionally we see Tayra run across the road behind the resort. Embera Indian trails lead from the river, and we often see them fishing from their canoes. Along the river's edge we search for Least Grebes, Muscovy & Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, and along their trails we often find Little Tinamou, Scarlet-rumped & Yellow-rumped Caciques, Yellow-tailed Oriole and sometimes Blue Cotinga! The Lantana and Verbena shrubs around the butterfly house attract dozens of species of butterflies, including Erato Longwing, Apricot Sulphur, Banded Peacock and Banded Orange. As dusk approaches, we will make our way back to the Canopy Tower.

This evening's presentation takes us on a historical journey through "100 years of the Panama Canal", an insightful presentation about this wonder of the modern engineering world. DINNER AT CANOPY TOWER.

## **Fri., Oct. 18 Summit Ponds / Old Gamboa Road / Miraflores Locks at the Panama Canal / Transfer to Canopy Lodge**

We will start our morning once again on the observation deck before breakfast, and as the mist lifts from the valley, we will watch for Crane Hawk, Golden-hooded Tanager and Blue Dacnis in the treetops. After breakfast, we will visit one of the best sites just down the road from the Canopy Tower, Summit Ponds and Old Gamboa Road. Our first stop will be at the two forest lagoons, where Boat-billed Herons, Capped Herons, 5 species of kingfishers, Lesser Kiskadee, Great Black Hawk, Gray-necked Wood-Rail, Greater Ani, Prothonotary Warbler, American Crocodile, Black River Turtle, Common Basilisk and occasionally Boa Constrictor can be found. Carrying on down Old Gamboa Road, we will scan the grassy edges and emerging roadside trees for arriving migrants, as many species of raptors, warblers and flycatchers are passing through Panama at the moment on their way to South America. Also, Rufous-breasted and Black-bellied wrens, Streaked Saltator, Golden-collared and Lance-tailed manakins, Red-throated Ant-Tanager and Blue-black Grosbeak are common in this dry forest. Leafcutter Ant highways cross the path several times. Variegated Squirrel and White-nosed Coati are just some of the mammals we may encounter. We are sure to have a great morning! LUNCH AT CANOPY TOWER.

This afternoon we will say "good bye" to the Canopy Tower and visit one of the wonders of the modern world – the Panama Canal! The Miraflores Locks are the first set of locks on the Pacific side of the Canal. They operate 24-hours a day, and have changed very little since 1914 when the Panama Canal opened. The Panama Canal is an engineering marvel, and opened up a new route for shipping ocean-to-ocean. Over 14,000 ships and boats pass through the Canal annually. Here we can visit the 4-floor museum and watch large container ships pass through the locks from an observation deck. After our visit at the locks, we will continue to drive west along the Panamerican Highway, passing by Pacific dry forest and scrub

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fields, at times with great views of the Pacific Ocean! Along the way, we will keep our eyes open for Crested Caracara and other roadside birds.

Upon arrival at the Canopy Lodge, we will get settled in and adjust to the cool, fresh air and the moist tropical forests around us. As the sun sets, we can start exploring the grounds of the Canopy Lodge, abundant with hummingbirds including Long-billed Starthroat, Violet-headed Hummingbird, Snowy-bellied Hummingbird, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, Garden Emerald and Black-throated Mango feeding among the verbena in the gardens. Thick-billed Euphonia, Rufous-capped Warbler, and Flame-rumped Tanagers are common on the property. Common Basilisks bask on the rocks in the stream. The afternoon is yours to relax and enjoy the property, and speak with our guest scientists. You are invited to join us in the dining area for cocktails followed by a delicious dinner. As at the Tower, we will meet during cocktail hour in the open-air lounge for a talk entitled "Bird Brains" by our guest scientists, opening our eyes to the sensory world of birds. This evening, we will watch for Orange Nectar Bats, which regularly visit the hummingbird feeders at the lodge at night. DINNER AT CANOPY LODGE.

## **Sat., Oct. 19 Las Minas Road / Cara Iguana Road**

After breakfast (during which we watch for Orange-billed Sparrow calling off the end of the dining area and Central American Agouti foraging in the garden), we head to Las Minas, an excellent place to get a wide variety of birds. The road follows a ridgeline, with sweeping vistas of forested mountains, speckled with grasslands and small fincas. The views from here are fantastic, as on a clear day near the summit, both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans can be seen! It is a great place to see some of the most beautiful tanagers, including Black-and-yellow, Bay-headed & Emerald tanagers, as well as Tawny-capped Euphonia, Gray-headed Kite, Barred Hawk, Bat Falcon, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Swallow-tailed Kite, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, White-tipped Sicklebill, Green Thorntail, Orange-bellied Trogon, Wedge-tailed Grass-Finch, Tawny-faced Gnatwren, Plain Antvireo, the endemic Stripe-cheeked Woodpecker, Spotted Woodcreeper, Red-capped & White-ruffed manakins and Black Guan have all been recorded here! It is also a great place for butterflies, as many skipperlings, satyrs, ticlears, hairstreaks and clearwings flutter along the roadsides. We get back in time for lunch at the CANOPY LODGE.

After a hearty lunch, we will have some time to rest and enjoy the beautiful grounds of the lodge. We will meet again to head to Cara Iguana Trail, which contains some of the last remaining examples of quality dry Pacific forest. This area is full of dry forest species, including Lesser Elaenia, Yellow-olive and Panama flycatchers, Lance-tailed Manakin, Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant, Rufous-breasted Wren, Rosy Thrush-Tanager, Whooping Motmot, Long-billed Gnatwren, Striped Cuckoo, White-bellied Antbird, White-winged Becard, Tropical Screech-Owl, White-vented Plumeleteer and migrants including Bay-breasted and Worm-eating warblers. Alfaro's Pygmy-Squirrel and Geoffroy's Tamarins can also be found here.

Back at the lodge, we will gather for our evening talk about butterflies by our guest scientists, explaining their fascinating natural history and what makes them unique. DINNER AT CANOPY LODGE.

## **Sun., Oct. 20 Full Day at Altos del Maria**

Departing after an early breakfast, we're off into the highlands of Altos del Maria! With the sunrise ahead of us, we will climb into the mountains along the Continental Divide east of El Valle. Often engulfed by the mist of the expansive cloud forest that surrounds the area, Altos del Maria sits at an

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altitude of 1,100 meters (3,600 feet). It is an excellent place to find highland forest birds, including Black-crowned Antpitta, Streak-chested Antpitta, Black-headed Saltator, White Hawk, Barred Forest-Falcon, Red-faced Spinetail, Spotted Barbtail, Tufted and Sulphur-rumped flycatchers, Rufous-browed Tyrannulet, Orange-bellied Trogon, Ochraceous Wren, White-breasted Wood-Wren, White-ruffed Manakin, Yellow-eared Toucanet, Yellow-billed Cacique, Black-and-yellow Tanager, White-vented Euphonia and exquisite hummingbirds including Band-tailed Barbthroat, White-tailed Emerald, Purple-throated Mountain-Gem, White-tipped Sicklebill, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer and the tiny yet stunning Snowcap. We will hope to see a tiny Western Pygmy Squirrel working away in the treetops. After a picnic lunch in the field, we will drop down into a valley and climb to the ridge on the opposite side. Reaching some large swaths of mature humid forest along this ridge, we will explore some trails and roadside spots in search of even more forest birds and animals. We will return back to the Canopy Lodge by mid-afternoon.

This afternoon, Carol will share her specialty with us in a presentation about “Poisonous Reptiles and Amphibians of the Rain Forest”, sharing information about the herps that live in the surrounding forests, dispelling myths and telling entertaining stories! DINNER AT CANOPY LODGE.

Tonight we have a special guest—we will meet with Mario Urriola, a native of El Valle who has extensive experience and knowledge about the reptiles of the area. Mario is the owner of “El Serpentario Maravillas Tropicales”, a reptile zoo in El Valle, which houses various species of snakes and lizards that can be found in the area. Mario will bring some of these snakes and reptiles to us at the lodge for an up-close look at some of these difficult-to-find creatures, and to tell us about the species found particularly in this area, their natural history and conservation. Bring your cameras, as there will be plenty of photo opportunities!

## **Mon., Oct. 21 Butterflies of Cerro Gaital / El Valle Market**

This morning, while birding and searching for other animals in the forest, we will take a look at the fascinating world of butterflies and insects in Central America. The biodiversity of butterflies (and moths, their nocturnal counterparts) is incredible in tropical regions around the world, and Panama alone has over 1500 species! From the beautiful metallic blue of the large Blue Morpho, to the pretty little Passion Vine butterflies (*Heliconius* spp.) tropical butterflies always get noticed. We will look for such eye-catching species including Mimosa Yellow, Deep-blue Eyed-Metalmark, Sara Longwing, Orange Mapwing, Togarna Hairstreak, Puerta Satyr, Common Ur-Satyr, Red-headed Firetip and the crepuscular Yellow-bordered and Giant owl-butterflies, roosting along the trails. Insight into the lives of butterflies – their life cycles, how they eat and various methods to evade predation are just a few of the interesting topics we will explore! LUNCH AT CANOPY LODGE.

After lunch there will be some time for a siesta, explore the grounds of the lodge and chat with our guest scientists. This afternoon, we will visit the artisan and fruit market in the heart of El Valle de Anton. The market is run by Panamanian artisans from Guna Yala and sell beautiful “molasses” – handmade panels sewn by combining layers of fabric and showing geometric and animal designs, hand-painted wooden decorations, paintings and jewelry. The market in El Valle is very colorful, and a great place to take photos and purchase souvenirs before returning home. We will have a final presentation from our guests from the Museum of Natural History, entitled “The Evolution of Animal Communication”. DINNER AT CANOPY LODGE.

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We will spend our last night sharing our favorite stories and sightings from the tour, and a final opportunity to talk with our guest scientists and guides.

## **Tues., Oct. 22 Departures**

This morning we will meet for a final farewell breakfast at the Canopy Lodge, and if time permits, take in some of the wildlife in the gardens of the lodge – Crimson-backed, Flame-rumped and Blue-gray tanagers come in for breakfast at the fruit feeders, while Garden Emerald, Long-billed Starthroat, Snowy-bellied and Violet-headed hummingbirds visit the flowers in the garden. Central American Agoutis clean up fallen food under the feeders, offering great photo opportunities! We will say our goodbyes and depart for Panama City to catch our return flights home.

## **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.

The cost of this journey is \$2699, per person, from Panama City. This cost is based on double occupancy and includes all accommodations; meals as specified in the itinerary, group airport transfers, professional guide services, local park and other area entrance fees, and miscellaneous program expenses. Please ask for single pricing.

The cost does not include transportation to or from your home to Panama, or items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone charges, portage, maid gratuities, or beverages from the bar.

## **Travel Information**

Please plan to arrive on October 14 by early afternoon — please check with us before confirming flights. Plan to depart after NOON on October 22. It is a three-hour plus drive down from the Lodge, so if you MUST leave earlier it is possible, but not enjoyable, and we'd need to charge you for an independent transfer.

*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**

Three-toed Sloth, Howard Topoff; Juvenile Harpy Eagle, Pat Lueders; Red-eyed Tree Frog, Greg Smith; White-necked Jacobin, Peg Abbot; Boa, Robert Gallardo; Blue Morpho Butterfly, Robert Gallardo; Capybara Family, Peg Abbott.