

Guatemala: Birding, Nature & Culture With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



January 10 – 20, 2022

W/ Tikal Extension January 20 – 24

866.900.1146

800.426.7781

520.558.1146

travel@naturalistjourneys.com

www.naturalistjourneys.com

or find us on Facebook at
Naturalist Journeys, LLC





Ted Beedy



Join Keith Hansen and Patricia Briceño to explore Guatemala as Naturalist Journeys returns again to this exciting country. This journey features a great blend of birding, nature, and culture. Guatemala is a spectacular birding destination, home to more than 700 bird species, from which at least 40 are regional endemics. These regional endemics include such beautiful species as Blue-throated Motmot, Wine-throated Hummingbird, Bushy-crested Jay, Blue-and-white Mockingbird, and Pink-headed Warbler. In addition, Guatemala is a culturally rich destination, inhabited today by the descendants of the Maya civilization. There are colorful markets, luscious fabrics, significant Maya and Spanish colonial historic sites, and delicious local foods.

With its spectacular volcanoes, famed Lake Atitlán, and other highland lakes, Guatemala holds remarkable beauty in the scenery, wildlife, birds, and landscapes. See it for yourself, and have a chance to examine Guatemala's many contrasts, colonial cities, jungles, volcanoes, archaeological sites, and more. It is simply a magical place. And, Guatemala has great shade-grown coffee!

Guatemala's birds are shared with neighboring countries of the Maya realm. Several rare and local species are shared with Mexico, El Salvador, and remote parts of Honduras, especially in the montane areas of this region. Some of these are real showstoppers such as Pink-headed Warbler, an entirely red warbler with a head frosted in pink. This is a great trip to find specialties with expert guides while enjoying beautiful landscapes and learning about Guatemala's rich history and culture.

Tour Highlights

- ✓ Bird, explore, and dine in colonial Antigua, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- ✓ Find overwintering Neotropical migrants in mixed flocks with resident species such as the stunning Pink-headed Warbler and Bushy-crested Jay
- ✓ Enjoy fabulous birding and a delightful eco-lodge at one of the New World Tropic's recently recognized and important birding hotspots—Los Tarrales Reserve!
- ✓ Search for Resplendent Quetzal, the national bird of Guatemala, at Refugio del Quetzal near the colonial city of Xela
- ✓ Spend time at the beautiful Lake Atitlán and see some of the local native villages
- ✓ Enjoy more color than you can imagine as Patricia helps you discover the famous market of Chichicastenango

Tour Summary

11-Day / 10-Night Guatemala Birding & Nature Tour w/
Keith Hansen & Patricia Briceño
\$TBD, from Guatemala City
Airport is La Aurora International (GUA)



Itinerary

Mon., Jan. 10 Arrival in Guatemala City

Welcome to Guatemala! Arrive today at La Aurora International Airport. You may travel to Guatemala independently or we are happy to suggest convenient flights where you may join others from the group.

It is about a three-hour flight from most USA gateway cities to Guatemala. Upon arrival, you are met at the airport for the transfer to our first hotel in the city, a short 10-minute drive from the airport. For those arriving one or more days early, your transfer is coordinated with the regular hotel shuttle.

The group officially gets together today at 6:30 PM in the hotel lobby to enjoy a welcome dinner where we meet our guides and fellow travelers and enjoy an overview of this birding, nature, and cultural tour of Guatemala. *Accommodation at the Clarion Suites Hotel, Guatemala City (D)*

Tues., Jan. 11 Museo Ixchel | Antigua Guatemala

After a wonderful breakfast we visit a local market in Guatemala City to start your day with some color. We first stop at the Museo Ixchel, Guatemala City's excellent textile museum. Named after the Maya goddess of the moon, women, and textiles, exhibits of indigenous costumes and other crafts show the incredible richness of traditional arts in Guatemala's highland towns. Birding on the grounds should offer great views of a nice mix of both familiar species of the American Southwest and the Central American tropics: Squirrel Cuckoo, Acorn Woodpecker, White-eared Hummingbird, Bushtit, Wilson's Warbler, and Boat-billed Flycatcher. Then, we continue on to Antigua, Guatemala.

As we travel, we enjoy lunch and nearby birding and upon arrival, relax with some free time to explore the city from our well-situated and delightful lodgings. We have dinner at the hotel and spend the night in this beautiful city.

Accommodation at Posada de Don Rodrigo, Antigua (B,L,D)



Wed., Jan. 12 Birding Finca El Pilar

In the morning, we head to an excellent reserve at Finca El Pilar. This site features a mixture of shade-grown coffee plantations, hummingbird feeders, and gardens and oak-pine forest. Patches of good bird habitat occur at the nature reserve and shade-grown coffee plantation. Here, we may find a fantastic and stunning variety of regional highland endemics such as Black-capped Swallow, Bushy-crested Jay, Highland Guan, Blue-throated Motmot, Rufous-collared Robin, and Blue-and-white Mockingbird. Other species we may observe include Singing Quail, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Pacific Parakeet, Chestnut-sided Shrike-vireo, Brown-backed Solitaire, and Gray Silky-flycatcher. Hummingbird feeders attract numerous species such as Green-throated Mountain-gem, Rufous Sabrewing, Azure-crowned Hummingbird, Berylline Hummingbird, and White-eared Hummingbird.

After this wonderful morning, enjoy a free afternoon or a city tour in Antigua. Those on the city tour meet our wonderful local guide in the lobby of our hotel and from there start a walking tour of the city. There is much to learn as you take a peek into the precious elements of Guatemala's heritage, architecture, culinary arts, and other cultural aspects. Antigua, Guatemala is a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to its incredibly well-preserved 17th Century Spanish Colonial environment. Founded in 1542 and partially destroyed by an earthquake in 1776, it was once the third largest city in the Americas, after Mexico City and Lima. Enjoy the beauty of the city's plazas, palaces, churches, and convents.

We tally up our bird sightings over cocktails, and then enjoy a memorable dinner together.
Accommodation at Posada de Don Rodrigo, Antigua (B,L,D)

Thurs., Jan. 13 Market Day in Chichicastenango | Xela

After breakfast, we depart to visit Chichicastenango, the most colorful and picturesque Indian open-air market in the country. Hundreds of native people from the surrounding countryside gather to barter their goods and products here. We also visit the 400-year old Church of Santo Tomás. (Please note: No shorts, bathing suits, or photography are allowed inside the church—this is important and enforced.)

After the market visit we continue towards Quetzaltenango (also known by its Maya name, Xela), where we have dinner and spend the night at a beautiful historic hotel. There are two large volcanoes and a host of



colonial buildings here.

Accommodations at Pension Bonifaz, Xela (B,L,D)

Fri., Jan. 14 Birding at El Refugio del Quetzal | Local Cultural Site

The climate in this part of Guatemala is delightfully cool, which some may consider even to be cold, so today for our outing, please wear warm clothes. These climatic conditions are conducive to giant ferns and coniferous vegetation—beautiful!

We have a good chance of seeing Resplendent Quetzal as we walk trails in cloud forest habitat. We have a drive to reach the site, but birding there makes it worthwhile. Refugio del Quetzal is about two hours outside of Quetzaltenango and rests at 6000 feet. Its cloud forest protects a number of birds, including Highland Guan, Brown-backed Solitaire, Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush, Blue-crowned Chlorophonia, and many more cloud forest specialists. The reserve is also home to a population of quetzals. The quetzals are just entering breeding season, which runs from February to May.

For those that prefer something closer to Xela, we offer a cultural option to explore the village of Zunil about 18km from Xela. Zunil is a small Maya village on the banks of the Salamá River with pretty adobe houses and red-tile roofs. Its inhabitants wear beautiful costumes made with pre-Hispanic techniques, the fabrics representing designs that represent objects of their environment with use of brilliant color. The village itself is not very large, but it is at the crossroads of two main roads, so it hosts a large market and plays an important role in the region.

We return and reunite at our hotel for dinner and a relaxing evening.

Accommodations at Pension Bonifaz, Xela (B,L,D)

Sat., Jan. 15 Transfer to Fuentes Georginas | Los Tarrales

After breakfast this morning it's time to pack up and head to our next exciting destination.



We have lunch along the way, since we have another great birding area ahead: Fuentes Georginas, a reserve that offers excellent birdwatching. Here, we can find Mountain Trogon, Blue-throated Motmot, Unicolored Jay, Black-capped Swallow, Rufous-browed Wren, Hooded Grosbeak, Golden-browed Warbler, and Pink-headed Warbler (stunning!). This site is also quite rich in montane hummingbirds, many of which are unique to Mexico and Central America, such as Green-throated Mountain-gem, Amethyst-throated Mountain-gem, Garnet-throated Hummingbird, and Wine-throated Hummingbird. Birding is quite easy here; species can be observed on the paved road and near the visitor center.

In the afternoon we travel to Los Tarrales. Los Tarrales Reserve itself protects humid, subtropical forest located on the southeastern slope of Atitlán Volcano. The reserve is part of the Atitlán Important Bird Area (IBA), designated by BirdLife International. Natural forest is interspersed with shade coffee plantations from 2300 to 5200 feet. It is incredibly scenic and the varied elevation gives us a great variety of birds. The reserve hosts over 400 species of birds and 99 mammals—wow! It is one of Guatemala's richest birding and natural history areas.

The verdant forests of Los Tarrales are home to a fantastic assortment of birds, and we have chances to see the nearly endemic Azure-rumped Tanager, as well as a rich supporting cast of colorful species such as Emerald-chinned Hummingbird, White-faced Quail-Dove, White-winged Tanager, and White-eared Ground-Sparrow. As the day warms up, there is also a rich diversity of butterflies from morphos to daggerwings to crescents.

Situated at a lower elevation, your comfortable lodge immerses you in nature with splendid scenery and birdy surroundings with shade-grown coffee plantations (yes, you can buy local coffee!). Some of the highlights we may see right around the lodge include Yellow-naped Parrot, White-bellied Chachalaca, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Turquoise-browed Motmot, Pacific Parakeet, and Yellow-winged Tanager.

Meals are served family-style in the original home of the estate. Walking to the dining room through hedgerows of flowers brings sighting of active and colorful hummingbirds. This is a cozy, simple birding lodge to long-remember.

Accommodations at the Los Tarrales Eco Lodge (B,L,D)

Sun., Jan. 16 Full Day at Los Tarrales Reserve

We rise early today for breakfast before meeting our local guide to bird a different area of the reserve. We drive part way up the mountain in four-wheel drive vehicles to a higher area of the forest, where a viewpoint affords splendid views of a lush landscape as far as the eye can see. Finding the mountain specialty birds takes time, so plan on spending much of the day walking the road with scenic views all along the way. Avian treasures we may



observe on this walk include Azure-rumped Tanager, White-winged Tanager, Blue Seedeater, Bar-winged Oriole, Blue-crowned Chlorophonia, and so much more. Returning to the lodge, we check a secretive pond area that is often highly productive.

Those not up for the walk can enjoy this delightful lodge and the nearby coffee plantation, with chances to watch Blue-tailed Hummingbird, Long-billed Starthroat, White-bellied Chachalaca, Turquoise-browed Motmot, Spot-breasted Oriole, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Barred Antshrike, Roadside Hawk, and other species.

Dinner is at the lodge tonight and we may go out to listen for owls and nightjars.

Accommodations at Los Tarrales Eco Lodge (B,L,D)

Mon., Jan. 17 Los Tarrales | Lake Atitlan

Those that wish can greet the dawn beside the lodge, scanning the mature trees that grow along an open soccer field for a variety of species such as Yellow-naped Parrot and Pacific Parakeet—these parrots may provide great scope views as they perch and socialize in the early morning light. We then enjoy breakfast, watching the birds as they busily go about their morning. Hummingbirds love the blooming hedgerow next to the building, putting on an energetic show. Then, it's time to pack up and head to our next exciting destination.

We continue to the community of Panajachel on the shore of Lake Atitlán. Few places in the world can match the spectacular beauty of this lake, one of Guatemala's most prized natural treasures. Geologists state its origin is due to a large volcanic blast that occurred millions of years ago. Pockets of broad-leaf and mixed pine-oak forests grow in the region.

Just outside the city, we stop at a dry forest site near the lake to try for Blue-and-white Mockingbird, migrant warblers, and though difficult to see—we give it a try—Belted Flycatcher. We plan on a late lunch in Panajachel.

For many centuries, several native groups of Maya origin have lived on the shores of Lake Atitlán and continue



to share a relationship based on community. Divided among numerous small townships, the two main groups that share the lake are the T'zutujiles and Kaqchiqueles.

We cross the lake here by boat to get to our lodgings on the other side at Santiago Atitlan. It is a fast ferry with splendid views of the surrounding landscape.

Accommodations at El Bambu, Santiago Atitlan (B,L,D)

Tues., Jan. 18 Morning Birding | San Juan La Laguna

Tolimán Volcano is one of the three volcanoes that frame beautiful Atitlán Lake. Located at an elevation between 5250 and 9800 feet, it spans over 9400 acres of land. At dawn, we head out to the trailhead. We have a chance today to see Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo, and with luck a good number of overwintering Neotropical warblers, including the Golden-cheeked Warbler of Texas Hill Country fame. We should see a great number of birds today, among them three species of orioles: Yellow-backed, Black-vented, and Bar-winged.

Our goal today is to search for the exceptional Horned Guan as we climb the trail up one of the local volcanoes. Consider this a quest, a difficult but rewarding hike, to see one of Central America's most coveted species—an avian unicorn of sorts both in the mythos surrounding it and its actual appearance! They only live in cloud forest on the large volcanos of this area extending over to Mexico's Chiapas. We observe the changes in vegetation as we pass through corn crops and old coffee plantations. As we climb higher, we walk through mountain woodland that is rich in biodiversity until we ascend high into the cloud forest where we stop for lunch on the trail. Other birds we may see include the Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Hooded Grosbeak, Black-throated Jay, and Wine-throated Hummingbird.

Alternatively, those in the group who do not wish to try the hike can experience the Tz'utujil culture and customs. You ride by boat to the picturesque Indian village of San Juan La Laguna, one of the twelve villages surrounding the lake. Here you have the chance to enjoy this bustling Indian community, where weavers work



their colorful textiles. Lunch is attended by women from the community, followed by an afternoon return to Panajachel. Last year, this day got rave reviews!

Accommodations at El Bambu, Santiago Atitlan (B,L,D)

Wed., Jan. 19 Santiago to Guatemala City via Tecpan

After breakfast at the hotel, we check out and travel back to Guatemala City, stopping en route at Finca Chichavac, located in Tecpan. Finca Chichavac is in the mountain forest biome of Sierra de Tecpan, 30 miles from La Antigua Guatemala at an altitude of 8200 feet. Today we look for Pink-headed Warbler, easily observed in this pine-oak forest. This beautiful warbler occurs in the same forest type where we may find Tufted Flycatcher, Olive Warbler, Gray Silky-flycatcher, Band-backed Wren, Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer, Hooded Grosbeak, and possibly the rare Black-capped Siskin. We may also see a few friends we know from back home: Steller's Jay, Acorn Woodpecker, Hutton's Vireo, and Spotted Towhee. Warblers are here in good number and species may include Red-faced, Rufous-capped (a local form), Golden-browed, Townsend's, and Hermit.

After lunch, we continue to bird nearby, and then start making our way to Guatemala City. Lodgings tonight near the airport position you for flights out the following day.

Tonight, we enjoy a farewell dinner at a favorite local restaurant to celebrate all the beauty and fun of our Guatemala tour!

Accommodation at the Clarion Suites Hotel, Guatemala City (B,L,D)

Thurs., Jan. 20 Departures | Tikal Extension

Our main tour ends this morning with a transfer to the international airport for flights out today at leisure. (B)

Maya Treasures Extension to Tikal



Those going on to Tikal make the flight to Flores today (booked as a morning flight by our agent as part of the extension). We land in Flores, a scenic location from which we drive to Tikal. Our expert local guide meets us at the airport, and then we enjoy birding along the way at the ruins of Yaxha, located 40 miles from the airport. Yaxha, always an ally of Tikal, has imposing pyramids and is all connected with causeways. It is also within the Maya Biosphere Reserve and located near the Yaxha Lake. The site is part of the National Park Yaxhá-Nakúm-Naranjo, which protects lowland rainforest. It is birdy here, as well as fascinating from a cultural perspective—a good start to seeing a host of new species in this lush habitat. Birds we might see include Slaty-tailed and Gartered Trogon, Red-lored and White-fronted Parrot, Blue Bunting and Keel-billed Toucan—our great taste of birding in the wet Central American lowlands. Our lodgings are immediately adjacent to the Tikal ruins, so we get a sneak preview today!

Accommodations at Jungle Lodge, Tikal (B,L,D)

Fri., Jan. 21 & Sat., Jan. 22 Tikal National Park

Protected as a national park in 1955, Tikal preserves the most magnificent example of pyramids, plazas, and temples of the ancient Maya culture. With towering pyramids that reach more than 240 feet, one cannot understand how impressive they are without being in their presence. Once the epicenter of Maya commerce and trade, Tikal's towering pyramids stretch towards the heaven and beyond the highest jungle canopy, providing a mystical view of the area's rich flora and fauna.

In addition to its rich architecture and archeology, Tikal encompasses more than 3-million acres of rainforest in northern Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve. In fact, UNESCO designates Tikal as a World Heritage Site based on both its incredible biodiversity as well as its historical heritage. More than 400 species of birds have been found within Tikal National Park, including exceptional numbers of parrots and raptors. While walking



through the forest, visiting the different archaeological groups with plazas, pyramids, and palaces, Howler and Spider Monkeys, and showy birds like Squirrel Cuckoo, Keel-billed Toucan, and Ocellated Turkey are also moving around. We enjoy lunch at a local restaurant inside the park, and then you have the option to continue exploring. If you find yourself wanting a siesta, our hotel is just outside the gate. These days are to wander through the jungle among the famous ruins, learning about Maya history with time for birding. The archeological zone of Tikal is large, magnificent, and worthy of additional exploration. Mornings and evenings can be very active with the cacophony of commuting parrots, including Brown-hooded, White-crowned, Red-lored, White-fronted, and Mealy Parrot. We also pay attention to what is soaring above us, and we may see Hook-billed, Plumbeous, and Swallow-tailed Kite, perhaps even Ornate or Black Hawk-Eagle!

Accommodations at Jungle Lodge, Tikal National Park (B,L,D)

Sun., Jan. 23 El Remate | Guatemala City

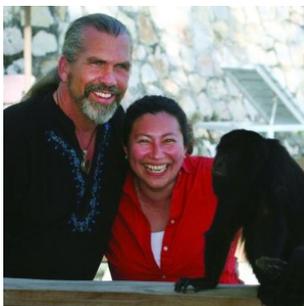
This morning we continue our birding at another site today, El Remate. This is an idyllic spot at the eastern end of Lago de Petén Itzá, and here we have lunch. A nice variety of water birds occur along the shores of the lake, including both Limpkin and Snail Kite. Rank grasses might attract small flocks of Morelet's Seedeater and Groove-billed Ani. We should also see a nice selection of herons and egrets.

We have scheduled an afternoon flight for the 45-minute jaunt back to Guatemala City, where we spend our last night in the same comfortable city hotel. This evening you have time to pack, get organized for your trip home, and relax during a final evening with friends.

Accommodations at Clarion Suites Hotel, Guatemala City (B,L,D)

Mon., Jan. 24 Departures

Depart at your convenience this morning from La Aurora International airport. Keep in mind when booking flights that you need to be at the airport approximately three hours ahead of your flight, so mid- to late-morning is far more comfortable than an early morning flight. Breakfast for those on a schedule that allows is in the hotel. The tour ends this morning with the transfer to the international airport. (B)



Guides Keith Hansen & Patricia Briceño

Keith is a renowned wildlife artist, capturing birds and other wildlife in innovative yet accurate portrayals for a wide range of books and other publications, art shows, and private commissions. Patricia is a fabric artist with an eye for color, fabric, and texture that influences all her art. Keith and Patricia's compassionate, positive spirit, and sense of fun are contagious. Together they share their passion for the natural world with their groups.

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.

Travel Information

Please plan to arrive in time for a 6:30 meet-up and dinner on January 10. Departures are at your leisure on January 20. If you plan on joining us for the highly recommended post-tour extension to Tikal, please plan to depart at your leisure on January 24.

Please note that you need to be at the airport three hours before your flight, so a mid- to late-morning flight time is most comfortable. The hotel runs a convenient shuttle.

Cost of the Journey

The cost of this journey is \$TBD DBL / \$TBD SGL, per person, from Guatemala 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. Cost of the Tikal extension is \$TBD DBL / \$TBD SGL, per person, and includes the round-trip flight to Flores, Guatemala.

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

Photo Credits

Resplendent Quetzal, Greg Smith (GS); Turquoise-browed Motmot, Luis Búrban, courtesy Operador Latino (OL); Ocellated Turkey, Peg Abbott (PA); Woman at Market, Irene Rodriguez (IR), courtesy OL; Montezuma Oropendola, Alex Navarro, courtesy OL; Lake Atitlán, IR, courtesy OL; Flame-colored Tanager, Ted Beedy; Market, Keith Hansen (KH); Artisan Work, KH; Resplendent Quetzal, GS; Pink-headed Warbler, Lori Conrad (LC); Textiles, PA; Lake Atitlan, PA; Birding Los Tarrales Reserve, PA; Long-billed Starthroat, Hugh Simmons Photography, Blue-crowned Cholorphonia, Robert Gallardo; Tody Motmot, PA; Unicolored Jays, Irene Rodriguez, courtesy Operador Latino; Wine-throated Hummingbird, Luis Burbano, courtesy Operado Latino; Market Textiles, PA; Market Scene, PA; Belted Flycatcher, Majo Lou, courtesy Operador Latino; Horned Guan, courtesy elbambu.com; Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Sandy Sorkin (SS); Yellow-backed Oriole, PA; Olive Warbler, PA; Pink-headed Warbler, Majo Lou, courtesy Operador Latino; Naturalist Journeys Group at Lake Atitlan, PA; Rose-throated Becard, Tom Dove; Violet Sabrewing, SS; Naturalist Journeys Group at Cooking Class, PA; Tikal x2, LC; Central American Spider Monkey, PA; Keel-billed Toucan, Doug Greenberg.

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.