

Panama: Birds & Mammals

With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



April 3 – 11, 2022

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Tour Highlights

- Enjoy five nights at the Canopy Tower, a converted radar tower, completely surrounded by wildlife
- Walk Semaphore Hill Road in Soberanía National Park looking for sloths, tamanduas, and coatis, as well as trogons, motmots, and antbirds
- Take the Birdmobile to Pipeline Road, looking for wild cats like Jaguarundi, and great birds
- Embark on night drives looking for Common Opossum, sloths, Peccary, and birds like Spectacled Owl
- Explore by boat; look for Lesser Capybara and West Indian Manatee on Gatun Lake
- Spend an afternoon at the Panama Canal, learning history and watching massive cargo ships go through the locks
- End your stay with three nights at the Canopy Lodge, with cool mountain air and fabulous birds on feeders and trails

This Panama wildlife tour offers both great birding and the chance to observe fascinating Neotropical mammals such as Two-toed and Three-toed Sloths, Manatee, neotropical monkeys like Geoffroy's Tamarin and Howler Monkey, Armadillo, night mammals, and more.

There are parts of the world, like Africa, where we are dazzled by the abundance of large mammals—elephants, giraffes, and lions are out in the open and easy to see. Mammal watching in Central and South America, however, can be a little more challenging. Many mammals here are found in lush forests and are small to medium-sized; many are predominantly nocturnal. Local expertise with our Canopy Family partners really helps! In Panama, we find that it's very easy to combine the two interests, at a pace set to observe, not just tick off species and run. We strive to find diurnal mammals like monkeys, agoutis, coatis, and tamanduas during the day; at night, we venture out with our spotlight to search for nocturnal mammals, like Kinkajou and various opossums and bats. A good list of night birds are a bonus of our efforts.

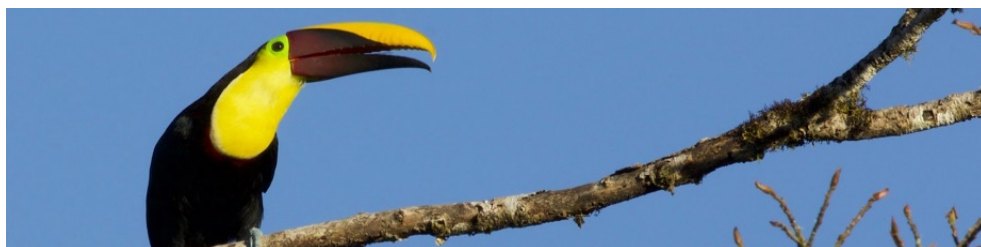
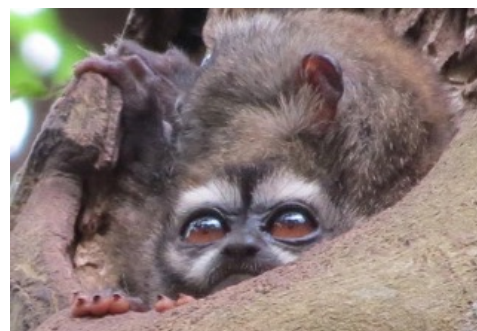
The forests of Central Panama are full of mammals, and although it may take a little searching, finding neotropical mammals is memorable and rewarding! We also take advantage of the forests around us to find birds, frogs, reptiles, and insects—there won't be a dull moment!

Tour Summary

9-Day / 8-Night Panama Nature Tour
\$4390, from Panama City
Airport is Tocumen International (PTY)



Itinerary



Sun., Apr. 3 Arrival in Panama City | Orientation | First Night Viewing

Arrive today in Panama City. Please arrive by early afternoon so you can settle in this evening and enjoy a first walk and some night mammal viewing. You are picked up at Tocumen International Airport and transfer by van to Canopy Tower, a drive of about 45 minutes to an hour. After settling in, meet your local guide on the observation deck where we likely spot our first mammal, a Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth, munching on Cecropia leaves. During dinner, keep an eye on the Cecropia trees, as they attract nocturnal Kinkajou, Olingo, and Panamanian Night Monkey; Black-and-white Owl are often around the Canopy Tower after dark too! *Accommodations at the Canopy Tower (B,L,D)*

Mon., Apr. 4 Observation Deck | Semaphore Hill Road | Ammo Dump Pond & Gamboa Marina

We start our day at sunrise on the observation deck at the Canopy Tower. Scan the treetops, where we often see Geoffroy's Tamarin, Mantled Howler, Two- and Three-toed Sloths, Red-tailed Squirrel, and a variety of colorful birds that come to feed on the Cecropia trees. Keel-billed Toucan, a colorful variety of tanagers, majestic raptors, and even Blue Cotinga can be seen from the observation deck. Breakfast follows.

After breakfast, we walk down Semaphore Hill Road through the lush lowland rainforest of Soberanía National Park to continue our search for mammals and other creatures. On this road there is a chance to find Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth and Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth, as well as a Northern Tamandua and White-nosed Coati. This paved road is a little more than a mile long, and passes through some of the most beautiful forest around! Here we also have the chance to see many birds and interesting plants, wildflowers, and butterflies. Two more rare species, Silky Anteater and the secretive Tayra, have been spotted occasionally along this road. We also have a great chance for understory birds including Slaty-tailed and Gartered Trogons, Rufous and Broad-billed Motmots, and several species of antbirds. At the end of this walk, we are picked up by one of the open-air birdmobiles and driven up to lunch.



After lunch and a siesta, we drive north to Ammo Dump Pond, located in the small town of Gamboa. This is a great place to look for the world's second largest rodent, the Lesser Capybara, which can be found in or near the Chagres River. Also, in Gamboa's forested neighborhoods, we hunt for Red Squirrel and Central American Agouti, a large diurnal rainforest rodent. Depending on time, we make a quick stop at the marina on the Chagres River, the main source of water for the Panama Canal. With a bit of luck, we can find a Neotropical River Otter and Variegated Squirrel. Water birds including Wattled Jacana, Striated Heron, and the beautiful Snail Kite can be seen hunting here.

After dinner we board the Canopy Tower's open back Rainfomobile for a night drive down Semaphore Hill Road. Many neotropical mammals are nocturnal, and night drives are the best way to find them! We hope this evening to find Panamanian Night Monkey, Paca, Central American Woolly Opossum, and if lucky, a Rothschild's Porcupine!

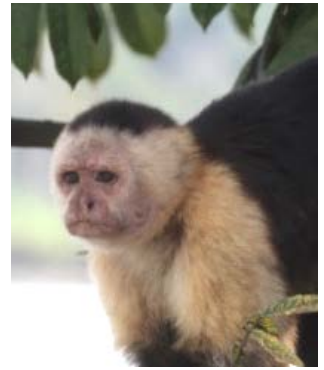
Accommodations at the Canopy Tower (B,L,D)

Tues., Apr. 5 Pipeline Road | Summit Gardens | Old Gamboa Road

This morning after an early breakfast, we board the Canopy Tower's Birdmobile for a 25-minute ride to spend the morning at the world famous Pipeline Road. Hundreds of species of birds, mammals, and countless insects and plants have been recorded here. This 10.5-mile gravel road with eleven creeks has much to be explored, and is a great place for mammals, including White-faced Capuchin, Mantled Howler, Central American Agouti, White-nosed Coati, Tayra, and Collared Peccary. We keep an eye on the openings of tree cavities for Rufous Tree Rat. There have also been sightings of three species of cats, namely Jaguarundi, Ocelot and even, rarely, Jaguar. Over 500 species of birds have been recorded here, so there are good chances we enjoy quality sightings of Crimson-crested Woodpecker, White-tailed Trogon, Spotted Antbird, and if lucky, Tiny Hawk! We return to the Tower for lunch.

After lunch, we head up to the Summit Botanical Garden, just 10 minutes from the Tower. Our main goal here is to find a roosting colony of Common Tent-making Bats under the large palm leaves at the entrance to the park. Other mammals are always a possibility. Great Black Hawk, Crane Hawk, Giant Cowbird, Yellow-backed Oriole, and Masked Tityra also may be seen!

After a short visit to the gardens, we cross the road to explore the area of Old Gamboa Road and the adjacent Summit Ponds. This site boasts the nearest access to Pacific Dry Forest from the Canopy Tower. The ponds are a great place to look for some secretive herons, namely Boat-billed and Capped Herons, and the diminutive American Pygmy Kingfisher, along with Spectacled Caiman and Common Basilisk or "Jesus Christ Lizard."



Carrying on south down Old Gamboa Road, we hope to encounter Tayra, Red-tailed Squirrel, more Two-toed and Three-toed Sloths, Jaguarundi, White-nosed Coati, and other mammals we have yet to encounter.

Back at the Canopy Tower in the evening, we review our checklist and enjoy happy hour prior to dinner. During dinner, Little Mastiff Bats may be seen flying around the dining room as they head out for their evening hunt, and we watch for the largest bat in the Americas, the False Vampire Bat, hunting around the Cecropia trees just out the windows.

This evening after dinner, we head out on another night drive, targeting nocturnal mammals. Common Opossum, Northern Tamandua, Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth and Collared Peccary are some hopefuls on our night drives, as are night birds like Spectacled Owl!

Accommodations at the Canopy Tower (B,L,D)

Wed., Apr. 6 Jungle Boat Tour | Panama Rainforest Discovery Center

This morning after breakfast we board a motorboat for a spectacular tour on the Panama Canal. Most of the Panama Canal is actually an artificial lake, Gatun Lake, and this boat trip departs from Gamboa, just 15 minutes from the Canopy Tower. We start in the Chagres River, enjoying the abundance of water birds, and keep an eye out for Lesser Capybara. Then we pass under the historic one-way Gamboa bridge into the Panama Canal! Along the way we pass huge cargo ships and ocean liners and also visit hidden coves and beautiful inlets of Gatun Lake with fascinating fauna and flora.

From the boat, we explore the small islands throughout the lake to look for primates, including Mantled Howler, White-faced Capuchin, and the tiny Geoffroy's Tamarin. There is also a chance to see some interesting reptiles, including American Crocodile (some reach 14+ feet in length) and its smaller relative, the Spectacled Caiman, Basilisk Lizard (Jesus Lizard), and Black River Turtle. A little scarcer, but not impossible, is the Neotropical River Otter and, if we are really lucky, a West Indian Manatee. This species was introduced to the Panama Canal in the



1960s to control the growth of water weeds, and they have adjusted very well to this habitat. We also hope to see the tiny Proboscis Bat; they roost along these quiet banks. We are sure to have a fantastic morning!

This afternoon after a little rest, we travel to the Discovery Center. The Panama Rainforest Discovery Center is an ecotourism and environmental education facility created and administrated by Fundación Avifauna Eugene Eisenmann on Pipeline Road. It is located in the tropical forests surrounding the Panama Canal, adjacent to Soberanía National Park.

Seventy percent of the materials used in the construction of this facility were recycled from old Canal Zone houses. We climb their tower up to the top of the canopy, overlooking vast Soberanía National Park. From this vantage, we scan the tree tops for mammals and hawks! Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Yellow-throated Toucan, and White-necked Puffbird are commonly seen from the top of the tower. The platform and its hummingbird feeders offer us an opportunity to see several species prior to dusk. Two-toed and Three-toed Sloths, White-nosed Coati, and Northern Tamandua may be found here.

Tonight after dinner we head out on our last night drive to continue our search for nocturnal mammals, with hopes to find Ocelot, Collared Peccary, Paca, Western Night Monkey, Silky Anteater, and Lesser Capybara.
Accommodations at the Canopy Tower (B,L,D)

Thurs., Apr. 7 Metro Park | Punta Culebra | Miraflores Locks

After breakfast, we head to Metropolitan Natural Park, located right next to Panama City, and only 30 minutes from the Canopy Tower. The forests of the Metro Park are much drier than those around the Tower. This park is also a great place for bird migration (September through October). There is a wonderful over-look at the summit of a hill, which gives us an incredible perspective of Panama City, the scenic bay, and some of the closer islands. One of the most common residents are Geoffroy's Tamarin and Variegated and Red-tailed Squirrels. Northern Tamandua, White-nosed Coati, and Panamanian Night Monkey are also a possibility for us this morning. Rosy



Thrush-Tanager, Black-throated Trogon, Green Shrike-Vireo, and the endemic Yellow-green Tyrannulet can also be found here!

Later this morning we head into Panama City to the Amador Causeway to visit Punta Culebra Nature Center, a public nature facility run by the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth are abundant here, and our main target for this site is the Crab-eating Raccoon, a shy mammal that lives in the Pacific Dry Forest and mangroves.

After lunch at Canopy Tower, we visit one of the must see attractions on any trip to Panama: The world famous Panama Canal! The newly expanded Panama Canal is one of the wonders of the modern world and an engineering marvel. There are four exhibition halls at this ultra-modern museum, which includes historic artifacts used in the construction of the Canal, interactive modules, video presentations, models of the Panama Canal, and objects used in Canal operations. Models of the biota collected during the construction are also on display. Most importantly, we watch the huge cargo ships negotiate the tight-fitting locks! After this fascinating visit we head back for happy hour and then dinner at the Canopy Tower.

Accommodations at the Canopy Tower (B,L,D)

Fri., Apr. 8 Plantation Road | Transfer to Canopy Lodge | Canopy Lodge Gardens & Canopy Adventure Trails

For our last morning at the Canopy Tower, we can enjoy the observation deck at dawn, followed by breakfast. After checking out, we take a short drive down to the bottom of Semaphore Hill to Plantation Road, one of Soberanía National Park's trails. It is a good, easy graded dirt road, passing through a mature forest for about four miles. The road follows a small creek, the Chico Masambi River. This trail, once a blacktopped road, has some incredible forest, including gigantic Wild Cashew, Ficus, and Cuipo Trees that reach heights of more than 100 feet. During this walk there is the chance to find more Mantled Howler, Geoffroy's Tamarin, and White-faced Capuchin. There is also the probability of encountering a Northern Tamandua (Anteater) and occasionally, a Spider Monkey is seen!

After a short walk, we return to the Tower mid-morning, load up our luggage, and transfer to the Canopy Lodge in El Valle de Anton in the foothills of Central Panama, about two hours west of the Canopy Tower. El Valle is located in the caldera of a gigantic volcano that erupted 3.5-million years ago. It is the largest inhabited caldera in the western hemisphere. The volcano has been dormant for many, many years, but there are mud baths and thermal pools in certain areas of the caldera. Both the Canopy Lodge and the town where it is located are just



delightful. When we arrive at the lodge, it is usually hard to get to your room since visitors are hypnotized by the several colorful tanagers visiting the feeders—not to mention the very pleasant temperature. The altitude here is about 2300 feet above sea level. Upon arrival, we can enjoy the flurry of activity at the lodge's feeders—Collared Aracari, Thick-billed Euphonia, and Dusky-faced and Flame-rumped Tanagers feast on the bananas provided.

After having lunch and enjoying the bird feeders, we take a walk on some of the trails near the Lodge, and this includes a visit to Chorro El Macho at the Canopy Adventure, a 120-foot high waterfall. We come back to the Canopy Lodge in time for happy hour and dinner.

The Canopy Lodge is a great place to catch up on some of the mammals we may have missed at the Tower and to get some other foothill specialties. After dinner we take a leisurely night walk around the lodge grounds. Some of the nocturnal mammals often seen in this area are Gray Four-eyed, Common, and Water Opossums, Rothschild's Porcupine, Western Night Monkey, Ocelot, and Orange Nectar Bats—they come to the hummingbird feeders at night!

Accommodations at the Canopy Lodge (B,L,D)

Sat., Apr. 9 La Mesa | Finca Candelario | Cara Iguana

After being awakened by the morning chorus of birds and having breakfast, we go out again in search of any other animal that is still missing on our list. This time we visit two places, the first one is La Mesa, the flatlands up along the rim of the crater, within the protected area of Cerro Gaital Natural Monument. We also visit Finca Candelario, a private and well-maintained property with tranquil trails and a pleasing open area to explore. Both these areas are great places to look for Western Pygmy Squirrel, Greater Grison, Rufous Tree Rat, Rothschild's Porcupine, Tayra, and Jaguarundi.

After lunch and a siesta, we head to Cara Iguana, a quiet road on the outskirts of El Valle. This area boasts quality dry forest at the roadsides. Here we hope to see any mammals we have not yet encountered—perhaps White-tailed Deer or Jaguarundi, along with the likelihood of Two-toed and Three-toed Sloths and Central American Agouti. We also check for roosting Spectacled Owl on a private property. Lance-tailed Manakin, Tody Motmot, and White-winged Becard are possibilities here! Our last afternoon of the tour is sure to be an enjoyable one. Back at the Canopy Lodge we will review our final checklist and reminisce about our favorite moments of the tour.

Accommodations at the Canopy Lodge (B,L,D)



Sun., Apr. 10 Full Day at Altos del Maria

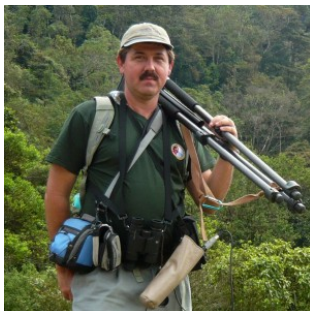
Departing after an early breakfast, we're off into the highlands of Altos del Maria! With the sunrise ahead of us, we climb into the mountains along the Continental Divide east of El Valle. Often engulfed by the mist of the expansive cloud forest that surrounds the area, Altos del Maria sits at an altitude of 1,100 meters (3,600 feet). On today's jungle tour, you can 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 hope to see a tiny Western Pygmy Squirrel working away in the treetops. After a picnic lunch in the field, we 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 explore some trails and roadside spots in search of even more forest birds and animals. We return to the Canopy Lodge by mid-afternoon.

Accommodations at Canopy Lodge (B,L,D)

Mon., Apr. 11 Departures

After breakfast we depart for Panama City to catch our return flights home, with memories of the many species of mammals, birds, insects, and other wonders of the Neotropics seen and photographed here in Panama. We highly recommend an afternoon flight; it takes about three hours to get back to the airport and you need to be there almost three hours ahead of your flight. If you must take an early morning flight, consider a dropoff at an airport hotel with shuttle and taking it the following day. While an early transfer can be arranged for you (additional cost), it is not the best way to end your wonderful holiday! (B)

Guide Robert Gallardo



Butterfly, orchid and bird authority of Honduras. An avid naturalist from childhood, Robert left his native California to join Peace Corps, finding a passion for tropical nature on arrival in 1993. He has authored two CD's, small field guides, and the forthcoming authoritative "Guide to the Birds of Honduras". He resides at the scenic Lake Yojoa and spends much of his time afield.



Cost of the Journey

Plan Ahead!

Protect yourself with [Allianz Travel Insurance](#). As of January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

Travel Information

Please plan to arrive on April 3 by early afternoon—please check with us before confirming flights. Plan to depart after NOON on April 11. 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.

If you are arriving early or staying longer to see other parts of Panama or to transit the Canal, we can recommend hotel and transit arrangements.

Cost of the Journey

The cost of this journey is \$4390 DBL or SGL per person, from Panama City. Only two singles are available. Tour 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. The cost is based on a minimum number of 6 participants. A limited number of upgrades to suite accommodations are also available.

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

If you wish to include a transit of the Panama Canal, please ask us for help in recommending arrangements. If you wish to add days on to your trip to make this work, we are happy to make suggestions for activities and lodgings. As of last year, there were cruises on a few different days of the week, please inquire.

Photo Credits

Black Howler Monkey, Peg Abbott (PA); Canopy Tower, Janice Petko; Collared Aracari, James Adams; Three-toed Sloth, PA; Capybara Family, PA; Golden-hooded Tanager, PA; Black-throated Trogon, NJS; Geoffroy's Tamarin, Howard Topoff (HT); Masked Tityra, PA; Broad-billed Motmot, Carla Bregman (CB); Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Tom Dove (TD); Night Monkeys, CB; Yellow-throated Toucan, Greg Smith; Tayra, Mukesh Ramdass; Tamandua, HT; San Lorenzo Fortress, Alex Vargo; Capybara, PA; White-faced Capuchin, NJS; Coati, NJS; Three-toed Sloth, Sandy Sorkin; Basilisk Lizard, PA; Capped Heron, PA; Black Howler Monkey, PA; Caiman, PA; Panama Canal, NJS; Three-toed Sloth, NJS; Snail Kite, PA; View from Canopy Tower, Carol Simon; Black-breasted Puffbird, NJS; Feeders at Canopy Lodge, NJS; Canopy Lodge Swing Bridge, PA; Canopy Lodge, NJS; Agouti, NJS; Ocelot, Don Cooper; Altos del Maria scenics, Robert Gallardo; Green Thorntail, Willy Alfaro; Chestnut-headed Oropendola, NJS.

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