

info@naturetravelbirding.com
www.naturetravelbirding.com



GUATEMALA BIRDING TOUR

13 DAY TOUR

OVERVIEW

Guatemala, a Central American country bordered by Mexico to the north and west, the Pacific Ocean to the southwest, Belize to the northeast, the Caribbean and Honduras to the east, and El Salvador to the southeast, is home to volcanoes, rainforests and ancient Mayan sites. Guatemala's abundance of biologically significant and unique ecosystems includes a large number of endemic species and contributes to the Mesoamerica area's designation as a top biodiversity hotspot.

Guatemala is a living museum full of culture, natural beauty, historical sites, archeology, anthropology, and fascinating geology. The capital, Guatemala City, features the stately National Palace of Culture and the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. Antigua, west of the capital, contains beautifully preserved Spanish colonial buildings. Lake Atitlán, formed in a massive volcanic crater, is surrounded by coffee fields and villages.

More than 740 bird species have been recorded in Guatemala. The country is the core area of distribution of endemic birds of the north Central American highlands, such as Pink-headed Warbler, Horned Guan, Azure-rumped Tanager, Goldman's Warbler, and Black-capped Siskin. Guatemala is also part of the range of approximately 40 species with an area of distribution restricted to southern Mexico and northern Central America. Guatemala's national bird, the Resplendent Quetzal, which many ornithologists call the most beautiful bird in the world, can be seen at several sites in the Guatemalan highlands.

This tour is a mixture of the best birdwatching destinations in Guatemala including the best locations to appreciate the country's endemic bird species. We will visit Guatemala's central highlands (Mountain Forest) and Peten (Tropical Rainforest) in the Guatemala's lowlands.

DAILY SUMMARY

DAY 1	Arrival - Transfer to Antigua Guatemala
DAY 2	Finca El Pilar and Antigua Walking tour
DAY 3	Tecpan Area and drive to Huehuetenango
DAY 4	Todos Santos/ Quetzaltenango
DAY 5	Fuentes Georginas and drive to Los Tarrales Nature Reserve
DAY 6	Los Tarrales Nature Reserve
DAY 7	Los Tarrales Nature Reserve and drive to Santiago Atitlan
DAY 8	Santiago Atitlan - San Pedro Volcano / Santiago Atitlan
DAY 9	Rey Pepepul, drive to Guatemala City and flight to Flores
DAY 10	Flores to Las Guacamayas Biological Station
DAY 11	El Peru and Las Guacamayas Biological Station
DAY 12	Las Guacamayas to Tikal National Park
DAY 13	Tikal National Park
DAY 14	Tikal National Park to Yaxha National Park and flight to Guatemala City
DAY 15	Departure

DETAILED DAILY ITINERARY

DAY 1: Arrival - Transfer to Antigua Guatemala

Meet & greet at the International Airport La Aurora in Guatemala City and transportation to Antigua Guatemala (one hour).

Antigua is a small city surrounded by volcanoes in the south of the country. It is commonly referred to as Antigua or la Antigua. It is renowned for its Spanish colonial buildings, many of them restored following a 1773 earthquake. Notable architectural examples include the baroque style La Merced church. The town has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We will enjoy dinner and a good night's sleep at our colonial-style hotel.

🏠 Accommodation: Lodging at Meson de Maria or similar in Antigua Guatemala (D).

DAY 2: Finca El Pilar and Antigua Walking Tour

We will leave for Finca El Pilar after an early breakfast. Finca El Pilar is a small birding paradise located just 10 minutes away from the center of Antigua Guatemala.

This private area protects habitat ranging from 1600 to 2400 m (5250 to 7870 ft) elevation, including dry forest in the lower section, and pine-oak and cloud forest at higher elevations. It has a good infrastructure of trails for birdwatching.

One of the main attractions in Finca El Pilar is a series of hummingbird feeders where it is possible to spot a wide variety of these spectacular birds. We will be on the lookout for Rufous Sabrewing, Violet Sabrewing, Magnificent, White-eared, Blue-tailed and Azure-crowned Hummingbird, Blue-throated Motmot, Emerald Toucanet, Bushy-crested Jay, Black-capped Swallow, Gray Silky-flycatcher, Hooded Grosbeak, Rose-throated Becard, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo, Bar-winged Oriole, Golden-fronted, Golden-olive, and Hairy Woodpecker, White-eared and Prevost's Ground-Sparrow, White-naped (Yellow-throated) Brushfinch, Ruddy Foliage-gleaner, Rufous-capped Warbler, White-tipped Dove, Rufous-collared Robin, Rufous-collared Sparrow and many others.

We will return to Antigua to have lunch in a local restaurant.

After lunch we will start the thrilling cultural tour of Antigua, visiting the magnificent churches, ruins and museums that combined with the old cobbled streets keep the stories and legends of those colonial times alive! We will visit the most important areas of Antigua like La Merced Church, Central Park, the famous Arch of the 5th Avenue, and much more.

We will have dinner in a local restaurant in Antigua Guatemala. Guatemala does not have a single standout national dish, but several foods feature in everyday diets. Almost all dishes include some form of black beans, white rice and corn tortillas.

🏠 **Accommodation: Lodging at Meson de Maria or similar in Antigua Guatemala (D).**

DAY 3: Tecpan Area and drive to Huehuetenango

We will depart early from Antigua Guatemala toward the Tecpan area. After one hour traveling on the Interamerican highway we will arrive at a local restaurant where we will enjoy a tasty breakfast and some famous Guatemalan coffee.

Then we continue to a private nature reserve located within the central highlands endemism zone, a significant natural area that is inhabited by several regional endemic bird species. At an altitude of about 2300 meters above sea level, this pine-oak mountain

forest may hold species such as Pink-headed Warbler, Rufous-browed Wren, Mountain Trogon, Blue-throated Motmot, Hutton's Vireo, Rufous-collared Robin, Townsend's, Wilson's, Black-and-white and Red-faced Warbler, Green-throated Mountaingem, Golden-browed Warbler, Black-capped Swallow, Black-capped Siskin, Amethyst-throated and Garnet-throated Hummingbird, and occasionally Guatemalan Pygmy Owl.

After birding is this exciting reserve we will drive northwest for about 5 hours to Huehuetenango, birding along the way.

Huehuetenango is a small city in the highlands of western Guatemala at an elevation of 1,901 m (6,237 ft). Many people of Mayan descent still live in and around Huehuetenango, and the nearby ruins of Zaculeu have become a tourist attraction.

We will have dinner and a good night's rest.

Accommodation: Lodging in Huehuetenango

DAY 4 : Todos Santos/Quetzaltenango

This morning we will transfer to Todos Santos National Park (2 hours) in the quest of Goldman's Warbler, a resident form of the Yellow-rumped Warbler complex.

Todos Santos is a region with a unique landscape in Guatemala, which combines sub-alpine meadows, rocky areas and slow-growing vegetation due to climatic conditions and altitude (3,850 meters). It is one of the geologically oldest areas and has the highest mountain formations of Central America.

This is one of the areas with the greatest biological diversity and endemism in the country, where a number of endangered species of flora and fauna can be seen like Guatemalan Fir, Hartweg's Pine, Huitum Juniper, Maya Mouse and Cuchumatanes Salamander amongst others.

Avian species we will be looking for in this area are Goldman's Warbler, Black-capped Siskin, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Broad-tailed and Amethyst-throated Hummingbird, Pink-headed Warbler, Rufous-browed Wren, Red-tailed and Sharp-shinned Hawk, a resident form of American Kestrel, Common Raven and Savannah Sparrow, along with many more!

In the afternoon we will drive to Quetzaltenango. It is a city in Guatemala's western highlands, located in a mountain valley at an elevation of 2,330 meters (7,640 feet) above sea level. It is set against a backdrop of volcanoes, including towering Santa María with its active Santiaguito lava dome. The city is known for its neoclassical buildings. It is Guatemala's second largest city.

If there is time after check-in at our hotel, we will make our way to the hot springs at Fuentes Georginas, targeting Fulvous Owl and Mexican Whip-poor-will.

Thereafter we will have dinner and overnight at our hotel in Quetzaltenango.

 **Accommodation: Hotel Las Cumbres or similar in Quetzaltenango (B,L,D)**



DAY 5 : Fuentes Georginas and drive to Los Tarrales Nature Reserve

After breakfast we will enjoy a full morning of birdwatching in the very humid sub-tropical forest at Fuentes Georginas. In addition to being a great birding destination Fuentes Georginas is a hot spring with developed pools. Here we hope to spot Wine-throated and Garnet-throated Hummingbird, Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer and Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush.

Afterwards we will drive (about 3 hours) to Los Tarrales Nature Reserve. Los Tarrales ranges from the lowlands at 750 m elevation to the top of the volcano at 3500 m, providing vastly different bird habitats. More than 350 bird species have been recorded in Los Tarrales. The reserve is part of the Atitlán Important Bird Area (IBA GT015), designated by BirdLife International.

The entire altitudinal range is accessible on trails of different difficulty, from easy to very tough hikes. Los Tarrales lodge is located at 750 m and surrounded by the small village, the coffee processing plant, coffee and ornamental flower plantations, and secondary growth.

Several Cinnamon Hummingbirds defend their territories around the lodge and flocks of Pacific, Orange-fronted and Orange-chinned Parakeet often rest in nearby trees. White-bellied Chachalacas are often seen in secondary scrub.

We will have dinner and a good night's sleep at the lodge.

 **Accommodation: Los Tarrales Lodge (B,L,D)**

DAY 6: Los Tarrales Nature Reserve (full day)

After an early morning coffee we will make our way to La Isla area at Volcan Atitlan in the quest of the severely range-restricted Azure-rumped Tanager, Rufous Sabrewing, Emerald-chinned and Blue-tailed Hummingbird, Pacific and Orange-fronted Parakeet and Tody Motmot. The cloud forest of Atitlán volcano is even home to the odd Horned Guan.

We will enjoy a boxed breakfast in a beautiful spot during our birdwatching escapades. Volcan Atitlán is a large, conical, active stratovolcano adjacent to the caldera of Lake Atitlán in the Guatemalan Highlands of the Sierra Madre de Chiapas range. Afternoon birding will be done around La Laguneta; this area offers good opportunity to find species such as White-bellied Chachalaca, Yellow-naped Parrot, Rufous-breasted Spinetail, Prevost's and White-eared Ground-Sparrow, White-faced and Ruddy Quail-Dove, Long-tailed Manakin, Rufous-naped Wren and Cinnamon Hummingbird amongst others.

Fruit feeders at the lodge are visited by Yellow-throated and Scrub Euphonias, Yellow-winged, Summer and Blue-gray Tanager, Spot-breasted, Altamira, and Baltimore Orioles, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Black-headed Saltator, Red-legged Honeycreeper, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Clay-colored Thrush, Blue-crowned Motmot, Melodious Blackbird and many others.

Our dinner and overnight accommodation will again be at the lodge.

🏠 **Accommodation: Los Tarrales Lodge (B,L,D)**

DAY 7: Los Tarrales Nature Reserve and drive to Santiago Atitlan

In the early morning there will be time for coffee and then we will transfer to La Rinconada area where it is possible to find species such as Long-tailed Manakin, Cinnamon Hummingbird and Rufous-naped Wren among others. Together with neighbouring private reserves, Los Tarrales protects the forest of the southern slope of the Atitlán volcano, one of the largest forest fragments remaining on Guatemala's Pacific slope. The area is still home to large raptors such as Black Hawk-Eagle, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, and King Vulture and we will do our best to glance upwards regularly to spot these and others.

Breakfast will again be of the boxed variety, eaten in a nice spot while we look for more species.

Around midday we will transfer to Santiago Atitlan. This beautiful town is situated on Lago de Atitlán, which has an elevation of 5,105 feet (1,556 m) above sea level. The town sits on a bay of the lake between two volcanos : San Pedro rises to 2,846 metres (9,337 ft) west of town and Toliman rises to 3,144 metres (10,315 ft) southeast of town. Volcan Atitlan, with a summit of 3,516 metres (11,535 ft), is further south-southeast of town.

Santiago Atitlán is the home of the Cojolya Weaving Center and Museum. The museum shows the history, tradition, and process of backstrap-loom weaving, and the evolution of the traditional costume of the Tzutujil, the indigenous people of Santiago Atitlán.

We will make our way to our hotel and do some birdwatching around the lake in the afternoon. Depending on the influx of migratory waterbirds, several ducks (Blue-winged

Teal, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Duck, Redhead) can be seen during the northern winter months. Ruddy Duck, Green Heron and Common Gallinule are residents.

We will retire to our comfortable hotel for dinner and a good night's rest.

🏠 **Accommodation: Hotel Posada Santiago (B,L,D)**

DAY 8: Paquisis part of Volcan San Pedro/Santiago Atitlan

We will set out early this morning on a boat ride toward San Pedro La Laguna and continue by pickup truck to the entrance of Paquisis Park. For centuries, San Pedro La Laguna has been inhabited by the Tz'utujil people, and in recent years it has also become a tourist destination for its Spanish language schools, night life, and proximity to the lake and volcanos.

In Paquisis Park we will follow an ancient Maya trading route trail that passes through montane, mixed and cloud forest. We will climb quite a bit in the 6 kilometre (4 mile) hike in the quest of Horned Guan (this is probably the easiest place in Guatemala to see this fascinating bird) and other interesting species. We will look out for Prevost's Ground-sparrow, Amethyst-throated Hummingbird, Slender Sheartail, Rufous and Violet Sabrewing, Bushy-crested Jay, Crested and Highland Guan, Emerald Toucanet, Chestnut-sided Shrike-vireo, Blue-throated Motmot, Belted Flycatcher, Black-capped Swallow, Blue-and-white Mockingbird, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Mountain Trogon, Bar-winged Oriole and Ocellated Quail amongst many others.

We will have some snacks for the route and enjoy lunch at Santiago Atitlan when we return. There might be some time for another birding session in the afternoon around the lake.

Dinner will be at the hotel again, followed by a good night's sleep after our hike today.

🏠 **Accommodation: Hotel Posada Santiago (B,L,D)**

DAY 9: Rey Tepepul, drive to Guatemala City and flight to Flores

We will start our day with a light breakfast and coffee and set off for morning birdwatching at Rey Tepepul Park. This park is located on the western slopes of the Atitlan volcano. This reserve sits at an altitude of 1800 meters above sea level and consists of mostly subtropical humid forest. We will enjoy breathtaking views of the surrounding lakes and volcanic mountain peaks.

Here we will look for the beautiful Resplendent Quetzal, Blue-crowned Chlorophonia, Azure-rumped Tanager, Slender Sheartail, Bar-winged Oriole, Elegant Euphonia, Crested

Guan, Emerald Toucanet, Chestnut-sided Shrike-vireo, White-eared Ground Sparrow, Green-throated Mountaingem, Rusty Sparrow, Black Hawk-Eagle, Pacific Parakeet and many more.

Around midday we will transfer to Guatemala City (3 hours), where we will catch a TAG Airline flight to Mundo Maya International Airport just outside Flores at around 17h15.

Flores is a beautiful town in Guatemala's northern Petén region. It is situated on an island on Lake Petén Itzá, linked by a causeway to the town of Santa Elena. Flores is known as a gateway to the famous nearby Mayan ruins at Tikal, as well as for its proximity to several nearby national parks and nature reserves.

After the one hour flight we will be met by a company representative at Flores airport and transferred to our hotel on Flores Island for dinner and a good night's rest.

🏠 **Accommodation: Hotel Isla de Flores or similar (B,L,D)**

DAY 10: Flores to Las Guacamayas Biological Station

After breakfast we will leave Flores for a trip of approximately 3 hours to Lagune del Tigre National Park in the northwest of the country. During the road trip we will be on the lookout for birds on the open areas alongside the road, as well as on the many ponds and waterbodies. We might see flycatchers, hawks, herons and kingfishers amongst others.

Laguna del Tigre National Park covers an area of 337,899 ha, making it the largest core zone of the Maya Biosphere Reserve and the largest National Park in Guatemala, as well as the largest protected wetland in Central America. The ecosystems of the park include an extensive wetland complex and Mayan jungle with abundant wildlife such as Spider Monkey and Howler Monkey, occasionally Jaguar, Tapir, Crocodile, and of course a great variety of birds. The park is the stronghold of the Guatemalan population of Scarlet Macaws.

After we arrive at the community of Paso Caballos, we will board a boat for a short ride that will take us on the San Pedro River towards Las Guacamayas Biological Station. We will be received by the station staff and they will give us an introduction on the activities of the station, solid waste management, research programs, conservation and social projection. The biological station is a paradise for lovers of nature; the station base is located on the banks of San Pedro River and near the Sacluc stream. More than 300 bird species have been identified at and around the station.

We will enjoy lunch and enjoy some birding afterwards, looking for Ocellated Turkey, Bat Falcon, Black-and-white Owl, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Lovely Cotinga, Rose-throated Tanager, Green-Backed Sparrow and many others.

After dinner we will have a nighttime aquatic excursion, exploring the Sacluc stream with an experienced guide on a boat. With the help of a flashlight, our guide will illuminate the nighttime creatures that live here, including the Morelet's crocodile, bats, nocturnal birds (like Mottled Owl, Guatemalan Screech Owl, Common Pauraque, Yucatan Poorwill, Yucatan Nightjar, Lesser Nighthawk, Short-tailed Nighthawk and Northern Potoo) and more.

Our overnight accommodation is in the comfortable lodge at the station.

🏠 **Accommodation: Guacamayas Biological Station (B,L,D)**

DAY 11: El Peru Archeological Site/Las Guacamayas Biological Station

We will have an early morning coffee (breakfast will be boxed and enjoyed later) and set off on our boat for a birding tour to the archeological site at El Perú. It is located 7 km west of Las Guacamayas biological station. It is a pre-Columbian Maya archeological site occupied during the Pre-classic and Classic cultural chronology periods (roughly 500 BC to 800 AD).

El Perú is great for seeing Scarlet Macaw, with the most important nesting site of this spectacular bird being situated here. The Wildlife Conservation Society of Guatemala maintains a field station in El Perú to monitor and protect the local Scarlet Macaw population. In scrub vegetation along the rivers and in open oak savannah some birds from the Yucatan peninsula can also be observed here, such as Yucatan Woodpecker, Yucatan Nightjar, Caribbean Dove, and Northern Cardinal. We will also look for Agami Heron.

The afternoon will be spent birdwatching around the lodge, both in the grounds and along the trails in the reserve. We will again enjoy dinner and a good night's rest at the station lodge.

🏠 **Accommodation: Guacamayas Biological Station (B,L,D)**

DAY 12: Las Guacamayas to Tikal National Park

After breakfast we will have a long transfer to Tikal National Park, stopping en route in Flores to have lunch.

We might have a quick stop at El Remate to do some birding. El Remate is a small, relaxed little village on the east side of Lago Petén Itza with a tropical savanna climate. The shallow water offers good habitat for waterbirds such as Northern Jacana, American

Coot, Pied-billed Grebe, herons and other shorebirds. Also species usually restricted to coasts, such as Royal and Caspian Tern, and sometimes even Black Skimmer, can be seen at the lake.

We will arrive at Tikal National Park in the late afternoon and enjoy a short sunset tour, before enjoying dinner and settling in for the night.

🏠 Accommodation: Hotel Jungle Lodge (Standard rooms) (B,L,D)

DAY 13: Tikal National Park

We will enjoy a full day of birding and an archeological tour in Tikal National Park today.

Tikal National Park encompasses 575 square kilometres of jungle and thousands of ruined structures. The central part of the ancient city alone contains 3000 buildings and covers about 16 square kilometers. Tikal is also part of the one-million-hectare Maya Biosphere Reserve created in 1990 to protect the dense forests of the Peten, which started to disappear at an alarming rate due to population pressures, illegal logging and slash-and-burn agricultural practices. Archeologists estimate that the Maya settled in the area now known as Tikal in about 900 BC.

Tikal was Guatemala's first National Park (declared in 1955) to preserve the Mayan ruins and the extensive broadleaf forest with its diverse wildlife. UNESCO then declared it a World Cultural and Natural Heritage site in 1979.

Birding in Tikal is great, with it's scenery dominated by impressive Mayan pyramid temples. More than 400 bird species have been reported in Tikal National Park and it's surroundings. We will walk the many wooden stairways and extensive trail network and look for Ocellated turkey, Orange-breasted Falcon, Yucatan Jay, Black Catbird, Rose-throated and Gray-headed Tanager, Great Curassow, White-fronted, Mealy, Red-lored and Brown-hooded Parrot, Crested Eagle, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Keel-billed Toucan, Chestnut-coloured Woodpecker, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Northern Barred, Olivaceous, Ruddy, Tawny-winged, and Ivory-billed Woodcreeper, Red-crowned and Red-throated Ant-Tanager, Tawny-crowned Greenlet, White-bellied Wren, Montezuma Oropendola and many others.

Because hunting is prohibited in Tikal National Park, mammals wander freely between the primary forest and ruins. The most commonly observed animals are White-nosed Coati, Central American Agouti and Gray Fox walking around the park grounds, and Spider Monkeys and Mexican Black Howler Monkeys in the forest canopy.

🏠 Accommodation: Hotel Jungle Lodge (Standard rooms) (B,L,D)

DAY 14: Tikal to Yaxha National Park and flight to Guatemala City

After breakfast we transfer towards Yaxha National Park. Yaxha is a Mesoamerican archaeological site in the northeast of the Petén Basin region, and a former ceremonial centre and city of the pre-Columbian Maya civilization. The ruins fall within the borders of the Yaxha-Nakum-Naranjo National Park.

After our arrival we will start birding from trails and causeways of this fantastic reserve located at the shores of the lake of the same name. The Yaxha Lagoon is one of the most important water systems in the Maya Biosphere.

This park has recorded over 150 bird species, 40 species of mammals, 14 amphibians, 45 reptiles, and 22 species of fish. The birding experience in Yaxhá is as astonishing as in Tikal. From the remarkable solstice observatory pyramid you can observe flocks of Red-lored, White-fronted, Mealy, and White-crowned Parrot flying over the canopy of the rainforest on their way to their nocturnal roost site. We can also find species such as Crane Hawk, Pale-billed Woodpecker, Yellow-tailed Oriole, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher, Brown Jay, Tawny-crowned Greenlet, Blue Bunting and many more.

In the afternoon will we transfer to the Mundo Maya International Airport just outside Flores for our 18h30 flight to Guatemala City. We will be met by a company representative and taken to our comfortable city hotel for our last night of the tour.

🏠 Accommodation: Radisson Hotel or similar comfortable city hotel (B,L,D)

DAY 15: Transfer to airport and flight back home (unguided)

Breakfast will be at the hotel and afterwards we will transfer to the airport in time to catch your international flight back home.

The tour includes:

- 14 nights of lodging as per itinerary sharing room with en-suite facilities
- All meals, from dinner day 1 to breakfast day 15 including one soft drink with meals
- All ground transportation mentioned in the itinerary, 4X4 where is necessary
- Boat transportation for Lake Atitlan and Las Guacamayas Biological Station
- Specialised birdwatching tour guide
- Local tour guides
- Reserve and parks entrance fees
- Round trip airline tickets from Guatemala to Flores via TAG Airline
- Cooler with purified water during the whole trip
- Bird and mammal check list
- Hotel Taxes

The tour does not include:

- Charges for payments with credit card (4%)
- Tour leader
- International flights
- Travel Insurance
- Airport departure tax (Q20 per person each way, about US\$3.00)
- Telephone calls, laundry or any other items of personal nature
- Tips to drivers and guides
- Non specified services

Thank you for choosing Nature Travel Birding.