

Panama

Avian Jewels

March 15 to 29, 2025



Crimson-backed Tanager
© Mike Danzenbaker

SAFARI OVERVIEW

Embark on a special trip in cooperation with our local operator and guide Paco to explore Panama's incredibly accessible biodiversity. Here you can ascend a canopy observation tower for breathtaking views of birds in the rainforest, encounter captivating mammals in the wetlands and rainforest of the Canal Zone, trek along the renowned Pipeline Road to discover avian wonders, search for endemic species in the cool foothills, and explore the picturesque Anton Valley and unique dry tropical forest of Cocles Province, all while experiencing the astounding diversity of flora and fauna in this beautiful country.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Observe flocks of migrating raptors and canopy species from the Canopy Observation Tower.
- Explore diverse ecosystems, from pastures to misty jungles, spotting colorful birds like tanagers, honeycreepers, and hummingbirds.
- Witness the mesmerizing sight of mixed bird flocks following army ant swarms.
- Watch for monkeys, kinkajous, sloths, agoutis, and caimans.
Visit the famous Panama Canal, adding a cultural and historical highlight to your adventure.

LEADERS: Paco Madrigal and Euclides "Kilo" Campos.

DAYS: 15, including estimated travel time.

GROUP SIZE: 10.

COST: \$5,400 per person, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See the *Costs* section on page 5.

Date	Description	Accommodation	Meals
Mar 15	Arrive in Panama City, Panama.	Summit Rainforest Resort, Panama City	D
Mar 16	Explore Soberanía National Park via Pipeline Road and the Rainforest Discovery Center.		B, L, D
Mar 17	Visit Metropolitan Nature Park to search for sloths and birds.		
Mar 18	Drive up through the cool foothills of Cerro Azul and Cerro Jefe to a tanager paradise.		
Mar 19	Make another trip up the famous Pipeline Road for wildlife sightings.		
Mar 20	Bird Semaphore Hill and Ammo Dump.		
Mar 21	Habitat-hop among Plantation Road, Summit Ponds, and Old Gamboa.		
Mar 22	Day trip to Eastern Panama/Bayano Lake.		
Mar 23	Decide as a group what favorite location to revisit.		
Mar 24	Drive to Anton Valley.		Los Mandarinos Hotel, Anton Valley
Mar 25	Discover the bird diversity in the Macho Falls region of the Anton Valley.		
Mar 26	Bird watch on Cerro Gaital and along Mesa Road.		
Mar 27	Explore the wildlife of Anton Valley.		
Mar 28	Survey the tropical dry forests of Cocles Province, and then drive back to Panama City.	Riande Aeropuerto Hotel, Panama City	B, L
Mar 29	Continue on our Costa Rica trip or fly home.		B

OPTIONS

- Continue your journey on our [Costa Rica](#) trip from March 29 to April 13, 2025. Costa Rica's lush landscapes, diverse tropical environments, and rich biodiversity in places like Savegre River Valley, Carara National Park, La Selva Biological Station, and Tortuguero National Park sustain some of the world's most productive ecosystems. Visit this paradise for bird and nature lovers alike.

LEADERS



Paco Madrigal

Paco has over 20 years of experience guiding wildlife, natural history, and birding tours throughout his native Costa Rica. He grew up in Sarapiquí near the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS) Station surrounded by his family's passion for the diverse local plants and animals. He was part of the very first World Wildlife Fund (WWF) intensive Naturalist training program and also worked at La Selva Biological Station before following his dream of starting his own tour company. His deep knowledge and charming personality make him one of our best leaders.

Euclides "Kilo" Campos

Though he holds a Nature Tourism degree from the National University in Panama, is involved with numerous national and international projects such as Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania, has a confirmed record of sighting 778 birds in Panama's 2019 Big Year, and comes fully equipped with Swarovski Optics, Kilo has a natural rapport with visitors as if going birding with a friend. He speaks fluent English and exhibits attentiveness and patience as he enjoys sharing his knowledge and his ability to recognize sounds and identify birds with people from all around the world.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Mar 15 ~ Fly to Panama City, Panama

Fly to Panama City where our local agent will transfer you from the airport to the resort. Many of the best birding areas are within an hour of Panama City, so you'll use the resort as your basecamp for the next several days.

Mar 16 ~ Pipeline Road, Rainforest Discovery Center

Explore world-renowned Pipeline Road, a Panamanian birding hotspot traversing Soberanía National Park. You'll stop along the road to scout the diverging forest trails for songbirds such as trogons, antshrikes, and manakins. When you arrive at the Rainforest Discovery Center, climb the 32-meter-tall Observation Tower for spectacular 360-degree panoramic views of the rainforest canopy, enjoying a unique bird's-eye view. In the distance, you will see the Panama Canal and Centennial Bridge. During this time of year, you may witness the wonders of hawk migration as they funnel northward along this land bridge connecting the Americas. At the base of the tower, enjoy hummingbird feeders frequented by long-billed hermits and white-necked jacobins.



White-necked Jacobin
© Debbie Thompson

Mar 17 ~ Metropolitan Nature Park

Metropolitan Nature Park, conveniently located within the city limits, contains a surprising variety of birds and other wildlife. As you make your way through the forest you will discover hidden avian treasures including lance-tailed manakins, rosy thrush-tanagers, and yellow-rumped caciques. While exploring the forest you will also look for mammals including coatimundi (coati), three-toed sloth, and the endemic and adorable Geoffrey's tamarin – the only tamarin species in Central America – feeding on its favorite fruits of the cecropia tree.

Mar 18 ~ Cerro Azul and Cerro Jefe

Today you travel east of Panama City for about two hours to a protected cloud forest within Chagres National Park. As you summit Cerro Azul and Cerro Jefe, at 2,500ft and 3,300ft above sea level, respectively, you will encounter trees dripping with epiphytes and orchids and discover dazzling new species for the trip. Enveloped in the cool mists, you will encounter a wide array of tanagers among the mixed-species



Three-toed Sloth
©Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

flocks; if lucky, you will see emerald, speckled, rufous-winged, golden-hooded, silver-throated, bay-headed, hepatic, olive, and black-and-yellow tanagers! The ornate hawk-eagle inhabits this forest, as well as the scale-crested pygmy-tyrant and the endemic stripe-cheeked woodpecker.

Mar 19 ~ Pipeline Road

You will spend a second day at Pipeline Road to revisit favorite wildlife hotspots and look for species you missed on your earlier visit.

Mar 20 ~ Semaphore Hill and Ammo Dump

At Semaphore Hill, wind along a jungle road in search of wildlife in this section of Soberanía National Park. Army ants commonly swarm here, drawing in mixed flocks of antbirds and woodcreepers. This area hosts other forest bird species such as the slaty antwren, great tinamou, and the spectacular rufous motmot. You may also encounter troupes of white-faced capuchins as you travel through these forests.

The pond at Ammo Dump is an excellent place for spotting waterbirds, including resident rufescent tiger-heron and American pygmy kingfisher. With some extra searching, you may encounter the striated heron or the capped heron. The surrounding fields and trees contain raptors, landbirds, and shorebirds, including collared forest falcon, Southern lapwing, and yellow-tailed oriole.

Mar 21 ~ Plantation Road, Summit Ponds, and Old Gamboa

Today you will visit a variety of habitats with wonderful opportunities for spotting a plethora of wildlife. Plantation Road runs through both old-growth and secondary forest, and its relative lack of undergrowth increases your chances of viewing birds of the forest floor such as tinamous and the aptly named leaf-tossers. You may also encounter avian jewels such as the blue-crowned motmot, golden-crowned spadebill, and white-breasted wood-wren.

As you travel along the access road to Summit ponds, you have a chance to see the gray-headed chachalaca, buff-throated saltator, and other edge-associated birds. The ponds are home to an assortment of herons and kingfishers; all six species of kingfishers of the Americas have been spotted here! Scrub and grassland habitats along Old Gamboa Road contain more open-habitat species, including kiskadees and manakins.

Mar 22 ~ Day trip to Bayano Lake in Eastern Panama

During this day trip towards the east, you will visit Eastern Pacific lowland forests around Bayano Lake for bird specialties such as the black antshrike and the dazzling orange-crowned oriole.

Mar 23 ~ Free day to revisit a favorite location

As a group, you will decide which locations you would like to revisit for birds or mammals that you missed before or would like to see again!



Rufous Motmot
©Mike Danzenbaker

Mar 24 ~ Drive to Anton Valley

Traveling into cloud forest country, discover exciting new flora and fauna while enjoying cooler temperatures and misty mountain landscapes. Along the way, look for colorful birds, including the flame-rumped tanager, blue-gray tanager, and red-crowned ant-tanager. The vocal and acrobatic chestnut-headed oropendula hang from high-up branches, swinging among their colony members and pendulous nests. In the afternoon, you will settle into the lodge and have time to explore this quaint mountain village nestled in the crater of an extinct volcano.

Mar 25 ~ Anton Valley Birding, Macho Falls

Spend the day scouting the lively forests around Macho Falls. Enjoy the breathtaking cloud forest and impressive diversity of wildlife as you seek the black-chested jay, white-throated robin, and other flora and fauna of the region.

Mar 26 ~ Cerro Gaital and Mesa Road

As you ascend the mountain to Cerro Gaital, look out for the shiny cowbird and streaked saltator. With this rise in altitude, you have the opportunity to see the orange-bellied trogon and blue-throated toucanet. You may encounter many of the resident raptors, such as the black hawk-eagle, gray hawk, and barred forest falcon. Much of the day will be spent enjoying nature along Mesa Road. With its mix of habitats, from forest to pasture, you will see many birds!

Mar 27 ~ Anton Valley Birding

Spend the day enjoying the incredible flora and fauna of Anton Valley. The route will depend on the weather and your preferences. The group may choose to journey to the Altos de Maria highlands or to traverse the birding trails closer to the hotel. Wherever you travel, you are sure to see a spectacular variety of wildlife.



Swainson's Hawk
©Bill Page

Mar 28 ~ Tropical Dry Forests of Cocles Province

On your drive back to Panama City, spend a good part of the day exploring the dry tropical forests of the Pacific coast lowlands. Some of the spectacular inhabitants of this area include the lesser yellow-headed vulture, the sapphire-throated hummingbird, and the rare Veraguan mango, a splendidly colored small hummingbird of Panama and Costa Rica. You will end the day at the hotel in Panama City, where you can enjoy dinner on your own at the hotel or in Panama City.

Mar 29 ~ Join our [Costa Rica](#) trip or depart for home

Fly straight to San José to join our [Costa Rica](#) trip. Or depart for home.

COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

Cost

Type	Cost per Person
Trip Cost, double occupancy	\$5,400
Single Supplement	\$1,200

Costs are per person, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See *Included* and *Not Included* sections for more details.

Payment Schedule

Payment	Due Date	Amount per Person
Deposit	Due now to reserve your space	\$500
Final	October 10, 2024	Remaining Balance

Payments are due based on the schedule above. All reservations require a deposit to confirm reservation of your space.

Cancellations

Until the Final Payment due date, deposits are refundable except for a cancellation fee of \$150 per person, which can be applied toward another trip if reserved within six months of the cancelled trip's departure date. Cancellations are non-transferrable. No refunds are given after the Final Payment due date.

Included

- Carbon offsets for the duration of this trip.
- All leaders, transport, park entry fees, and permits for all activities unless described as optional.
- Transfers from the Panama City Airport to the Summit Rainforest Resort on March 15 and from the Riande Aeropuerto Hotel to the Panama City Airport, via complimentary hotel airport shuttle, on March 29.
- Accommodations for the nights of March 15 through March 28.
- Meals from dinner on March 15 through breakfast on March 29, except meals listed in *Not Included* section.
- Panama Canal visit during one of the days you are staying in Panama City.
- Gratuities for group meals.
- Water throughout the trip.
- Trip Planning Materials – information about entry requirements, flights, packing, gratuities, etc.

Not Included

- Carbon offsets for your flights to/from this trip.
- All airfare, airport and departure taxes, and excess baggage fees. Round-trip airfare is approximately \$550 to \$1,410 between the US and Panama City, depending on origin.
- Passport and visa fees.
- COVID tests.
- Dinner on March 28.
- Divergent airport transfers (arranged by us) and extra hotel nights.
- Gratuities – tipping is always discretionary. However, we suggest budgeting about \$15 to \$25 per participant per day for 14 days with our leaders (about \$210 to \$350 total per participant).
- [Emergency evacuation insurance and trip cancellation insurance](#).
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone calls, medical costs or hospitalization, room service, alcoholic and other beverages, items not on the regular menu, etc. If you have special dietary needs, please indicate them on your Reservation Form.

SIGN UP

Please contact us first to check availability, reserve your space, and obtain Reservation Materials. To confirm your reservation, we require a deposit and signed form from each participant.

[Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris](#)

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OTHER DETAILS

Climate

Temperatures vary greatly. The Pacific coast is often hot, while the cloud forests can be surprisingly cool. In March, the average daily temperature in the Panama Canal Zone and cloud forest of the Anton Valley are in the mid-80s°F (28°C), with highs up to low 90s°F (33°C); the evenings are typically in the low 70s°F (22°C). Although March is considered the dry season, it can still rain.

Fitness Level

Minimal fitness level required. You may walk two to three miles per day at a slow pace, stopping for observation and photography. Most walking is on relatively level ground or gradual slopes. Please contact us if you have any health concerns that may make this trip challenging.

When you fill in your Reservation Form, please answer the following:

1. Describe how often you walk for two to three miles.
2. Tell us how often you carry the same gear you plan to take out in your day pack (photography gear, binoculars, etc.).
3. Tell us how you've managed walking in hot and humid conditions.

Transportation

You'll travel in spacious air-conditioned vehicles.

Flights

Detailed logistical information is included in the Trip Planning Materials we will send you.

Flights you book

- Arrive in Panama City, Panama (PTY) by 4:00pm on March 15.
- Depart from Panama City, Panama (PTY) after 12:00am on March 29. **If you are continuing on our [Costa Rica trip](#)**, see the *Flights* section in its itinerary for departure information.

Terms and Conditions

Read our current [Terms and Conditions](#).

Conservation

Our company ethos has always regarded conservation as inseparable from responsible tourism. We struggle with the dilemma that traveling worldwide expends climate-changing carbon. However, we wholeheartedly

believe that traveling with us will cultivate your passion for conserving our beautiful world while stimulating each destination's local economy. We encourage you to explore the various ways in which Cheesemans' operates within this context:

- **Cheesemans' Trips are [Carbon Neutral](#).**
- **Offsetting your Travel to/from our Trip:** We ask you to pledge to offset the carbon emissions for your travel to and from our trips. You can purchase offsets with most airlines (Delta includes them automatically), use our handy [carbon calculator](#) and donate to Sustainable Travel International, or contribute to your favorite offsetting organization.