



# The Best of Panama

*February 4-14, 2025*

*Tentative Itinerary\**

## **February 4, 2025 - Welcome to Panama!**

Recommended flights will arrive at the international airport in Panama City, Panama, where you will be met by Dan and Candace, your Bird Alliance of Oregon guides. Transfer to hotel. Depending on time of arrival, you may get to see your first birds of Panama on the drive.

**Lodging:** [Riande Airport Hotel](#)

## **February 5, 6 and 7, 2025 - Travel to the small town of Metetí**

Metetí is a small rural community in the tropical lowlands, near the dense and mountainous Darien Gap where the Pan-American highway ends (then continues in Colombia.) Our small hotel will be nothing fancy, but places us in a great position for the next day's adventure. The drive here from Panama City will take most of the day, but we'll break it up with numerous fun stops for birding and a traditional Panamanian lunch.

The next day will be dedicated to a grand adventure in search of the magnificent Harpy Eagle. We'll rise well before dawn, leaving at 0430am, and drive to Yaviza, the last town at the end of the Pan-American Highway before the Darien Gap. Here we'll take a short restroom break and then head to a boat launch, where we'll board a small boat for a 15-20 minute ride on the Rio Chucunaque. On the river, we might find Southern Lapwing, Wattled Jacana, Cocoli and Capped Herons, and Greater Ani! We will disembark at a small village and begin our adventurous trek. We'll hike about 3.5 miles over fairly flat but sometimes uneven terrain until we reach the site where we will look for the Harpy Eagle. We will return to Metetí in the early afternoon for a well-earned siesta.

While in the region, we hope to find regional specialties such as Bicolored and White-headed Wrens and Black Oropendola, all at the northern edge of their natural distribution. Besides a plethora of birds, we may also encounter white-lipped peccaries, black-headed spider monkeys and other fun megafauna.

**Lodging:** Hotel Aruba

## **February 8 and 9, 2025 - Travel west to the small mountain resort of El Valle**

We leave Metetí fairly early and drive back across eastern Panama to the small resort town of El Valle de Anton at about 2000' elevation. This picturesque village is located inside the caldera of the now extinct El Valle volcano, which is the easternmost volcano of the Central American Volcanic Arc. This is the end of a volcanic isthmus that rose from the sea a mere 3 million years ago to form the land bridge connecting two continents. The geologic link allowed the exchange overland of mammals, birds and plants, and contributed to Panama's incredible biological diversity. In this hilly terrain, cloud forests cover the slopes of the caldera.

While walking the wide paths and some forested trails of the area, we should find a nice selection of colorful tropical birds that could include Collared Trogon, Northern Emerald Toucanet, Tawny-capped Euphonia, and Silver-throated, Bay-headed, Plain-colored and Tawny-crested Tanagers. With a little luck we may find the White-tipped Sicklebill, a hummingbird that specializes in feeding on the nectar of certain Heliconia flowers.

Sloths and monkeys are likely encounters, and we'll take an optional night walk here, looking for bats, herptiles and nocturnal mammals as well!

**Lodging:** [Golden Frog Inn](#)

## **February 10, 11 and 12, 2025 - Birding near Gamboa and Panama City**

The numerous parks and reserves that surround the Panama canal protect important lowland forest and the watershed that supplies water to the canal as well as the city. We will explore the Soberania National Park and the famous-among-birders Pipeline Road, a service road constructed during World War II to host a nearby pipeline that brought fuel across the isthmus. You may see remnants of the old pipeline if you peer into the forest. The road affords great access to different parts of the rainforest and we'll likely make two visits to explore different parts of this famous hotspot.

In multiple years, this area held the record for number of species recorded in a 24-hour period. A few of the species we hope to find on a great day of birding include Greater Ani, Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Black-tailed Trogon, Black-breasted Puffbird, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Velvety Manakin, and Blue Cotinga!

The nearby Rainforest Discovery Center has excellent hummingbird feeders where up to 14 species can be seen including Black-throated Mango, White-vented Plumeleteer, and Snowy-bellied, Sapphire-throated, Blue-chested and Violet-bellied Hummingbirds. A few of the mammals we hope to encounter while exploring the various habitats of the area include Mantled Howler Monkey, Geoffrey's Tamarin and Lesser Capybara.

**Lodging:** [Radisson Summit](#)

**February 13, 2025**

On our final full day in Panama we will visit the Panama Canal Museum and the famous Miraflores Locks, which allows massive ships from around the world to transit to and from the Pacific Ocean after passing under the Bridge of the Americas which links the two continents. We will also spend some time in the old city, enjoying the classic architecture in the beautiful Casco Viejo district of Panama City. We arrive late afternoon to check into our lodgings, then we'll head out to enjoy our last group meal together and share stories of our wonderful adventure!

**Lodging: Riande Airport Hotel**

**February 14, 2025 - Flights home or to respective destinations**