



Great Basin: Desert Oases to Montane Specialties

September 7-14, 2025

Tentative Itinerary

Day 1 – Sunday, September 7, Salt Lake City

Arrive at the Salt Lake City International Airport to meet your trip leaders. If time allows, we will bird a destination or two on the Great Salt Lake that may bring sightings of **Snowy Plover, Franklin's Gull, and Black-chinned Hummingbird** before settling into our hotel.

Lodging: Hampton Inn & Suites, Farmington, UT

Day 2 – Monday, September 8, Great Salt Lake

Our focus today will be on the Great Salt Lake, the largest saltwater lake in the Western Hemisphere and eight largest terminal lake in the world. **Millions of migratory shorebirds and waterfowl** use the wetlands on the eastern and northern edges of the lake. A visit to Antelope Island State Park could turn up **Chukar, Broad-tailed Hummingbird**, as well as thousands of **Wilson's Phalarope** and **Eared Grebes**. Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge will have plenty of shorebirds and we could also spot **Black Tern, Short-eared Owl, and maybe a Ferruginous Hawk**.

Lodging: Hampton Inn & Suites Farmington, UT

Day 3 – Tuesday, September 9, Great Basin National Park

We will make our way west today, going deeper into the Great Basin. But first, we will make a stop at Utah Lake in search of **Semipalmated Plover, Solitary Sandpiper, and Great-tailed Grackle**. We should arrive at the Hidden Canyon Retreat with enough time for some late afternoon birding in the hopes of finding **Pinyon Jays**. Some early



night birding could turn up **Common Poorwill** and **Western Screech-Owl** as well as some of the darkest skies in the country, making for some great stargazing.

Lodging: Hidden Canyon Retreat, Baker, NV

Day 4 – Wednesday, September 10, Great Basin National Park

We will visit the Wheeler Peak Bristlecone Pine Grove with a **2.8-mile roundtrip** hike at 10,000 feet of elevation. Great Basin Bristlecone Pines are the oldest non-cloning species on the planet and live in harsh environments just below treeline that give them twisted trunks. We will take our time on the hike in search of **American Three-toed Woodpecker, Clark's Nutcracker, and Black Rosy-Finch**. Other spots in the park could turn up **Dusky Grouse** and **Red Crossbills**.

Lodging: Hidden Canyon Retreat, Baker, NV

Day 5, Thursday, September 11, Steptoe Valley

We will tour Lehman Caves in Great Basin National Park, the longest cave system in Nevada, to see the shield formations, stalactites, and stalagmites before heading to Steptoe Valley. We will have a good chance of seeing **Pronghorn**, the fastest land mammal in the Americas, as well as **Mustangs** in the valley. **Elk** could be possible during our venture into the surrounding mountains but are difficult to see. Birds in the area could include **Horned Lark, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, and Prairie Falcon**.

Lodging: La Quinta Inn & Suites, Ely, NV

Day 6, Friday, September 12, Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge

We will visit the Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge, a desert oasis with over 17,000 acres of marsh in its 40,000 acres. Birds we may see include **Sandhill Crane, Loggerhead Shrike, Sage Thrasher, Mountain Bluebird, Vesper Sparrow**, and if we are really lucky, **Greater Sage-Grouse**. A stop in the Ruby Mountains could turn up **Juniper Titmouse** and **Mountain Chickadee**.

Lodging: Best Western, Elko, NV



Day 7, Saturday, September 13, Lamoille Canyon, Ruby Mountains

A very early morning will have us hiking in the dark (well worth it!) the 1.8 miles and 900 feet of elevation gain to Island Lake so we can be in place to scan the cirque for **Himalayan Snowcock**, which roost on cliffs and move to feed at lower elevations usually before sunrise. Along the way, we will hear songbirds waking in the bushes around us and see the sun rise from the “Yosemite of Nevada,” Lamoille Canyon. The picturesque Lamoille Canyon is glacially carved and could have **Dusky Grouse, White-throated Swift, Lewis’s Woodpecker and Golden Eagle**. We will bird our way down the Canyon before returning to our lodging early-afternoon for a much-needed rest.

Lodging: Best Western, Elko, NV

Day 8, Sunday, September 14, Bonneville Salt Flats

We will have a more leisurely morning than the previous day before returning to Salt Lake City for flights home. We will make a stop at the 12-by-5-mile Bonneville Salt Flats where the flat surface has held several of the land-speed records. Depending on our timing, we may have a birding stop along the way.

Trip Leaders

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