Eagle-Eye Tours

Belize & Tikal Itinerary

Link: Belize & Tikal

Tour Overview

Our Belize & Tikal birding tour combines outstanding tropical birding with beautiful landscapes and the spectacular Maya ruins of Tikal. We explore the rainforests of Jade Jungle, the pine forests of Mountain Pine Ridge, the wetlands and Yucatán-influenced pine savanna of Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary, and the magnificent forests and temples of Tikal National Park.

Along the way, we search for Keel-billed Toucans, trogons, puffbirds, hummingbirds, King Vulture and Ocellated Turkey. At Crooked Tree, boat trips through lagoons and waterways offer opportunities for Agami and Boat-billed Herons, Sungrebe, Jabiru and kingfishers, while the pine savanna supports regional specialties such as Yucatan Jay and Yucatan Woodpecker.

At Tikal, ancient Maya temples rise above vast tropical forest, where we search for forest specialties including the Orange-breasted Falcon.

With excellent birding, comfortable lodge stays, abundant wildlife and the fascinating history of Tikal, this tour showcases the natural and cultural richness of Belize and northern Guatemala.

Itinerary

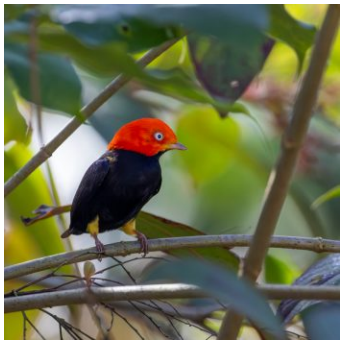
Day 1: Arrival in Belize City

Our Belize & Tikal birding tour begins in Belize City. We gather for an evening meal and welcome at our hotel, with time to meet our guides and fellow travellers before our birding adventure begins. Night: Belize City.

Day 2: Monkey Bay & Maya Mountains Foothills

We begin with some birding around Belize City, where the coast and flowering gardens offer our first introduction to Belize's birdlife. We may encounter Magnificent Frigatebird, Sandwich and Royal Terns, Cinnamon Hummingbird, orioles and a variety of wintering shorebirds and songbirds. Leaving the city, we travel inland, stopping at Monkey Bay Wildlife Sanctuary for our first taste of tropical forest birding. Here we begin encountering characteristic Neotropical families such as honeycreepers, woodcreepers, motmots and hummingbirds. By late afternoon, we reach Jade Jungle Resort, situated on a private reserve in the foothills of the Maya Mountains. Surrounded by lush tropical forest, the lodge grounds themselves offer excellent birding and a wonderful introduction to the days ahead. Night: Jade Jungle Resort.

Days 3 & 4: Maya Mountains Foothills & Mountain Pine Ridge



We have two days to explore the remarkably diverse habitats surrounding Jade Jungle and nearby Mountain Pine Ridge. The forest and trails around Jade Jungle can be wonderfully productive. We search for mixed flocks and forest specialties such as Tody Motmot, White-whiskered Puffbird, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, trogons, woodcreepers and Red-capped Manakin, while hummingbirds frequent flowering vegetation around the lodge. Black Howler Monkeys may provide an early-morning wake-up call, and optional night walks can reveal Common Pauraque and other nocturnal wildlife. A day trip to Mountain Pine Ridge provides a dramatic change of habitat as we explore open pine forest, broadleaf valleys and scenic overlooks. Raptors are a particular attraction, with opportunities for King Vulture, White Hawk and Bat Falcon, while the pine forests support birds such as Acorn Woodpecker and Grace's Warbler. We also visit hummingbird feeders, where an impressive variety of species may include Violet Sabrewing, Wedge-tailed Sabrewing and Green-breasted Mango. Night: Jade Jungle Resort.

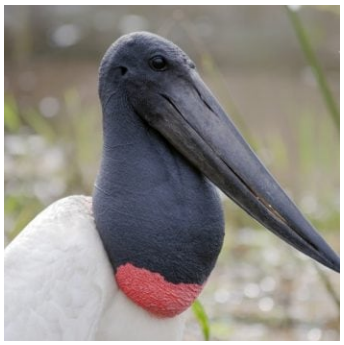
Day 5: Travel to Tikal

After some final birding around Jade Jungle, we travel west toward Guatemala. Depending on timing and local conditions, stops along the way may include archaeological sites, roadside wetlands and other productive birding areas. After crossing the border, wetlands can provide a change of pace, with possibilities including Wood Stork, Roseate Spoonbill, Northern Jacana and Black-bellied Whistling-Duck. We continue to Tikal National Park, arriving in time for our first introduction to its remarkable wildlife. Ocellated Turkeys may already be wandering the lodge grounds as dusk approaches. Night: Tikal National Park.

Day 6 & 7: Tikal National Park

Few birding experiences compare with exploring tropical forest among the magnificent Maya ruins of Tikal. Trails wind beneath towering forest before emerging among temples and plazas, where views over an almost unbroken canopy provide excellent opportunities for watching raptors and other canopy birds. Ocellated Turkey is one of Tikal's signature birds, while Great Curassow, Keel-billed Toucan, trogons, puffbirds, woodcreepers, antbirds and mixed-species flocks are among the many possibilities. One of our most anticipated birds is the spectacular Orange-breasted Falcon. We also spend time with a local guide learning about the history and culture of this extraordinary ancient Maya city while exploring its temples and plazas. Along the way, we keep an eye out for Central American Spider Monkeys, Black Howler Monkeys, White-nosed Coatis and other wildlife. Night: Tikal National Park.

Day 8: Tikal to Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary



After a final morning at Tikal, we return to Belize and travel to Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. This is one of our longer travel days, but birding stops along the way help break up the journey. By late afternoon we arrive at our lodge, set beside the extensive lagoons and wetlands of Crooked Tree. Birding begins right outside our rooms, with waterbirds, swallows, orioles, flycatchers and other species frequenting the lodge grounds and surrounding community. Night: Bird's Eye View Lodge.

Days 9 & 10: Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary

We spend two days exploring the lagoons, waterways, forests and Yucatán-influenced pine savanna of Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. Boat trips through the lagoon and quiet creeks are a highlight. The wetlands support an impressive diversity of waterbirds, and we search for specialties such as Agami and Boat-billed Herons, Sungrebe, Jabiru, Black-collared Hawk, Snail Kite and American Pygmy Kingfisher. Crocodiles, turtles and other wildlife may also be encountered along the waterways. Away from the water, we explore the distinctive pine savanna for birds with strong Yucatán affinities, including Yucatan Jay, Yucatan Woodpecker and Yucatan Flycatcher, along with parrots, pygmy-owls and wintering songbirds. There is also time to enjoy the excellent birding around the lodge—or simply relax and take in this beautiful setting. Night: Bird's Eye View Lodge.

Day 11: Departure

We have time for one final morning of birding around Crooked Tree before returning to Belize City International Airport, where our Belize & Tikal birding tour concludes. We plan to arrive at approximately 11:00 am, allowing participants to book flights departing after 1:00 pm.

What to Expect

Overview

On our Belize & Tikal birding tour we spend the more pleasant parts of the day, morning and late afternoon, birding and exploring each area we visit. We start each day early to take advantage of high bird activity during the first few daylight hours. Early afternoons will be for siestas or gentle birding around the lodges. Each evening, the list of birds and other wildlife will be reviewed, and plans for the next day discussed.

Food and Accommodation

Most meals will be in the lodge restaurants; we have packed lunches on those days when we transfer between sites.

Driving

Driving is moderate, with travel between Belize City, the Maya Mountains, Tikal and Crooked Tree. Most days include shorter transfers combined with birding stops, while the journey from Tikal to Crooked Tree is a longer travel day.

Walking

There is a lot of walking on this tour. Most trails are relatively easy and level. The longest/most challenging walks are in Tikal, especially the walk to see the ruins, which is ~6km (~4 miles) return and involves some inclines and steps. Combined, we can sometimes walk 10-12 km (6-8 miles) in a day while in Tikal. In other areas, most of the longer walks are 2-4 km (1-3 miles) return on relatively flat trails. Trails can be muddy.

Weather

The weather should be warm and pleasant, becoming hot by mid-day. Some rain is to be expected, and a waterproof jacket or umbrella is recommended. Bring mosquito repellant – mosquitos are not usually a problem but can be a nuisance after rain.

Boat Trips

We take two boat excursions in Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. They are each 2-3 hours long on a calm lagoon. Please note that there are not washroom facilities onboard.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes

- All accommodations
- All meals and soft drinks
- Airport Transfers
- Ground transportation & boat rides
- All park/ tour fees
- 1 guide with 4 - 8 participants, 2 guides with 9 - 12 participants

Tour Price Does Not Include

- Flights to and from Belize
- Items of a personal nature
- Travel Insurance
- Alcoholic Beverages