

Southeast Arizona Itinerary

[Link: Southeast Arizona](#)

Tour Overview

Southeast Arizona birding tour highlights borderland specialties like Elegant Trogon, Spotted Owl, Rose-throated Becard, Mexican Chickadee, Thick-billed Kingbird and many more!

This tour is timed for the start of the monsoon season, known also as the second spring; the desert blossoms at this time, and it is the best season to find many of the hummingbirds and other specialties for which the region is famous.

Coinciding with afternoon rains, several species like Varied Bunting and Botteri's Sparrow initiate their breeding season during the monsoons and are more visible than at other times of year.

The mountain canyons we visit are gorgeous places with plenty of opportunity to soak in the visually stunning scenery.

This tour covers a variety of habitats and elevations and should tally over 150 species of birds. In addition to the avian spectacle that is southern Arizona, this is a naturalist's playground with lots of viewing opportunities for mammals, herps, butterflies and flowers.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival and Orientation



Our Southeast Arizona birding tour begins in Tucson for our evening meet & greet dinner. Night in Tucson.

Day 2: Mount Lemmon

We travel up a paved road to the pine forests on nearby Mount Lemmon for excellent views of the city and desert below. We will also have a chance to see our first species of these forests. Night in Tucson.

Day 3: Tucson area-Saguaro National Park



On our next morning, we search the Sonoran Desert's Giant Saguaro cactus landscape for lowland birds such as Gilded Flicker, Gila Woodpecker, Costa's Hummingbird, Verdin, Cactus Wren, Black-throated Sparrow and Phainopepla. Afterwards, in the heat of the day, we drive to higher elevations of the Chiricahua Mountains where we stay for the next few days. Night in Portal.

Days 4 & 5: Portal/Chiricahua Mountains



The Chiricahuas are a very special place. The spectacular vistas; the diverse habitats of deserts, canyons, and mountain highlands; and the rich history of the area all combine to make this a major highlight of any trip to southeast Arizona. The arid grasslands and deserts are good habitat for Prairie Falcon, Scaled Quail, Burrowing Owl, Juniper Titmouse, Bendire's and Crissal Thrashers and Swainson's Hawk. Cave Creek Canyon is just simply a joy to visit, and we explore the roadways and trails of this marvelous canyon. The wild and beautiful mountains are the only spot in the US one can reliably find Mexican Chickadees! The Chiricahuas are a treasure trove of amazing birds, with superb Elegant Trogons; several hummingbirds including Blue-throated, Rivoli's and Broad-tailed; and Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers. In the high-elevation pinelands we look for specialties including Arizona Woodpecker, Greater Pewee, Pygmy Nuthatch, Yellow-eyed Junco, Hepatic Tanager and Short-tailed Hawk. Flocks of migrant warblers such as Townsend's and Hermit mix with local breeders such as Olive, Grace's, Virginia's, and Red-faced Warblers and Painted Redstarts. Other goodies we should encounter include Mexican Jay, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Western Bluebird, Scott's and Hooded Orioles, and Black-headed and Evening Grosbeaks. At some point we try for some nighttime birds like owls and goatsuckers, as well as noting any of the fascinating snakes, lizards and toads that appear in the evening. Nights in Portal.

Days 6 & 7: Huachuca Mountains



We spend a final morning in Portal, looking for species we might have missed, before heading towards our next mountain range, the Huachuca Mountains. This is a great area for fantastic birds like Lucifer Hummingbird, Buff-breasted Flycatcher, Red-faced Warbler and Spotted Owl, and we spend two exciting days exploring this delightful mountain range. The lush mesquite grasslands here are inhabited by Botteri's, Cassin's and Rufous-crowned Sparrows. Nearby mountains are cloaked in pine/oak woodlands that host a diverse array of woodland birds - Arizona Woodpecker, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Bridled Titmouse, Virginia's and Black-throated Gray Warblers, Hepatic Tanager, Plumbeous and Hutton's Vireos, Spotted Towhee and Red Crossbill. Overhead we look for Zone-tailed Hawk, Northern Goshawk and Golden Eagle. Some very special birds we attempt to find include a loose colony of Buff-breasted Flycatchers, Eastern Bluebird, Spotted Owl, and Lucifer and White-eared Hummingbirds at hummingbird feeders. Being so close to the Mexican border, these mountains have a long history of producing some real rarities. A few of the rarer species that have been somewhat regular the last few years include Tufted Flycatcher, Plain-capped Starthroat, Flame-colored Tanager and Rufous-capped Warbler - we will certainly try to find any of these species if they are present. We also have another chance here for Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher and Greater Pewee. Nights in Sierra Vista.

Day 8: Patagonia



Today, we visit the Patton Center, one of the best places in the US to see Violet-crowned Hummingbirds. We should also find Broad-billed, Black-chinned and Anna's Hummingbirds, along with Yellow-breasted Chat, Bronzed Cowbird, Hooded and Bullock's Orioles, and Lesser Goldfinch. The adjacent Sonora Creek Nature Conservancy is an excellent location for Thick-billed Kingbird and the hills nearby can be productive for Montezuma Quail and Black-capped Gnatcatcher. We also visit the rugged and exceptionally beautiful Atascosa Highlands to track down Five-striped Sparrows and Buff-collared Nightjars, both species that just barely slip over the Mexican border into the US. We are always on the lookout for Gray Hawk, Northern Beardless Tyrannulet, Varied Bunting, three species of Myiarchus flycatchers (Ash-throated, Brown-crested, and Dusky-capped), Vermilion Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo, and Lucy's Warbler. Night in Green Valley.

Day 9: Atascosa Highlands/Tubac



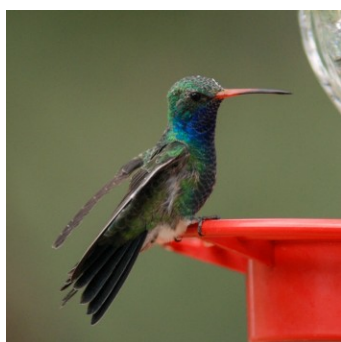
Today we work our way up to the Santa Rita Mountains. Rose-throated Becards have been found annually for a few years along the Santa Cruz River in Tubac, and we will certainly try for this strange sub-tropical bird. We should have time today to track down a species or two that we might have missed up to now. Night in Green Valley.

Day 10: Santa Rita Mountains and return to Tucson



We spend our final days in the Santa Rita Mountains, birding legendary Madera Canyon. This scenic canyon is full of birds like Painted Redstart, Arizona Woodpecker, Whiskered Screech-Owls and Rivoli's (Magnificent) Hummingbirds, and it can be another excellent spot for Trogons. Climbing into the Santa Ritas, we stop at lowland washes and dry watercourses, outstanding localities for desert scrub species where we look for Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Pyrrhuloxia, Bell's Vireo, Rufous-winged Sparrow, Canyon Wren, and Greater Roadrunner. Night in Tucson.

Day 11: Departure



Our Southeast Arizona birding tour ends today, you can depart anytime today.

What to Expect

Overview

The Southeast Arizona tour is a moderately paced birding tour. We go birding early most days to beat the heat, and spend most of our time looking for birds.

Food

We generally have breakfast at the hotel before we head out for the day. Sometimes we will have optional pre-breakfast walks. We often take a picnic lunch in the field, but will occasionally stop at a restaurant for lunch. Dinner is usually at the lodge or a nearby restaurant. Each evening after dinner we compile the day's checklist, review the day's activities, birds, mammals and other observations, and plan the next day's activities.

Accommodation

Accommodations during the stay are basic, and vary from comfortable three star hotels to rustic birding lodges.

Walking

Most of the walking on this tour is easy, but there are a few steeper hikes with uneven surfaces. Participants must be able to walk for 2-3 hours for up to 5km (3 miles).

Driving

Most days have a small to moderate amount of driving. There will be two longer drives between towns, but we make several rest and birding stops along the way.

Climate

The temperatures will be mostly warm to hot. The maximum elevation on this tour is 2,000m (8000 ft). July in Arizona features an average high temperature of 41° C (105.9° F) and an average low of 27° C (81° F.) We should generally expect a little bit of rain this time of year, so a light rain jacket is recommended.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes

- All accommodation (Good, comfortable)
- All meals
- Ground transportation (typically 12-passenger vans)
- One EET guide with 4 - 8 participants, 2 guides with 9 - 12 participants in 2 vehicles
- All park, conservation and entrance fees

Tour Price Does Not Include

- Flights to and from start/ end location
 - Travel Insurance
 - Items of a personal nature
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