Eagle-Eye Tours

Ultimate British Columbia: Boreal Itinerary

Link: Ultimate British Columbia: Boreal

Tour Overview

This short tour to northeastern BC completes the Ultimate British Columbia birding tour! This takes you to a region of the province that shares more birds with areas to the east than the rest of the province.

Here we walk the mixed boreal forests for a number of warblers, including Ovenbird, Magnolia Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Black-and-White Warbler, and more. We also hope to find American Three-toed or Black-backed Woodpecker in the coniferous forests. Upland Sandpiper will also be a target in some of the open areas.

If road and snow conditions allow we will venture to Pink Mountain, an isolated mountain range north of Fort St. John. Here we have the best chance to find Rock Ptarmigan in BC and will look for other tundra species such as Horned Lark and American Pipit. The views across the boreal forest below are also spectacular!

Join us on this exciting tour to another part of this very diverse province!

Itinerary

Day 1: Travel to Fort St. John

Our Ultimate British Columbia: Boreal birding tour begins in Fort St. John after the final morning of our Coast & Grasslands tour. We will gather in the evening for dinner to begin our exploration of the pleasant countryside, forests and wetlands of the Peace River valley. If our guides arrive early enough there may be an opportunity for some birding in the afternoon before dinner. Night in Fort St. John.

Days 2 - 4: Peace River area

On our first morning we begin in earnest to track down boreal songbirds in the mixed woodlands near Fort St. John. The songs of “eastern” birds like Blue-headed Vireo, Black-throated Green and Cape May Warbler seem out of place here, yet they are three of many “Peace River specialties” that cross over from the boreal forest only in this part of the province. This part of the tour will focus on seeing as many of these species as possible and if the timing is right we’ll catch the shorebird migration in prime season, with eastern species like White-rumped Sandpiper a possibility. Beatton Provincial Park with its numerous boreal species will offer an exciting morning of birding. Blue Jays, Common Grackles, Broad-winged Hawks and other raucous birds welcome us in the mixed woods. In aspen stands we’ll be on the lookout for Connecticut Warbler, Pileated Woodpecker and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. The resonant song of Ovenbird will ring out, with more cryptic notes from other species like Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart and Tennessee Warbler providing a backdrop. Scoping out Charlie Lake for scoters, loons, grebes and other migrating waterfowl will round out a diverse morning of birding. To the south of Fort St. John we visit a site where Ruby-throated Hummingbird can be found. Nearby slopes conceal singing Canada Warbler and with some perseverance we admire these gorgeous birds. A hidden wetland be home to a pair of Hooded Mergansers. In grasslands and riparian areas further south toward Dawson Creek we will be on the lookout for Upland Sandpiper, LeConte’s Sparrow and Philadelphia Vireo among other species that have their stronghold in this part of the province. Mountain conditions have a chance to influence our schedule but if there is a low snowpack we may try to access a higher elevation site that offers exciting possibilities, with the main targets being Rock Ptarmigan and Stone’s Sheep. Other species include Fox Sparrow, American Pipit, Horned Lark, Willow Ptarmigan, Townsend’s Solitaire, Golden-crowned Sparrow, and with much luck Bohemian Waxwing, Gray-cheeked Thrush, White-tailed Ptarmigan, Smith’s Longspur, Brewer’s “Timberline” Sparrow and Bay-breasted Warbler. Up in the north other wildlife abounds and we might see mammals such as moose, black bear, groundhog, and the prairie subspecies of white-tailed deer. Nights in Fort St. John.

Day 5: Departure

Our birding tour to the boreal forests of British Columbia concludes today after 3 very enjoyable days of birding. You can depart anytime. There are regular flights to Calgary and Vancouver connecting to destinations further afield.

What to Expect

Overview

The Ultimate British Columbia: Boreal tour is a short, but moderately paced birding tour, where you can expect some early morning, pre-breakfast walks, and long days in the field.

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

We stay in standard hotel rooms in locations close to where we want to go birding.

Walking

The walking on this tour is rated easy to moderate. Most birding is done from roads and well-marked trails, but we occasionally traverse low brush, swampy and uneven terrain, and there is some hill hiking. We walk at a slow pace, stopping frequently to observe fauna and flora. When we have two leaders, we sometimes split into "faster" and "slower" groups.

Driving

Driving distances will be short as we are based in Fort St. John for the duration of the tour, and do our trips from there each day. As vehicle options are limited, we will most likely be traveling in minivans or SUVs.

Climate

The weather in British Columbia can be highly variable, from chilly mornings, heavy rain spells to warm and dry afternoons. It is best to check the weather the week before the trip and pack layers!

What's Included

Tour Price Includes	Tour Price Does Not Include
• 4 nights accommodation • All meals and soft drinks • Ground transportation in minivans or SUVs • 1 guide with 4 - 5 participants, 2 guides in 2 vehicles with 6 - 10 participants • All park, conservation and entrance fees	• Flights to and home from Fort St. John • Travel Insurance • Items of a personal nature • Taxes (5% GST) • Alcoholic Beverages

---