



Discover the Darién and the River of Raptors

With Hawks Aloft and Canopy Family

Canopy Tower and Canopy Camp Darien, Panama

November 2-12, 2023

\$3850 All Inclusive from Panama City



Panama is a biologically and culturally diverse country connecting North and South America. Canopy Company has operated ecotourism lodges in Panama since 1999 with the mission to share the nature, history and culture of the Republic of Panama with passion and enthusiasm, focused on customer satisfaction and guided by the principles of conservation and social responsibility.

Hawks Aloft, Inc. is based in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and works to conserve indigenous wild birds and their habitats through avian research, conservation education, raptor rescue and cooperation with others. Hawks Aloft last visited Canopy Camp Darien and Canopy Tower in November 2019.

Everyone agreed that it was an incredible trip, among the best most of us have ever experienced. Highlights of that trip included: a Harpy Eagle on her nest with a nestling too small to be seen; a Crested Eagle in Panama City, migrating raptors flying in formation with wings set heading toward Colombia, a veritable river of raptors overhead, and even an active lek of Golden-headed Manakins right on the grounds of Canopy Camp.



Canopy Tower – River of Raptors! November 2-5

Because we will stay at Canopy Tower only three days, we will visit of only some nearby locations. Also, because these dates were selected to be present during peak raptor migration, we may spend more time on the Observation Deck in lieu of some of the daily field trips offered, depending on numbers of raptors seen overhead.

Join Hawks Aloft and Canopy Tower for the birding adventure of a lifetime to witness one of the world's greatest hawk migration events when literally hundreds of thousands of raptors funnel through the narrow isthmus of Panama toward their wintering grounds in South America! The centerpiece of our

first three days of our visit emphasizes the best of central Panamanian birding—and the Observation Deck of the Canopy Tower is the perfect vantage point to witness this raptor bonanza! From our base of operations at the Canopy Tower, we take excursions to Panama's premier birding site, Pipeline Road, as well as to Metropolitan Nature Park and Ancon Hill, where over 2.5 million migrating raptors pass every fall, Summit Ponds & Old Gamboa Road, Panama Rainforest Discovery Center and its remarkable observation tower, the marshy Ammo Ponds, Chagres River & Gamboa and the stunningly beautiful highlands of Cerro Azul & Cerro Jefe. This birding adventure is designed not only for you to personally experience the mind-boggling number of migrating hawks, but also to see an incredible country rich in biodiversity—not only birds, but also mammals, butterflies, beautiful plants, insects, reptiles & amphibians, and friendly people!

Upon arrival at the airport our driver will transfer you to the Canopy Tower, located at the top of Semaphore Hill in the rainforest of Soberanía National Park. After orientation, visit the dining/bar area while your luggage is delivered to your room. Best of all, climb to the Observation Deck, where the view offers many incredible Panamanian birding opportunities!



Hawk Migration

Meet your guide up on the Observation Deck to watch for the hawk migration, but also to help you sort out the birds that woke you up this morning! Resident raptors include Short-tailed & Zone-tailed Hawks, Plumbeous & Gray-headed Kites, King Vulture, and Black Hawk-Eagle! At this time of year, hawk migration is at its peak as thousands of Turkey Vultures and Broad-winged & Swainson's Hawks, along with the odd Osprey, Peregrine Falcon and Mississippi Kite, as these species fly long distances from their northern breeding grounds through the Isthmus to South America. It is impressive to say the least and the Observation Deck at the Canopy Tower is the best place to view this spectacle!

The Canopy Tower "Semaphore Hill Hawkwatch" is an official count site for the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA), with an annual count of 300,000+ migrating raptors over the Canopy Tower itself. Over 3 million migrating raptors in total pass over the Isthmus of Panama. Canopy Tower's official hawk counter will be on the deck every day from 8 am to 5 pm, counting the raptors passing over and in the vicinity. Along with your guide, they will explain how raptor migration takes place, and how to count literally tens of thousands of raptors passing by, along with the ecological importance of surveying migrating hawks.

Depending on the direction of the winds, the hawk migration can be fantastic over the Canopy Tower, or if the winds are not in our favor, then we can venture to Ancon Hill in Panama City, the highest hill in the metropolitan area, where Panama Audubon counts the migrating hawks and vultures from their observatory. On a good day, the numbers here are outstanding! Over a million birds have been known to pass over in one day during the peak of the season. Our schedule will remain rather flexible based the hawk migration.

Visit the Semaphore Hill HawkWatch official count site: <https://www.hawkcount.org/siteinfo.php?rsite=627>



Canopy Camp Darién November 5-12

After we've thrilled to the many thousands of raptors, we turn our sights to the lowland rainforest of the Darién state. The approximately 6 hour drive south to Canopy Camp Darién includes a variety of stops along the way to check out the local bird life, and lunch at a hummingbird filled restaurant!

The province of Darién is revered for its incredible wildlife in the vast expanse of protected rainforest in Darién National Park. Located literally at the end of the highway in Panama – the Pan-American Highway, which extends from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, with only one small gap between Panama and Colombia – the Darién Gap. The protected Darién jungle provides a stronghold for the Great Green Macaw, Great Curassow and the majestic Harpy Eagle, Panama's national bird, as well as other endangered wildlife including Colombian Spider Monkey, Baird's Tapir and America's most powerful cat, the Jaguar. We also had sloths, coatimundi, howler monkeys and Geoffrey's tamarinds in camp.

While you sip your morning coffee, listen for the buzzy trills of Golden-headed Manakins lekking in the forest beside the camp. From tiny, colorful poison dart frogs on the forest floor to Red-throated Caracaras in the canopy, these forests are full of life. At the end of the day of exploring the region, settle into your tent and doze off to the calls of owls, potoos, nightjars and a symphony of frogs, bidding you good-night from the forests of Darién.

Panama's National Bird: The Harpy Eagle

Darién is a stronghold for Harpy Eagles and other large forest raptors with Central America's largest population. Harpy Eagles live in remote mature forest, and a full-day trip may be required to visit the site available. The following description gives you an idea of what a Harpy Eagle excursion entails:

Today we depart long before sunrise, and drive to Yaviza, at the end of the Pan-American Highway where we will board a "piragua"—a dugout canoe—and traverse the still waters of the Chucunaque and Tuira rivers while watching for birds and mammals on the riverside. White-tailed Kite and Black-collared and Common Black Hawks may be found cruising overhead.



We will travel to the trailhead at the border of Darién National Park! If very lucky, we may see Harpy Eagle or Crested Eagle, as both species roam these dense forests. (*Horses are available to rent for those who do not want to walk*). Other large forest eagles, including Ornate Hawk-Eagle, can also be found in the area, as well as Green-and-rufous Kingfisher, Agami Heron, Red-throated Caracara, Chestnut-backed Antbird, Chestnut-fronted and Great Green Macaws and more. After lunch and a break, we will retrace our steps and start our way back to El Real, then head back to Yaviza by river.

Darién Province Site Visits

The following are brief descriptions of some of the birding areas we may visit. Destinations may vary depending on known locations for certain species, weather, and access. Please keep in mind that we can never guarantee the sighting of a Harpy Eagle (or anything in nature), even at a reliable site, but we will be sure to try if there is a chance!

Bayano Lake Area & Torti Area

The bridge at Bayano Lake Reservoir offers great numbers of water birds, Anhinga, Cocoi Heron and Bare-throated Tiger-Heron and Fasciated Tiger-Heron. We'll stop at a lovely Panamanian restaurant in Torti where the hummingbirds are impressive, feeding voraciously at the feeders with total disregard for the presence of diners: Long-billed Starthroat, Sapphire-throated Hummingbird, Scaly-breasted Hummingbird, Black-throated Mango; great hummingbird photo opportunities abound throughout this Panama wildlife tour!



Golden-collared Manakin

Canopy Camp Grounds & Nando's Trail

Yellow-throated and Keel-billed Toucans call from the towering Cuipo trees; Red-lored and Mealy Parrots fly overhead; Pale-bellied Hermit and Sapphire-throated Hummingbird visit the flowers around camp. Rufous-tailed Jacamar and Barred Puffbird are also seen frequently.

We will follow Nando's Trail into the forest in hopes of finding Tiny Hawk, Black-tailed Trogon, and Royal Flycatcher while also looking for groups of Red-throated Caracara, King Vulture and Short-tailed Hawk overhead in the clearings. Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Plumbeous and Zone-tailed Hawk also are possible.

Verbenas are full of hummingbird and butterfly activity, where we hope to see Violet-bellied Hummingbird, Pale-bellied Hermit, Long-billed Starthroat and, if lucky, the stunning Ruby-Topaz Hummingbird. One evening, we will explore the grounds at night in search of nocturnal birds and mammals, including Black-and-white and Mottled Owls, Great and

Common Potoos, Kinkajous, Central American Woolly Opossum and more!

El Salto Road

El Salto Road and surrounding dry forest is home to regional specialties including Golden-green Woodpecker, Blue-and-yellow and Chestnut-fronted Macaws, Black and Crested Oropendolas, Blue Cotinga, Black-breasted Puffbird and the majestic King Vulture.



White-faced Capuchin, photo by Sami Sanborn

Tierra Nueva Foundation

Fundación Tierra Nueva, a non-profit organization whose main mission is "working towards the sustainable development of people of the Darién Rainforest." The property is the home of a technical school focusing on applications in agriculture. We will explore the trails of this large, forested property, in hopes of finding Streak-headed Woodcreeper, Yellow-breasted and Black-billed Flycatchers, Red-rumped Woodpecker, Slaty-backed Forest-Falcon, Cinnamon, Cinereous and One-colored Becards, White-eared Conebill, White-headed Wren and the magnificent Great Curassow. We will also search for the eastern race of the Chestnut-backed Antbird, which shows white spots on the wings.

Las Lagunas Road (Aguas Calientes) & Aruza Lagoons

This road passes through open farmland, dry scrub and roadside habitat eventually coming to a stream small ponds. Along the roadsides, we hope to find Ringed and Amazon Kingfishers, Buff-breasted Wren, Bananaquit, Giant and Shiny Cowbirds, Crested Oropendola, and Laughing and Aplomado Falcons. If we're lucky, we may get a glimpse of a Chestnut-fronted Macaw or a shy Little Cuckoo. At the lagoons, we hope to find Pied Water-Tyrant, Capped Heron, the beautiful Yellow-hooded Blackbird and the extraordinary Black-capped Donacobius.

Quebrada Felix

Quebrada Felix is nestled in the base of the Filo del Tallo Hydrological Reserve. Surrounded by tall trees and mature lowland forest, some of Panama's most wanted species can be found here: Black-crowned Antpitta, Scaly-throated Leaf-tosser, Speckled Mourner, Ocellated Antbird, Rufous-winged and Moustached Antwrens, White-fronted Nunbird, Wedge-billed Woodcreeper, Royal Flycatcher and the endemic Stripe-cheeked Woodpecker. Crested and Solitary Eagles have even been spotted here, a great testament to the mature forest of the area.



Crested Eagle, photo by Chellye Porter

Lajas Blancas & Nuevo Vigia

Lajas Blancas is the closest Embera community to the Canopy Camp, a large town with a population of over 1000 residents. Just 15 minutes away, the area around the community boasts great birding and the opportunity to find many Darién specialties!

In the town of Nuevo Vigia, local artisans weave colorful decorative masks and plates out of palm fronds and carve cocobolo wood and tagua nuts into animals and plants. We will have the opportunity to meet members of the community and purchase some of the beautiful products they make by hand. Community members will prepare and serve us a picnic lunch in the village.



*Traditional Dance by Embera Women
photo by Chellye Porter.*

San Francisco Reserve

San Francisco Nature Reserve, a private forest reserve owned and managed by the St. Francis Foundation, covers 1,300 acres. Established in 2001 by Father Pablo Kasuboski, an American priest from Wisconsin who came to Panama in 1988, the reserve serves as a wildlife refuge and protects the headwaters of the main rivers of the area. The reserve has a variety of habitats including primary, secondary and riparian forests, farmland, ponds and wetlands. We will hope to find Great Jacamar, Broad-billed Motmot, Collared Aracari, Royal Flycatcher, Central American Pygmy-Owl, and if we're very lucky, a Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle soaring overhead!



*Rufous-tailed Jacamar
photo by Chellye Porter*

Your Trip Leader

Gail Garber, Executive Director, discovered her passion for birds 32 years ago. Since then, she has dedicated her life to avian studies, education, and other aspects of Hawks Aloft. She has traveled extensively for birding, and leads birding tours in the US and internationally: New Zealand, Ecuador, Peru, Costa Rica, and more.

Canopy Company Guides

Canopy Family guides will accompany us on our journey as local experts. Check out their website as well as their Feeder Cams to get a feel for what to expect.

Pricing

Cost is all inclusive on arrival in Panama City and includes transfers, lodging, all meals, bilingual professional guides, all tours mentioned in the itinerary, natural fruit juices, sodas, wine at dinner time, WIFI, entrance fees to national parks as mentioned in the itinerary, snacks and beverages during all outings. Does not include airfare, tips, alcoholic beverages, or incidental expenditures (e.g. souvenirs) Travel insurance is strongly recommended.

Cost based on double occupancy: \$3,800 (Due August 1, 2023). Single supplement (limited due to space at Canopy Tower): \$600.

Deposit \$800 (due at registration)

Please visit <http://hawskaloft.org/events/> for registration and additional information.

Canopy Company Checklists for all sites

Includes birds, mammals, butterflies, insects, and more.

<https://www.canopytower.com/resources/checklists/>

Canopy Company Feeder Cams

<https://www.canopytower.com/fruit-feeder-cam/>

Panama's official entry requirements and safety guidelines

Canopy Family COVID-19 protocol FAQs.

