



## Natural Selections

**BIRDING, WILDLIFE, AND PHOTO TOURS**



Orange-breasted Falcon

# **Birding Belize on a Budget; 8 days, 2 lodges, and lots of birds!**

7 Nights/8 Days

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With a diversity of over 574 species of birds, the tiny nation of Belize is a favorite Central American destination among birders and nature lovers. Belize is located on the eastern coast of Central America, with Caribbean Sea shorelines to the east and dense jungle to the west. Offshore, the massive Belize Barrier Reef, dotted with hundreds of low-lying islands called cays, hosts some of the richest marine life of the Meso-American Barrier Reef System. Belize's dry, pine, and rain forest areas are home to Mayan ruins like Caracol, renowned for its towering pyramid; lagoon-side Lamanai; and Altun Ha, just outside Belize City. This tour is designed for those who want a short, yet rich introduction to birding Belize, while staying at just two lodges; from La Milpa Ecolodge and Research Center, to Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary and Bird's Eye View Lodge before returning back to Belize City and flights home.

## Tour Overview

Day 1: Arrive Belize City (BZE), transfer to La Milpa Reserve and Archaeological Site

Day 2: Birding Rio Bravo Conservation Area

Day 3: Birding La Milpa, Rio Bravo

Day 4: Birding La Milpa Archaeological Site

Day 5: La Milpa to Crooked Tree

Day 6: Crooked Tree Lagoon and Lamanai Archaeological Site

Day 7: Birding Crooked Tree's savannas and wetlands

Day 8: Sunrise birding Crooked Tree and departure for Belize City Airport (BZE).

## 7 Night/8 Day Itinerary:

### Day 1, Arrival and transfer to Rio Bravo:

Arrival at Philip Goldson International Airport, transfer to Rio Bravo Conservation Area. Light birding along the way to La Milpa around Blue Creek Rice fields for Black-throated Bobwhite.

#### Gartered Trogon



Jabiru

The forest road leading to the eco-lodge is a good area for Ocellated Turkey and Great Curassow. An optional night walk around the property will be available for anyone interested in looking for owls, frogs, snakes, bats, and other nocturnal wildlife around the lodge.

Meals: Dinner

*Lodging at La Milpa Eco Lodge*

### Day 2, Rio Bravo Conservation Area:

Today we explore part of the Rio Bravo Conservation Area, a massive reserve which connects Belize with Guatemala and Mexico to form the Selva Maya or Maya Forest, the largest tract of forest north of the Amazon. This area is part of the dry Yucatan Peninsula with low canopy forest and warm temperatures, so we will be sure to take a break and retreat to the cool room during the peak heat hours. During the morning we will search for Crested Guan, Toucans, Green Honeycreepers and Yellow-winged Tanagers which come to the lodge feeders. In the afternoon, we will

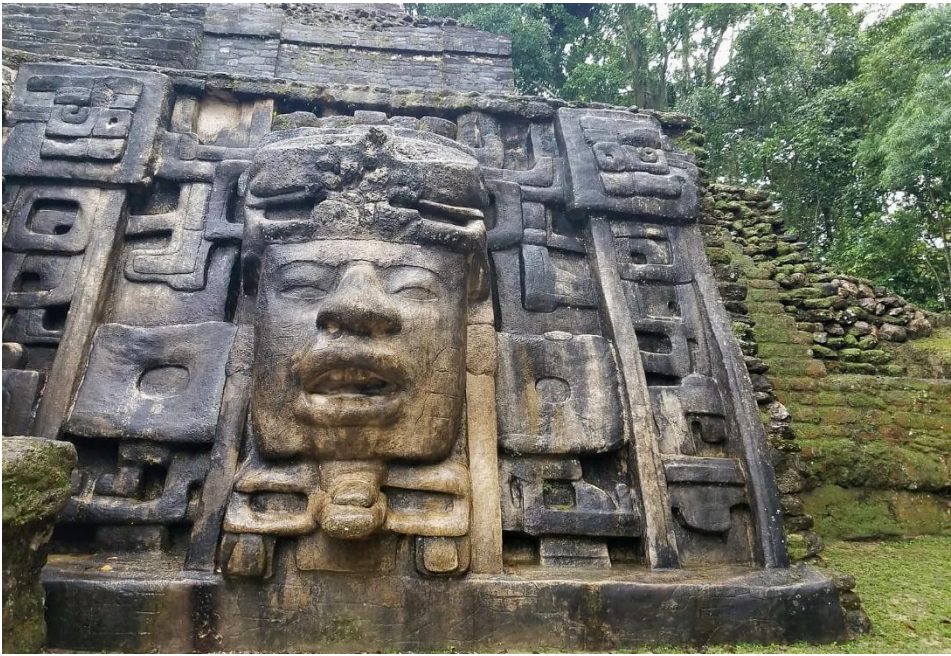
cover more trails nearby looking for Ruddy and Tawny-winged Woodcreepers, Short-billed Pigeons and Collared Trogons and Barred Forest-Falcon. Owling will be available for species such as Northern Potoo, Yucatan Poorwill and Mottled Owl.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

*Lodging at La Milpa Eco Lodge*

### Day 3, Birding La Milpa and Hill Bank:

We'll begin with sunrise birding around lodge grounds. After breakfast we will bird along the Main Road en route to Hill Bank. Some forest ponds and nearby forest trails provide habitat for Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Yucatan Flycatcher, Caribbean Dove, Yellow-lored Parrot and Green-backed Sparrow. The New River Lagoon frontage can offer Russet-naped Wood-Rail and Mangrove Swallow as well as Purple Gallinule, Yellow-breasted Crake, rarely Uniform Crake and Black Rail. After lunch at Hill Bank,



Mask Temple, Lamanai

we will drive back midafternoon birding the rest of the forest roads looking for White-browed Gnatcatcher, Gray-collared Becard, Buff-bellied Hummingbird as well as several forest Raptors like the White Hawk, Bicolored Hawk and Hook-billed Kite.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
*Lodging at La Milpa Eco Lodge*

#### **Day 4, Birding La Milpa:**

Today we will roam the vast forest roads and trails of the Rio Bravo Conservation Area in search of Little Tinamou and Thicket Tinamou. This area is also a good area for Gray-headed Kite, Ruddy Quail-Dove, Gray Chested Dove and Lesson's Motmot. At the main archaeological site, we will search for Ruddy-tailed Flycatcher, Northern Bentbill, Stub-tailed Spadebill and Royal Flycatcher. Around the main grounds Tropical Pewee, Black-throated Shrike-Tanager, Green-backed Sparrow, Wedge-tailed Sabrewing and

Rufous Piha are also possible. We will have a shorter day today for you to enjoy the grounds on your own in the afternoon.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
*Lodging at La Milpa Eco Lodge*

#### **Day 5, La Milpa to Crooked Tree:**

After coffee, we continue our search for some of the local specialties such as the Tody Motmot, Thicket Tinamou and Yucatan Flycatcher, Mayan Ant Thrush, Royal Flycatcher and Gray-headed Tanager. We will return to the lodge for some remaining hummingbirds and honeycreepers. After breakfast we will pack and start heading to Crooked Tree. This massive wetland is an important Ramsar site where thousands of waders and shorebirds gather to fuel up during their northbound migration. Along the way we will try for Rufous-breasted Spinetail, Grace's Warbler and Olive Sparrow. After lunch here, we will take a short break before heading out

again. At sunset we will take a boat ride down the lagoon in search of many other good birds, including the elusive Sungrebe or the colorful Roseate Spoonbill. This area is also good for American Pygmy Kingfisher, and Ringed Kingfisher.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
*Lodging at Birds Eye View Lodge*

#### **Day 6, Crooked Tree Lagoon and Lamanai Archaeological Site:**

We get up early today to watch the sunrise over the Crooked Tree Lagoon, coffee in hand. After breakfast we will head north for a bit to explore the ancient Maya city of Lamanai. The boat ride along the New River allows us to see some good birds such as Snail Kites, Boat-billed Heron, Purple Gallinule and occasionally a Sungrebe. Once at the site, our expert guide will walk us thru the history of this amazing city up to our recent past. Spider Monkeys and Howler Monkeys are found here as well as Euphonias, Woodpeckers and Jays. On the way out, we seek Morelet's Crocodiles and Central American River Turtles. You will have some time off in the afternoon, to grab a beer and watch the Yellow-headed Parrots come into the area to roost.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
*Lodging at Birds Eye View Lodge*

## Day 7, Birding Crooked Tree's savannas and wetlands:

This morning we will be doing our second boat ride at Crooked Tree. On this boat ride we will be looking for Boat-billed Herons, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, Agami Heron, Black-collared Hawk and Snail Kites, plus over a dozen waders and waterfowl. We then return to the lodge for breakfast before continuing with the birding. The Savannas and wetlands behind the village are excellent for Yucatan Jays, Green Jays, Mangrove Vireo and an occasional Jabiru. After lunch, we will take a break from the heat of the day and resume just before sunset. As the sun sets, we enjoy cooler temperatures while the Jabirus and Wood storks look for a roosting spot along the lagoon.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
*Lodging at Birds Eye View Lodge*

## Day 8, Morning Birding at Bird's Eye View and Departure.

We will spend the morning around the lodge and nearby trails looking for Rufous-breasted Spinetail, Yellow-headed Parrot and Striped Cuckoo. We will return to the lodge for breakfast and relax a bit before packing and getting ready to head back to the airport. On the way out, Vermillion Flycatchers and Northern Jacanas are still possible, and a Jabiru might still surprise us. We'll arrive at Belize Airport at your desired time.

*Meals: Breakfast*



Black-collared Hawk

### Included for the duration of this itinerary:

In-country accommodations, ground and boat transportation, tours, meals from dinner on arrival day to breakfast on departure day, soft drinks, tour leader, local guide, entrance fees and purified water throughout are included.

### Not Included:

Personal items such as alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, gift shop, laundry, tips, etc. are not included.

### Travel insurance:

We highly recommend purchasing travel insurance. In the event that you need to cancel your trip due to medical or other reasons, this insurance will protect you.



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