



# Natural Selections

**BIRDING, WILDLIFE, AND PHOTO TOURS**



Horned Guan

Guatemala is the northernmost country in Central America and boasts 749 bird species with at least 35 of these being Mesoamerican endemics. With geographic features including lowland rainforests, high elevation cloud forests, tropical dry forests, spectacular volcanoes, crystalline lakes, colorful Mayan culture and ancient Mayan ruins, Guatemala may well be the most spectacularly diverse nations in all of Central America. This birding tour leads us across misty cloud forests, beneath the shadows of volcanoes, and through the colonial town of Antigua while offering specialty bird species such as Horned Guan, Resplendent Quetzal, stunning Pink-headed Warbler, and more.

## Guatemala's Birding Highlights: Highlands, Lowlands & optional Tikal Extension

10 Nights/11 Days

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Our birding itinerary combines Guatemala's southwestern highlands and mid-elevation forests. The locations within were chosen based on their great birding as well as the conservation efforts at each place. Your trip contributes to bird conservation and ecotourism by encouraging more sustainable economic activities throughout the areas we will visit. This trip is led entirely by knowledgeable and experienced local guides and an international tour leader who will ensure that you get the best birding experience as you contribute to preserve the fragile ecosystems of the Guatemalan highlands and the bird species they support.

## Tour Overview

**Day 1:** Arrival at Guatemala City (GUA)  
**Day 2:** Guatemala City to Volcán Chicabal  
**Day 3:** Volcán Chicabal to Sibinal  
**Day 4:** Birding Sibinal and Tacaná Volcano  
**Day 5:** Sibinal to San Marcos  
**Day 6:** Refugio del Quetzal to Los Tarrales Reserve  
**Days 7 & 8:** Tarrales Reserve  
**Day 9:** Santiago Atitlan  
**Day 10:** Transfer to Guatemala City (GUA)  
**Day 11:** Transfer to Guatemala City airport for flights home (GUA).

## Extension Overview

**Day 1:** Flight to Petén and birding Tikal National Park  
**Days 2, 3:** Birding Tikal Ruins and National Park  
**Day 4:** Birding the road from Flores, Peten  
**Day 5:** AM flights to Guatemala City and international flights home.

## 10 Night/11 Day Itinerary:

### Day 1, Arrival Day:

After arrival into Guatemala City (GUA), we will be met by our local guide at the airport and transferred to our hotel for the evening. Depending on arrival times, there may be time to rest after international travel before gathering for a welcome dinner and trip orientation with our guide, tour leader, and fellow participants.

*Meals: Dinner*

*Lodging: Hilton Guatemala City*

### Day 2, Guatemala City Hummingbird Feeders and transfer to Volcán Chicabal:

We will begin our birding adventure early this morning with a visit to the hummingbird feeders at a private home near the hotel, an outstanding location to observe and photograph a wide variety of hummingbirds at close range. This is an excellent introduction to Guatemala's avifauna. Birds that

Fulvous Owl



can be found here are: Azure-crowned Hummingbird, Rufous Sabrewing, White-eared Hummingbird, and Green-throated Mountain-gem. Another good possibility today are looks at the amazing Buffy-crowned Wood-Partridge.

Late in the morning, we will begin our drive toward Quetzaltenango (Xela), birding along the way. In the afternoon, we will stop at Finca Caleras Chichavac, where we will explore the grounds and surrounding habitats in search of additional highland specialties such as pink-headed Warbler, Guatemalan Flicker, Crescent-chested Warbler, Rufous-collared Robin, Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer, Mexican Violetear, and Elegant Euphonia. From here, we will continue to our lodge near Volcán Chicabal.

After dinner, we will head out for an evening owling session, targeting several nocturnal species found in the area like Unspotted Saw-whet Owl and Whiskered Screech-Owl.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*  
*Lodging: Eco Guest House Chile Verde (Volcán Chicabal)*

### Day 3, Morning birding at Volcán Chicabal and transfer to Sibinal:

This morning, we will explore the forests surrounding Volcán Chicabal, a sacred volcanic lake set within lush highland habitat. Birding here offers opportunities for a variety of cloud forest species before we begin our drive west

toward Sibinal.

In the afternoon, we will continue birding as we travel to the Tacaná Volcano region, arriving in Sibinal by evening.

Key species: Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush, Highland Guan, Singing Quail, Maroon-chested Ground Dove, Amethyst-throated Mountain-gem, Mountain Trogon.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*  
*Lodging: Estrella Dorada Hotel*

#### **Day 4, Birding the Sibinal and Tacaná Volcano area:**

The Tacana Volcano area is a wonderful opportunity to explore the richness of Guatemala's highlands. We will be birding in lush montane forest above 10,000 ft. where views of the tallest volcanoes in Central America (Tacana and Tajumulco) are unforgettable. Here, our main target is the enigmatic and rare Horned Guan, one of the most sought-after species for any birder.

Thankfully, we will not have to make the "Horned Guan death march" as many refer when going to other well-known locations for this species. Depending on our success with the Guan, we will visit other locations around the area in search for other specialties such as Garnet-throated Hummingbird, Yellow Grosbeak, Amethyst-throated Mountain-gem, Blue-throated Motmot, Rufous-collared Robin, Black-capped Siskin, Black-throated Jay, Fulvous Owl, Pink-headed Warbler, and others.



Pink-headed Warbler

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*  
*Lodging: Estrella Dorada Hotel*

#### **Day 5, Sibinal to San Marcos:**

We will enjoy a final morning of birding in the Sibinal area before beginning our drive toward San Marcos. Along the way, we will continue birding in suitable habitats as opportunities arise. By afternoon, we will arrive at our hotel in San Marcos, where we will settle in and enjoy a relaxed evening.

Key species: Chestnut-capped Brushfinch, Golden-browed Warbler, White-naped Brushfinch, Blue-and-white Mockingbird, Yellow Grosbeak, Pink-headed Warbler.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*  
*Lodging: Madelyn Hotel*

#### **Day 6, Refugio del Quetzal and transfer to Los Tarrales Reserve:**

Today we will have an early start to drive to Refugio del Quetzal, where we will start our birding, a well-

protected cloud forest in the Pacific slopes of Guatemala. Here we will spend most of the morning dedicated to finding Resplendent Quetzals and Azure-rumped Tanagers among other species.

After lunch, we will begin our descent from the highlands toward the Pacific foothills, enjoying a dramatic change in habitat and birdlife as we travel to Los Tarrales Natural Reserve. Upon arrival, there will be time to rest before an optional afternoon birding session near the lodge.

Key species here include: Resplendent Quetzal, Azure-rumped Tanager, Blue-crowned Chlorophonia, Yellow-throated Nightingale-Thrush, Hooded Grosbeak, Yellow Grosbeak, Barred Forest-Falcon, Golden-browed Warbler, Barred Parakeet and more.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*  
*Lodging: Los Tarrales Natural Reserve*



Resplendent Quetzal

**Day 7 & 8, Two full days of birding at Los Tarrales Reserve:**

We will have two full days to explore as many spots as possible at this amazing reserve. We will start our days by visiting the upper part of the reserve, home to very special and unique species such as: Highland Guan, Blue-crowned Chlorophonia, Azure-rumped Tanager, Long-tailed Manakin, Guatemalan Tyrannulet among many others. Around mid-day we'll head back to the lodge to have lunch and rest until the day cools down. In the afternoon we'll continue exploring the reserve by birding along the trails in the lower slopes of the reserve.

Key species here include Highland Guan, Tody Motmot, Long-tailed Manakin, White-eared Ground-Sparrow, King Vulture, Blue-throated Goldentail, White Hawk, Smoky-brown Woodpecker, Azure-rumped Tanager, Blue-crowned Chlorophonia, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, White-eared

Hummingbird, Violet Sabrewing, Black-and-white Owl, Collared Forest-Falcon, Guatemalan Tyrannulet, Gartered Trogon, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, and many more.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Lodging: Los Tarrales Natural Reserven*

**Day 9, Transfer to Santiago Atitlán and afternoon birding:**

Today we will visit the trails near the lodge for lower elevation species such as: Blue-throated Motmot, Golden-olive Woodpecker, Bushy-crested Jay, Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush, White-bellied Chachalaca among many others.

After a great morning of birding, we'll head back to the lodge for lunch before saying goodbye to Tarrales and making a short 1-hour drive to our next destination: Santiago Atitlán, one of the colorful towns on the shore of Lake Atitlán. In the afternoon we'll bird the lake's

shore among agricultural patches and second growth forests in search for the rare Slender Sheartail.

Key species here include Slender Sheartail, Blue-throated Motmot, Golden-olive Woodpecker, Bushy-crested Jay, Band-backed Wren, Blue-and-white Mockingbird, Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Gray Silky-flycatcher, White-faced Ground-Sparrow, Rusty Sparrow, Black-vented Oriole, Cabanis's Wren, Slate-throated Redstart, Flame-colored Tanager, and many more.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Lodging: Hotel Bambú*

**Day 10, Transfer to Guatemala City:**

Today we will be visiting Mirador Rey Tepepul, near Santiago Atitlán. Birding here is along an established trail that will take us through some agricultural landscapes and mature forest that holds one of the most stunning birds: The Resplendent Quetzal. This subspecies is bigger, has longer upper-tail coverts and is more golden in tone than the subspecies found in Costa Rica and Panama. We will not only hope to watch this magnificent bird but also species such as: Blue-crowned Chlorophonia, Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo, White-faced Quail-Dove, Green-throated Mountain-gem, Emerald-chinned Hummingbird, Ruddy Foliage-gleaner, Spotted Nightingale-Thrush, Chestnut-capped Brushfinch, White-naped Brushfinch, Bar-winged Oriole,

Buffy-crowned Wood-Partridge, Amethyst-throated Mountain-gem, and others.

We'll return for lunch to Santiago, Atitlán and then begin our drive towards Guatemala City. We will try to get to the city fairly early to make sure we have a good night of sleep for the next day.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

*Lodging: Hotel near Guatemala City Airport.*

#### **Day 11, Departure Day:**

After breakfast, we will transfer to Guatemala City International Airport (GUA) for international flights home.

*Meals: Breakfast*

### **Birding Tikal Extension**

#### **4 Night/5 Day Itinerary:**

Birding at Tikal, Guatemala is unlike anyplace else, with its scenery dominated by impressive Mayan pyramid temples and unbroken rain forest. With archaeological remains dating back to 1,800 years before present, Tikal is one of the largest archaeological sites and urban centers of the pre-Columbian Maya civilization. Today, a dense network of trails provides access to rainforest, secondary forest, and open areas. Over 400 bird species have been reported from Tikal National Park and the surrounding area.

Tikal is Guatemala's first National Park and was declared in 1955 to preserve its majestic Mayan ruins, spectacular rainforests and diverse wildlife. UNESCO then declared it a World Cultural and Natural Heritage site by UNESCO in 1979. Tikal National Park is a component of the Maya Biosphere Reserve, the largest Neotropical rain forest north of the Amazon basin.

#### **Day 1, Fly to Petén and first day birding in Tikal National Park:**

For those enrolled in the Tikal Extension, today will start with a flight to Flores Petén. After arriving Flores, we will head straight to Tikal National Park. Tikal National Park is the perfect blend of culture and nature richness where you will truly feel in the heart of the jungle. We'll spend this day walking among towering ancient ruins and numerous rainforest trails to encounter as many species as possible.

Key species today at Tikal will include: Slaty-tailed Trogon, Pale-billed Woodpecker, Olive-throated Parakeet, Brown-hooded Parrot, White-crowned Parrot, Red-lored Parrot, Yucatan Flycatcher, Giant Cowbird, Montezuma Oropendola, Keel-billed Toucan, and many more.

Our Lodge (inside Tikal National Park and a mile away from Tikal Main Plaza) is a very productive area as well, with amazing birds like Ocellated Turkey, Giant Cowbird and with luck even Pheasant Cuckoo! There is an area of dry forest habitat, as well as lagoons that hold species like



Temple of the Great Jaguar

Russet-naped Wood-Rail, Purple Gallinule, Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Agami Heron, Boat-billed Heron, and American Pygmy Kingfisher.

*Meals: Lunch, Dinner*

*Lodging at Jungle Lodge*

#### **Day 2 and 3, Tikal National Park:**

With the variety of habitats surrounding our lodge, and over 575 square kilometers of rain forest and thousands of ruined structures at Tikal, we have two full days and plenty of trails to roam free and explore this incredibly rich area. Hunting is prohibited in Tikal National Park and mammals wander freely among the forests and Mayan ruins. The most commonly seen species are Coatis, Agoutis, and Gray Fox around the park grounds, while Spider monkeys and Mexican Black Howler Monkeys inhabit the forest canopy above.

Regionally endemic Ocellated

Turkeys are also quite tame at Tikal, while army ant swarms often draw species such as Northern Barred, Olivaceous, Ruddy, Tawny-winged, and Ivory-billed Woodcreepers, Red-crowned and Red-throated Ant-Tanager, Gray-headed Tanager, Tawny-crowned Greenlet, and many more.

Other key species here include: Keel-billed Toucan, Collared Aracari, Plain Chachalaca, Pheasant Cuckoo, Gray-throated Chat, Purple-crowned Fairy, Stub-tailed Spadebill, Worm-eating Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Great Curassow, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Black-faced Antthrush, Royal Flycatcher, Red-capped Manakin, White-collared Manakin, Gray-headed Tanager, Black-throated Shrike-Tanager, Red-crowned Ant-Tanager, and Red-throated Ant-Tanager.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Lodging at Jungle Lodge*

#### **Day 4, Birding the road to Flores, Petén:**

Today we will say goodbye to Tikal National Park and travel the bird-rich route between Tikal and Flores. Along the way we'll visit the lush shores of Lake Petén Itza for American Pygmy Kingfisher, Amazon Kingfisher, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, Bat Falcon, Ruddy Crake and Pinnated Bittern. After a great lunch at a lake-side restaurant we'll head to drier areas and grasslands to try for birds like Black Catbird, Gray-crowned Yellowthroat, Black-throated Bobwhite, Botteri's Sparrow, and

Green-backed Sparrow.

After dinner at our hotel, we will have to chance to do some owling nearby for Striped Owl.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Lodging at Villa Maya*

#### **Day 5, Flights home from Guatemala City:**

Today we will have breakfast at our hotel and head to the airport to catch our flight to Guatemala City.

*Meals: Breakfast*

#### **Included for the duration of this itinerary:**

**Main Tour:** Accommodations from arrival at Guatemala City on day 1 to departure on day 11. All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 11. All ground transportation, bilingual birding guides throughout, all guide, park, and entrance fees.

**Extension:** Accommodations from arrival at Tikal on day 1 to departure from Flores on day 5, all meals beginning with lunch on day 1 to breakfast on day 5. Round-trip GUA – FRS airfare, all ground transportation, bilingual birding guide throughout, all guide, park, and entrance fees..

#### **Not Included:**

Alcoholic beverages, additional soft drinks other than juice and water, laundry, souvenirs, or similar items of a personal nature.

**Travel insurance is recommended for this and all travel. Please see <https://www.naturalselectionstours.com/travel-insurance/for details>**



## Natural Selections

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