

# 2023 Guatemala Birding

Jan 7-18



JB  
Journeys

## *See the Golden-cheeked Warbler in its winter territory!*

Join us for this unique birding tour to beautiful Guatemala. Based on the overwhelming success of this tour that we started in 2019, we again offer this opportunity to bird areas not offered by other bird tour companies, guided by Guatemala's top birder, **John Cahill**.

But this is not just about birds and a list. Your participation in this tour benefits Community Cloud Forest Conservation (CCFC), an environmental education program located near Cobán in central Guatemala. You will stay at the CCFC Center and see for yourself the work being done by the Cahill family, among which is the reforestation of the winter home of the **Golden-cheeked Warbler** and other threatened migrant birds.



In addition to fabulous birds – including the near mythical **Resplendent Quetzal** – Guatemala offers you an amazing history of birding and conservation.

First, we begin our birding while staying on Lake Atitlan, one of the most beautiful places in the world! We will bird around the preserve here, but also visit an area where **Dr. Alexander Skutch** began his studies of birds and plants. Here we hope to see a number of range-restricted birds that occur in this area such as Blue-throated Motmot, Black-capped Siskin, and what is possibly the most beautiful of all warblers, the Pink-headed Warbler.



Then we work our way to the cloud forest, visiting several private reserves set up specifically for migrating birds. This area also gives Central Texas birders the possibility to see the **Golden-cheeked Warbler** on its wintering grounds in the very cloud forest where the species was first described back in 1860! We will spend three nights and days at CCFC's amazing environmental center, a totally off-the-grid structure and a marvel in engineering.

We end in Tikal, perhaps the greatest of the Mayan cities. We'll pick up a local cultural guide who will add to the experience. There are more amazing birds to see here as we walk among pyramids, like Keel-billed Toucan, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Ocellated Turkey, Tody Motmot, several species of parrots, and raptors including the rare Orange-breasted Falcon. We may also see some cool mammals like Coatis, Agoutis, and Spider and Black Howler Monkeys.

**John Cahill**, the top birder in Guatemala, is our guide. Only in his 20s, he is part of the new generation of birders. Comments from prior tours refer to John as "the best bird guide ever". He is a birding rockstar and seems to know everyone in the country! [Read about John's Big Year here.](#)

You will have a chance to meet other member of the Cahill family while staying at the campus of [Community Cloud Forest Conservation](#), operated by Tara & Rob Cahill. CCFC focuses on environmental education for the local Mayan school population, using Cornell Lab of Ornithology's BirdSleuth program. They also run a leadership training program for girls and young women in sustainable agro-ecology, nutrition, cooking, health and family planning, career and educational options, eco-tourism, and other life-skills, with the goal of helping them stay in school and continue their education. A further benefit of agro-ecology is reforestation of the cloud forest.



*Additionally, a half-acre cloud forest restoration will be dedicated in the name of you and your fellow travelers, totally offsetting your in-country carbon footprint while enhancing bird habitat. Also, JB Journeys will make a donation to your bird club. This tour is an excellent example of sustainable tourism.*

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Photo credit: John Cahill

**Jan 7, Sat:** Arrive Guatemala City mid-day. Transfer from Guatemala City to Lake Atitlan, approximately 2-3 hours, with some birding stops en route. 2 nights at Hotel Atitlan or similar.(L,D)

**Jan 8, Sun: Tecpán** – Morning birding at Reserva Natural Atitlan. Lunch at Lake Atitlan. Afternoon birding at Caleras Chichavac Private Reserve and Rincon Suizo's Private Reserve. Overnight in Atitlan.(B,L,D)

*Bar-winged Oriole, Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo, Rufous Sabrewing, Slender Sheartail, Sparkling-tailed Hummingbird, Belted Flycatcher, Black-throated Jay, Red-faced Warbler, Garnet-throated Hummingbird, Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer, Black-capped Siskin, Pink-headed Warbler, Mountain Trogon, Rufous-browed Wren, Blue-throated Motmot, Mountain Thrush, Hooded Grosbeak*

**Jan 9, Mon: Tecpán to Guatemala City** - This morning we have another chance to look for target birds. Early afternoon we head to Guatemala City. Overnight at San Carlos Hotel. .(B,L,D)

**Jan 10, Tues: Granados** – We have an early departure with breakfast on the road as we head to Granados in the Motagua Valley. Lunch in the cloudforest and we'll arrive at Posada del Quetzal late afternoon. Total drive time approximately 4-5 hours, with birding stops along the way. 2 nights Posada del Quetzal. (B,L,D)

*White-lored Gnatcatcher, Russet-crowned and Turquoise-browed Motmots, Streak-backed Oriole, Stripe-headed Sparrow, Orange-fronted Parakeet, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Buff-collared Nightjar, Crested Bobwhite, Cinnamon Hummingbird, Varied Bunting*

**Jan 11, Wed: Cloud Forest Birding** – Morning birding at Los Ranchitos Private Reserve about ½ hour away. Afternoon birding in pine-oak forest at Rio Escondido Private Reserve, which was created to protect migrating birds, such as the Golden-cheeked Warbler. Overnight Posada del Quetzal (B,L,D)

*Resplendent Quetzal, Unicolored Jay, Blue-crowned Chlorophonia, Azure-hooded Jay, Black-headed and Spotted Nightingale-Thrush, Violet Sabrewing, Highland Guan, Buff-breasted Flycatcher, Painted Redstart, Golden-cheeked Warbler*

**Jan 12, Thurs: Rubel Chaim/CCFC Center** – Morning birding at Los Ranchitos again. Afternoon drive to the CCFC agro-ecology center, approximately 1-1.5 hours. Bird around the Center, where we stay 3 nights.(B,L,D)

*Belted Flycatcher, Golden-cheeked Warbler, Guatemalan Pygmy-Owl, Emerald-chinned Hummingbird, Bushy-crested Jay, Brown-capped Vireo, Golden-winged Warbler, Ocellated Quail*

**Jan 13, Fri: Laguna Chichoj** – Morning birding the Center. Afternoon birding Laguna Chichoj. (B,L,D)

*Golden-cheeked Warbler, Bushy-crested Jay, Ocellated Quail, Blue-crowned Chlorophonia, Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser, Ruddy Crane, Spotted Rail, Limpkin, Spot-breasted Oriole, White-throated Flycatcher, Gray-crowned Yellowthroat.*

**Jan 14, Sat: Rubel Chaim** – Morning birding the cloud forests above the agro-ecology center. Afternoon free for touring the agro-ecology center campus. Overnight CCFC Center. (B,L,D)

*Golden-cheeked Warbler, Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush, Chestnut-capped Brushfinch, Ocellated Quail, Resplendent Quetzal, Rose-throated Becard, Crimson-collared Tanager, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Green-throated Mountain-Gem, Flame-colored Tanager*

**Jan 15, Sun: Cloud Forest to Rain Forest** – This is the longest day of driving, with a total of 7-8 hours, broken up with stops for birding. Morning birding Chajbaoc Private Reserve and in pine forest at Las Victorias National Park. Afternoon birding in rain forest in the Rosario National Park. Late afternoon/early evening, we arrive to Tikal, the fabulous Mayan city, for 2 nights at Jungle Lodge at the ruins. (B,L,D)

*Scaled Antpitta, Mottled Owl, Yellow-backed Oriole, Emerald Toucanet, Slate-colored Solitaire, Slate-throated Redstart, Rusty Sparrow, Lesson's Motmot, Grace's Warbler, Black-capped Swallow, Collared Trogon, Black-collared Hawk, Black-crowned Tityra, Olive-backed Euphonia, Golden-hooded Tanager, White-whiskered Puffbird*

**Jan 16, Mon: Tikal** – Full day birding the archeological site in Tikal National Park, including the famous abandoned airstrip. In addition to birding, we will be joined by a local archeological guide. One night we'll look for owls. Overnight Jungle Lodge. (B,L,D)

*Ocellated Turkey, Black-throated Shrike-Tanager, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Yellow-bellied Tyrannulet, Gray-headed Tanager, Tawny-winged Woodcreeper, Red-capped Manakin, Orange-breasted Falcon, Gray-necked Wood-Rail, Giant Cowbird, Montezuma Oropendola, Black-cowled Oriole, Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Purple-crowned Fairy, Brown-hooded Parrot, Boat-billed Heron, White-bellied Emerald, Blue Bunting*

**Jan 17, Tue: Tikal to El Remate** - A last morning of birding before we drive to El Remate on the shore of late Peten Itza, the drive about 1-1.5 hours. We'll have time for some afternoon and evening birding around the grounds of our hotel, which offers a great place for a sunset! Overnight Casa de don David. (B,L,D)

**Jan 18, Wed: Departure** – Very early this morning, we'll leave for Flores airport, and the flight from Flores to Guatemala City is included, which departs Flores around 8:00 am, arriving Guatemala City 9:00 am. You should schedule your international departure for 12 noon or later. (B)

*Note: The order and sites visited may vary due to weather, road conditions and other factors beyond our control. Hotels listed are valid as of printing but may change.*

**NOTE REGARDING LODGING:** We have selected a variety of lodging close to birding sites to reduce driving time, but **all have private hot water bathrooms**. Hotel Atitlan is quite nice with amazing views. Posada del Quetzal is a simple, local ins. The CCFC Center is off-the-grid with composting toilets. Jungle Lodge in Tikal runs on a generator with power only mornings and afternoons. Casa de Don David is a quaint tourist hotel.

**NOTE REGARDING FLIGHTS:** The itinerary is based on flights arriving Guatemala City airport by early afternoon to depart immediately for Atitlan. United, American, and Delta (among others) flights arrive between 11 AM and 1 PM. Later arrivals may incur an additional transfer fee. If you prefer to arrive a day early, we can arrange an overnight and pick you up to meet the others on arrival day, at additional cost. The tour ends in Flores, the airport serving Tikal, and the flight from Flores to Guatemala City is included in your fee. You should plan your international departure flights from Guatemala at or after 12 noon.

#### **COST:**

- \$3950 per person in double occupancy with minimum 6 participants. (maximum 10).
- Single \$395. Singles are very limited. *Rooms are either a smaller room or a double at single rate.*
- Minimum 6 to operate, maximum 10 participants.
- To confirm your spot, please [complete the reservation form on-line](#).
- Deposit \$500 to hold space; final payment will due Oct 7, 2022.
- Cancellation policy – Deposit is non-refundable after 30 days. Final payment is due Oct 7 2022, 90 days out. Once paid, from 90-60 days prior to departure, 25% penalty. Inside 60 days – non-refundable. Name changes may be allowed.

#### **INCLUDED:**

- Transportation as listed by van
- Local flight, Flores to Guatemala City, Jan 18
- 11 nights lodging with taxes included
- Services of local bilingual bird guides
- Entry fees to parks, etc
- Meals as listed
- Basic gratuities for hotels, meals, & driver
- Carbon offset for in-country tour
- Donation to your bird club

#### **NOT INCLUDED:**

- International airfare (into/out of Guatemala City, sample flights on registration)
- Drinks
- Gratuities to local guides\*(See suggestions)
- Travel Insurance
- Personal expenses

#### *\*Suggested tipping for guides:*

- John, your lead guide: \$10-20 per person/per day
- Local guide in Tikal: \$10-20 per person