



GUATEMALA: GENERAL INFORMATION



*The most wanted **Pink-headed Warbler** is always one of the tops of our Guatemala tours.*

PLEASE SEE TOUR PAGES FOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION ABOUT INDIVIDUAL GUATEMALA TOURS

MEDICAL AND TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE

We strongly encourage you to purchase trip cancellation or interruption insurance in case you have to cancel due to illness or for any other reason, as tour payments are non-refundable as per [our terms and conditions](#). We advise you to get a plan that will cover all of your medical care and evacuation back to your country of residence.

MONEY

We recommend carrying US dollars. Please do not bring US dollar bills that are damaged in any way (broken tips and edges, ink marks, pieces of tape, etc.). Most businesses and individuals will not accept damaged bills. Travelers' checks/cheques are difficult to change, and it is not possible to do this everywhere, especially in remote areas. It would be very difficult and time consuming to have to look for financial institutions where you can cash travelers' checks during the tour. Since this is almost an all-inclusive tour, you would only need minimal cash to cover personal expenses like drinks, laundry service, phone calls from the hotels, bar expenses, souvenirs and gifts you want to take home, or any non-mandatory gratuities you may want to give to any person who you think has provided exceptional service. During our tour, neither ATM machines nor places to exchange US\$ to Q (Quetzales, the local currency) are easy to find. We recommend that you bring some US\$ and draw local currency at the ATM at the airport when you arrive in the country. Depending on your arrival time, some of the exchange houses at the airport will be open and we advise you to change currency there. Please note that credit cards are not accepted everywhere, especially in remote locations.

MEALS

During our Guatemala tours, we will either eat breakfast at the lodges that make breakfast available very early, or we will leave the lodge with a cup of coffee and have a packed or field breakfast in the field to maximize birding time. Most of the lunches are served at the lodges or in restaurants. This depends a lot on the day's schedule. The dinners are always hot meals, either in the lodges or in hotel restaurants. In restaurants, there are two menu options, one of which is always a vegetarian meal. In the lodges we have a fixed meal. Please let us know in advance about any dietary restrictions or preferences you may have. Often, on the last day in Guatemala, we have an *a la carte* meal.

We have found that Guatemalan cuisine is one of the most delicious and varied in the whole of Central America and the coffee is some of the finest in the region.

Bottled water during the trip is included in the tour price. Drinks, including soft drinks, fruit juices, alcoholic beverages, and beer are not included in the tour price.

ACCOMMODATION

We always aim to book the best accommodation available for our tours, to provide our clients with a memorable holiday. It is generally comfortable but not luxurious. In some remote regions, the lodges only offer basic accommodation; in these areas we either stay in these more basic lodges or even family homes, to ensure we have the best chances of finding our key target species. Where the birding sites are near to cities, we generally stay in better accommodation in the cities where possible.

Note on bedrooms: The price of our tour is per person sharing a twin bedroom. Most of our clients, even some couples, prefer to have their own bed to ensure a better sleep after a long day out birding. The standard matrimonial or double bed in South America is the normal double bed size, which might be too small for some people. Bedrooms with queen/king-size beds are normally found only in city hotels and are more expensive, and we do not include these rooms in the tour price. If you prefer to upgrade your room, the hotel will charge the difference directly to you (subject to availability). This surcharge is not included in the tour price.

HEALTH

Please refer to the [Center for Disease Control website](#) for health advice (including about malaria and vaccinations). Please also consult with your physician or your local travel clinic for recommendations. While not a requirement for entry into Guatemala (unless you are arriving from an infected area in another country), a yellow fever vaccination is a good idea for most people traveling to less developed and/or tropical countries, and the vaccination is valid for ten years. Hepatitis A, B and C, as well as polio, tetanus, rabies and typhoid protection is advised. Dengue fever is very infrequent and is transmitted by day-flying Aedes mosquitoes infected with the dengue virus. There is no prophylaxis against dengue fever, therefore proper clothing and use of insect repellent, especially in lowland areas, is the best protection. Diarrhea is always a tricky hazard whilst traveling in South America. Although some travelers do escape untouched, we ask you to consult your doctor and bring some medication to treat diarrhea, such as Imodium or Ciprofloxacin 500mg. We recommend drinking only bottled water and not eating in street shops where hygiene standards are low. Follow your tour leader's suggestions.

We carefully select the places where we go for meals. We ask you to clean your hands using hand sanitizer. Please note that sometimes the dramatic change from your normal diet might result in some mild stomach or digestive abnormalities that may disappear in a short time. Should nausea and/or fever follow, there may be a real diarrhea problem. Again, please ask your doctor what they recommend is best for you. Please do let us know about any medical condition you have, such as diabetes, asthma, allergies, heart conditions, or knee problems. Please also include phobias or anything you think we should know, so that we can take care of you and suggest what is best for you, so that you can have an enjoyable trip.

INSECTS

Insects should not be a big problem along most of our route, but they can be more abundant in the lowlands. We recommend that you wear loose-fitting long pants and long-sleeved shirts and keep insect repellent handy. Spraying your feet, socks, shoes, and the lower portion of pants with insect repellent will help reduce a problem with chiggers. Chiggers are burrowing mites that are well-spread throughout the Americas in hot areas. They occur on grass, and even though they do not spread any kind of disease, their bites produce long-term itching as an allergic reaction.

WHAT TO BRING

Kindly read our general list of what to bring on a birding tour [here](#). The tour leader will usually have a spotting scope for general use of all participants. However, we ask you to take brief views of the birds in order to allow all tour participants to have good views, especially of elusive species. If you like to enjoy longer scope views of species, you might consider bringing your own scope. Digiscoping is not allowed with the tour leader's scope. Please do not bring any military camouflage, as that conveys an inappropriate image to police and military personnel: a likelihood at highway checkpoints. Please avoid nylon or plastic jackets and/or rainwear of similar materials. Noisy clothing is annoying to others and may frighten birds, especially when owling.

SECURITY

Even though Guatemala has unfortunately had a bad reputation for crime for many years, the Guatemalan countryside in all areas that we visit is now considered safe and you will find that Guatemalans everywhere are friendly and helpful. However, cities such as Guatemala City and Flores experience the same problems as large cities everywhere, and you should take precautions to safeguard personal belongings such as money, passport and optical equipment. We recommend using money belts or security pouches worn inside your clothing. Avoid walking at night without informing your tour leader and don't walk around big cities displaying binoculars and big cameras.

ELECTRICITY

Different electrical plug-in sockets are present in Guatemala, such as Type A, B, G and I. The voltage is usually 120 volts. We strongly recommend bringing a surge protector and a universal adaptor to fit your electric devices into all kinds of sockets.

PASSPORT AND VISA

A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Guatemala is required. We recommend having a few blank pages; some countries require a full page for the stamp in your passport. Bring a few Xerox copies of your passport and details of your Consular Representative in Guatemala as well. Citizens of the USA, Canada, Australia, New

Zealand, the UK, the EU, and Latin America do not currently require a visa to enter Guatemala. This may change so please check carefully. Citizens of any other country should check with their local Guatemalan Consulate about what requirements there are to get into Guatemala.

TOUR VEHICLES & SEAT ROTATION

We mostly use vans (Mercedes Sprinters) for all our Guatemala tours when we have more than 4 participants on the tour. We do occasionally switch to 4x4 vehicles when negotiating rougher sections of road. At Birding Ecotours, we employ a seat rotation policy on all our small-group set departure tours. This will ensure everybody has equal opportunities throughout the tour. Unfortunately motion sickness will not excuse you from our seat rotation policy and thus if you are prone to motion sickness you should ensure that you bring the necessary medication. We also require that you are fit and flexible enough to maneuver yourself to the back of the vehicle. Tour participants should also be considerate about what extra equipment they bring into the general seating area of the vehicle (rather than the luggage section). We request, from both a comfort and a safety point of view, that general thoroughfares and/or extra seats are not obstructed with camera equipment, tripods, etc.

