

# Birding Ecotours



## GUATEMALA: HIGHLAND SPECIALS AND HORNED GUAN

02–12 MARCH 2027



*Horned Guan* is considered the holy grail of Central American birds and is the main target of our trip.

Guatemala is an underrated birding destination and among the most remarkable avian countries in Central America. It offers visitors a rich avifauna including classic Central American jewels like the splendid and highly sought **Resplendent Quetzal**, **Tody Motmot**, **Turquoise-browed Motmot** and **Keel-billed Toucan**. It also boasts localized near endemics shared only with the Chiapas region of Mexico, such as the handsome **Pink-headed Warbler**, **Belted Flycatcher**, **Azure-rumped Tanager** and the enigmatic **Horned Guan**.

Other northern Central America specials (shared only with Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras) such as **Fulvous Owl**, **Highland Guan**, **White-bellied Chachalaca**, **Brown-backed Solitaire**, **Rufous-browed Wren**, **Blue-throated Motmot** and **Blue-and-white Mockingbird** are easily found here.

Our trip starts in Guatemala City and explores the Sierra de Cuchumatanes, home of the **Goldman's Warbler**. For many years this was considered one of the true Guatemalan endemics, but an isolated population was recently found in Chiapas, Mexico. Today some authorities recognize it as a full species, while others treat it as a subspecies of **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, which is also a target of our trip. We will spend several days birding the montane forests looking for highland specials. The scenery here is incredible.

Have you ever heard the expression “The Horned Guan Death March”? An apt description indeed because until a few years ago the only way to see this bird in Guatemala was to make a 03:00 a.m. start and hike up the steep slopes of the Atitlan Volcano. This strenuous endeavor was suitable only for the very fit, making the species an unattainable dream for many birders. The good news is that **Horned Guan** has been found in the forests around the Tacaná Volcano in an area accessible by car. Join us on this 11-day tour in search of this extraordinary bird, while enjoying Guatemala's active volcanoes, world-class coffee, rich gastronomy, and vibrant Mayan culture.

This 11-day tour is easily combined with our [Guatemala: Tikal and Mayan Rainforest Highlights](#) tour to create a comprehensive Guatemala experience.

## Itinerary (11 days/10 nights)

### Day 1. Arrival in Guatemala City

Upon arriving in [Guatemala City](#), you will be transferred to the hotel.

Overnight: [Hotel Barceló](#), Guatemala City

### Day 2. Flight to Huehuetenango and transfer to La Alfalfa area

Today we start our adventure flying to the city of Huehuetenango located in the foothills of the Sierra de Cuchumatanes, a large mountain range in the northern part of the state bordering Sierra de Chiapas, Mexico. We will head directly to the La Alfalfa area at Unicornio Azul Lodge where we spend the whole day birding the lodge grounds and the route to the lodge looking for incredible species including the beautiful **Pink-headed Warbler**, one of the most wanted species in Guatemala.



*The stunning **Pink-headed Warbler** is one of the stars of our Guatemala birding tour (photo Renato Fernandez).*

Other top species around Unicornio Azul Lodge include **Buff-breasted Flycatcher**, **Crescent-faced Warbler**, **Rock Wren**, **Brown-backed Solitaire**, **Great Silky-flycatcher**, **Rufous-browed Wren**, **Black-capped Swallow**, **Blue-throated Motmot**, **Hermit Warbler**, **Steller's Jay**, **Northern Flicker**, **White-eared Hummingbird**, **Mexican Violetear**, **Greater Pewee**, **Velasquez Woodpecker**, **Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer**, **Black Thrush**, **Grace's Warbler**, **Brown Creeper**, **Black-headed Siskin**, **Broad-tailed Hummingbird**, **Black-throated Jay**, **Spot-crowned Woodcreeper**, **Yellow-eyed Junco**, and **Spotted Towhee**. At night we will try for the **Mexican Whip-poor-will** and, if we are lucky, for the enigmatic and seldom seen **Unspotted Saw-whet Owl**.

Overnight: Unicornio Azul Lodge, La Alfalfa

### **Day 3. Exploring Todos los Santos**

Today we make a special excursion to explore Todos los Santos in the Cuchumatanes in search of the localized and range-restricted **Goldman's Warbler**, found only in this part of the country and with an isolated small population in Mexico.



*Goldman's Warbler is another localized target (photo Renato Fernandez).*

Our visit to Todos los Santos aims for **Black-capped Siskin, Yellow-eyed Junco, Rufous-collared Robin, Northern Raven, Hutton's Vireo, Red Crossbill, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Singing Quail, Eastern Bluebird, Acorn Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush, Bushtit, Violet-green Swallow, Bushy-crested Jay, Black-vented Oriole, Red-faced Warbler** and others.

Overnight: Unicornio Azul Lodge, La Alfalfa

#### **Day 4. Union Reforma birding**

Today we leave the lodge and start our drive to the base of Tacaná Volcano and spend the afternoon birding the remote Union Reforma site. Here in the humid montane forest, we look for **Highland Guan, Amethyst-throated Hummingbird, Mountain Trogon, Blue-throated Motmot, White-throated Hummingbird, Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo, Rufous-browed Wren, Blue-headed Vireo and Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush.** We focus on the shy **Blue-and-white Mockingbird, Rivoli's Hummingbird, Green-throated Mountaingem, Northern Tufted Flycatcher, Pine Siskin, Mountain Elaenia and Flame-colored Tanager.** We stay overnight in the basic Sibinal Lodge.

Overnight: Sibinal Lodge, Sibinal

### Day 5. Tacaná Volcano and the search for the Horned Guan

We begin before dawn in a convoy of 4x4 vehicles, driving up to the Tacaná Volcano to look for the sought after **Horned Guan**. This is the primary target of the day but we should have other avian encounters with species such as **Broad-tailed Hummingbird**, **Steller's Jay**, **Wilson's Warbler**, **Townsend's Warbler**, **Chestnut-capped Brushfinch**, **Hammond's Flycatcher**, **Mountain Thrush**, **Golden-browed Warbler**, **Garnet-throated Hummingbird**, and **Crescent-chested Warbler**.

Overnight: Sibinal Lodge, Sibinal

### Day 6. Transfer to San Rafael

Today we leave Sibinal and transfer to San Rafael de la Cuesta, arriving in the afternoon. If time permits, we might get some interesting species such as **Collared Trogon**, **Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush**, **Brown-capped Vireo**, **Spotted Woodcreeper**, **Black-headed Saltator**, **Scaly-throated Foliage-gleaner**, **Guatemalan Tyrannulet** and **Bushy-crested Jay**.

Overnight: Victorias Hotel, San Rafael de la Cuesta



*Resplendent Quetzal, the iconic bird of Central America.*

### Day 7. San Rafael and transfer to Tarrales

Another early start to explore Refugio El Quetzal where, with luck, we'll see the splendid male **Resplendent Quetzal**. Other targets for this area are the localized **Azure-rumped Tanager** and the handsome **Blue-crowned Chlorophonia**, **Emerald-chinned Hummingbird**, **Rose-throated Becard**, **Black-throated Green Warbler**, **Black-and-white Warbler**, **Worm-eating Warbler**,

**Yellow-throated Euphonia, Slate-throated Whitestart, Northern Emerald Toucanet, Olive Warbler, Sparkling-tailed Woodstar, Red-tailed Hawk, Western Tanager, Ruddy Foliage-gleaner, and others.** Then we will transfer to Los Tarrales Natural Reserve. At night we will try for the **Northern Potoo** and **Mottled Owl**.

Overnight: Los Tarrales Natural Reserve

### Day 8. Los Tarrales Natural Reserve

We have a full day to explore Los Tarrales Natural Reserve to look for **Long-tailed Manakin, Tody Motmot, White-bellied Chachalaca, Lesson's Motmot, Orange-chinned Parakeet, Spot-breasted Oriole, Scrub Euphonia, Crested Guan, Turquoise-browed Motmot, Gartered Trogon, Rufous-and-white Wren, Collared Aracari, Masked Tityra, Sungrebe, Least Grebe, Cinnamon-bellied Saltator** and others. At night we will try for **Black-and-white Owl**.

Overnight: Los Tarrales Natural Reserve

### Day 9. Belted Flycatcher and transfer to Antigua

We then leave Tarrales and head to the dry, steep slopes above Lake Atitlán in search of the range-restricted **Belted Flycatcher**. Despite habitat loss, a few birds still breed in the area and we will attempt to locate them here. Other interesting species here include **Blue-and-white Mockingbird**. The hike to see the **Belted Flycatcher** may be strenuous but the reward should be worth it.



*Belted Flycatcher, another localized special of this tour (photo Renato Fernandez).*

Then we will be transferred by ferry across the Atitlan Lake (once habitat of the now extinct Atitlan Grebe) to get our vehicle and head to Antigua. If time permits, we will visit the bird feeders at El Pilar to get views of hummingbirds like **Rufous Sabrewing** and **Beryline Hummingbird**, and **Green-throated Mountaingem**.

Overnight: Antigua

#### **Day 10. Finca del Pilar Reserve and transfer to Guatemala City**

A predawn start to visit Finca del Pilar Reserve in search of the most wanted **Fulvous Owl**. Other birds include **White-eared Ground Sparrow**, **Rufous-browed Wren**, **Blue-throated Motmot**, **Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo**, **Brown-backed Solitaire**, **Singing Quail**, **Mountain Trogon**, **Northern Emerald Toucanet**, **Inca Dove**, **Bushtit**, **Black-capped Swallow**, **Band-backed Wren**, **Black-headed Siskin**, **Elegant Euphonia**, **Black-vented Oriole**, **White-naped Brushfinch**, **Chestnut-capped Warbler**, **Squirrel Cuckoo**, **Philadelphia Vireo**, and **Cinnamon Hummingbird**. After lunch, we transfer to Guatemala City.

Overnight: Hotel Barceló, Guatemala City

#### **Day 11. Transfer to the airport for flight home or connect with the Tikal Tour**

Today we transfer to the airport to catch our international flight home or continue with the **Birding Tour Guatemala: Tikal and Mayan Rainforest Highlights** tour.

*Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.*

<b>Duration:</b>	11 days
<b>Group size:</b>	4–8
<b>Dates:</b>	02–12 March 2027
<b>Start:</b>	Guatemala City, Guatemala
<b>End:</b>	Guatemala City, Guatemala
<b>Prices:</b>	US\$7,370 per person sharing – based on 4–8 participants (2027)
<b>Single supplements:</b>	US\$531 (2027)

**Price includes:**

All accommodation  
All meals (except when indicated)  
Land transportation  
Private English speaking tour leader  
Admission fees  
Local guides  
Transfer from the airport to the hotel on Day 1  
Water

**Price excludes:**

Hotel and dinner in Guatemala City on Day 11  
Personal expenses such as laundry, phone calls, internet access, room service, etc.  
Personal beverages and alcoholic drinks  
Domestic flights from Guatemala City-Huehuetenango; roughly US\$188 (we can help you purchase your flight ticket)  
Luggage fees such as excess weight on flights  
Gratuities (please see [our tipping guidelines blog](#))