BIRDING TOUR USA: NORTHERN ARIZONA, THE GRAND CANYON, AND CONDORS

21–26 AUGUST 2027
22–27 AUGUST 2028
22–27 AUGUST 2029



*The iconic **California Condor** will be searched for on this trip.*

Overview

Immediately following our tour of the desert and scrublands of south-eastern Arizona, we begin our exciting adventure to the northern portion of the state. The area north of the Mogollon Rim, an escarpment that defines the southwestern edge of the Colorado Plateau, presents a completely different impression of Arizona with its extensive ponderosa pine forests, permanently snow-capped peaks, and steep canyons. The most famous of these canyons, the Grand Canyon, is one of the seven wonders of the natural world and is located in the amazing Grand Canyon National Park. The birds in this region are more typical of the Rocky Mountains, such as **Lewis's Woodpecker** and **Pinyon Jay**.



One of the many amazing views of the Grand Canyon and surrounding area.

The tour begins with a taste of the desert and juniper scrub region just outside of Phoenix for a few speciality birds such as **Black-chinned Sparrow**. We then head north out of the desert to the city of Flagstaff, which will act as our hub for most of this tour. Towering just north of the city are the majestic San Francisco Peaks, the highest mountains in Arizona at 12,633 feet (3,851 meters). Home to a long list of iconic Western United States species, such as the amazingly hued **Mountain Bluebird**, the striking **Steller's Jay** and the bizarre **Clark's Nutcracker**, these mountains make for some fantastic birding. From Flagstaff, we will make trips further north to both the Grand Canyon and Vermilion Cliffs. Besides some of the most jaw-dropping views on the planet, these areas are excellent for birding with the true highlight and target being the Critically Endangered **California Condor**.

This tour can be combined with our Comprehensive Southeast Arizona — The Desert and Sky Islands tour which precedes our northern Arizona tour.

Detailed Itinerary (6 days/5 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Phoenix and searching for lovebirds

For those joining from our exciting southeast Arizona tour, which you certainly do not want to miss, you will be transferred to Phoenix from Tucson by your guide to begin day 1. Other participants will arrive at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport and be picked up by the rest of the group to begin the tour. Everyone should plan on transferring to our hotel for a small break and to settle in. From here, we will make a quick stop at one of several local recreation areas to get a little birding in and score our first target, **Rosy-faced Lovebird**, which is countable in the ABA region. After this, we will head off to dinner for a chance to get better acquainted and discuss the exciting prospects of the trip.

Overnight: Phoenix



*We'll keep a lookout for **Greater Roadrunner** while traversing southeast Arizona.*

Day 2. Mount Ord to Flagstaff

Located in the Mazatzal Mountains northeast of Phoenix, Mount Ord offers us a great chance at several unique species, such as **Grey Vireo** and **Black-chinned Sparrow**. The lower slopes of this mountain, covered in chaparral and juniper scrub, can be alive with the song and bustle of birds early in the morning, and we will hopefully obtain views of some dry country specialties including **Scott's Oriole** and **Phainopepla**. The Old Beeline Highway, our next stop, is a traditional site for two normally rare to uncommon raptors in the United States, **Common Black Hawk** and **Zone-tailed Hawk**. They nest in this lovely riparian area along Sycamore Creek, which runs right by the historic highway. While traversing through this beautiful drive, we will keep our

eyes peeled to the sides of the road for a potential **Greater Roadrunner** or even a covey of **Gambel's Quails** running by.

As the temperatures begin to climb, we say goodbye to the desert and start our journey towards the mountains in the north. Flagstaff is a lovely city riddled with urban parks, weaved together with a system of forest corridors and an extensive urban trail system, providing us with excellent birding areas to enjoy. The afternoon and evening hours will be spent exploring a few of these areas and hopefully tracking down some fantastic western species, such as the bizarre **Lewis's Woodpecker**.

Overnight: Flagstaff



*We hope to track down the incredibly colorful **Lewis's Woodpecker**.*

Day 3. Vermilion Cliffs and condor searching

Encompassing a massive area of almost 300,000 acres, the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument lies in the far northern reaches of Arizona. These cliffs have been the most reliable area in recent years for our top target and one of the world's best birds, **California Condor**. We will spend the better part of the day, if needed, searching for this amazing bird while enjoying the incredible scenic views on offer. While scanning the cliffs, we hope to encounter a few other raptors like **Peregrine Falcon** and **Zone-tailed Hawk**. After a hopefully successful trip, we will head back to Flagstaff for some evening birding.

Overnight: Flagstaff

Day 4. Grand Canyon National Park

The Grand Canyon, carved by the mighty Colorado River, is visually overwhelming for both its immense size and colorful rock walls. We will make a day trip to the South Rim to enjoy this spectacular geological feature while also looking for several Great Basin targets. With any luck, we will score another sighting of **California Condor**, soaring and roaming the great abyss. On our way to and from the canyon, we will make a few stops in the surrounding Pinyon-juniper woodland habitat for species such as **Pinyon Jay**, **Juniper Titmouse**, **White-throated Swift** and more.

Overnight: Flagstaff



*The brilliant color of this **Western Bluebird** really pops in the sunlight.*

Day 5. San Francisco Peaks

Alpine meadows, groves of aspen and pine, and burnt fields of tree snags, create a habitat mosaic that offers an assortment of birds more typical of the Great Basin than of the Sierra Madre of Mexico (and barely into the USA), which we focus on in our southeast Arizona tour. We spend the day exploring this alpine mosaic habitat via several sites in the San Francisco Peaks for species such as **American Dusky Flycatcher**, **Green-tailed Towhee**, and **Mountain Bluebird**. We will also keep an eye out on the numerous tree snags for woodpeckers like the uncommon **American Three-toed Woodpecker** and the boldly patterned **Williamson's Sapsucker**. In the late afternoon, we will make a visit to the Kachina Wetlands just south of town for **Yellow-headed Blackbird** and **Virginia Rail**, before preparing to head back to Phoenix for our final evening.

Overnight: Phoenix

Day 6. Tour concludes

This morning concludes our northern Arizona tour with a drop off at the Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. Some participants may have joined from our southeast Arizona tour and transport to the Tucson airport can be arranged if needed. We hope you enjoyed the amazing birds and spectacular views on offer in this region.

Overnight: Not included

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 guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling or other factors.

Tour Details

Duration:	6 days
Group size:	4–8
Dates:	21–26 August 2027 22–27 August 2028 22–27 August 2029
Start:	Phoenix
End:	Phoenix (Transfer to Tucson is possible for those who request it).
Prices:	US$ 3,134 per person sharing, assuming 4–8 participants (2027) US$ 3,460 per person sharing, assuming 4–8 participants (2028) US$ 3,590 per person sharing, assuming 4–8 participants (2029)
Single supplements:	US$ 584 (2027) US$ 590 (2028) US$ 620 (2029)

Price includes:

Meals
Accommodation
Transport
Guiding fees

Price excludes:

Flights
Personal insurance
Alcoholic beverages
Gratuities (please see our tipping guidelines blog)
Laundry service
Personal expenses such as gifts