Guatemala

Temples, Trogons & Volcanoes (Relaxed)



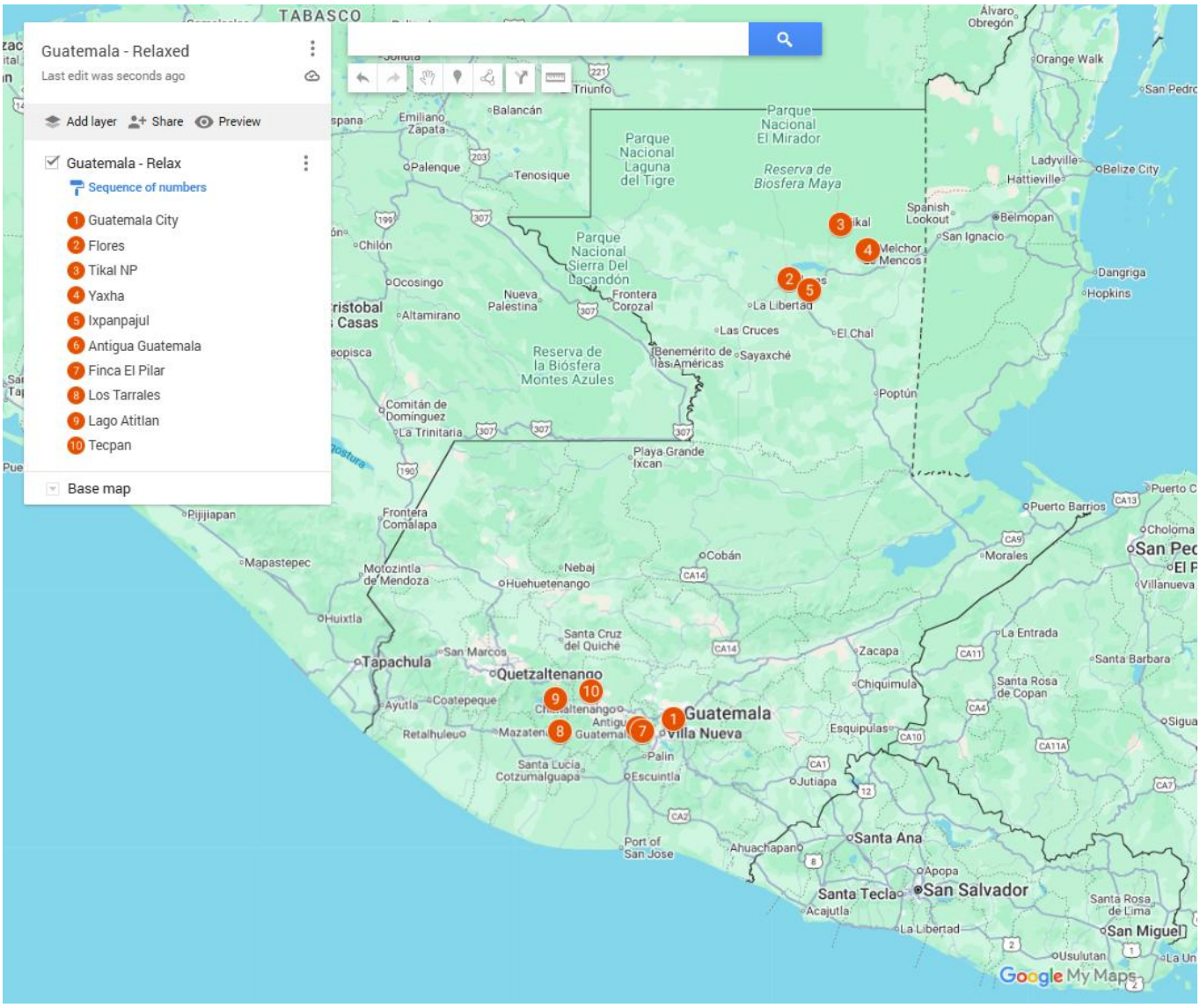
Wine-throated Hummingbird by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Spectacular volcanoes, highland lakes and remarkable Mayan temple complexes form the brilliant backdrop to our new Relaxed tour of Guatemala. The northern Petén region of Guatemala is covered in extensive lowland rainforest and ancient Mayan cities and temples. We'll spend time in and around Tikal National Park, one of the most biodiverse biological stations in Central America. There are many highlights, but Ocellated Turkey is surely one of the most sought after, and here they can often be found mooching about the historical ruins. Various species of trogon, toucan, hawk-eagle, warbler, and parrot are in order, whilst we shall also search for Black-throated Shrike-Tanager, Spot-tailed and Yucatan Nightjars, Orange-breasted Falcon, Agami Heron and the impressive Great Curassow! Superb birding and mammal watching combined with fascinating historical insights and architecture.

The central Guatemalan highlands are best known for shade coffee production, and more recently - tourism coupled with a strong environmental bond. Whether its cloud forests or coffee fincas – we'll be well occupied with several stunning species such as the gorgeous Pink-headed Warbler, Blue-throated Motmot, Blue-and-white Mockingbird, Slender Sheartail, Bushy-crested Jay, Black-capped Swallow, Belted Flycatcher, Prevost's & Grey-crowned Ground Sparrows, Wine-throated Hummingbird, Green-throated Mountaingem, and Azure-rumped Tanager. This tour showcases some of the best birding sites in Guatemala, augmented with comfortable lodgings, delicious fare, and fabulous scenery throughout.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Guatemala City**
Day 2	**Guatemala City, flight to Flores & transfer to Tikal**
Days 3 & 4	**Tikal National Park**
Day 5	**Tikal National Park to Flores via Yaxha**
Day 6	**Ixpanpajul Wildlife Centre**
Day 7	**Villa Maya to Flores, flight to Guatemala City, drive to Antigua Guatemala**
Day 8	**Finca el Pilar**
Day 9	**Antigua Guatemala to Los Tarrales Nature Reserve**
Days 10 & 11	**Los Tarrales Nature Reserve**
Day 12	**Los Tarrales Nature Reserve to Lago Atitlan**
Day 13	**Mirador Rey Tepepul & surrounds**
Day 14	**Lago Atitlan to Guatemala City via Tecpan**
Day 15	**Final departure**



Birding sites in detail

Universidad Francisco Marroquin. The campus has remnants of the once wide-spread pine and evergreen oak forest that covered the area prior to the development of Guatemala City. Our easy stroll should turn up White-bellied Chachalaca, Grey Silky-flycatcher, Clay-colored Thrush, Black-capped Swallows overhead, Velasquez's Woodpecker, near-endemic Azure-crowned and White-eared Hummingbirds, White-collared Swift, Great-tailed Grackle and White-winged Doves.



Ocellated Turkey by Clayton Burne

Tikal National Park. Believed to have supported over three million people at its peak, Tikal was once one of the major cultural, military and population centres of the Mayan civilisation. The Tikal temple complex and main city cover an area of more than 16km^2 (6.2 miles^2) and includes about 3 000 structures; though the residential area of Tikal covers an estimated 60km^2 (23 miles^2), all of which now falls within the 570km^2 (220 miles^2) Tikal National Park. The city itself is believed to have supported up to 90 000 people but the site was abandoned in the latter part of the 10th century, mostly due to the lack of water – remarkably the city relied entirely on rainfall! For centuries it lay untouched as the rainforest regenerated and swallowed it up, covering all the temples and other buildings. Now much of the city has been restored, although thousands of structures are still buried under mounds of dirt and covered in trees. Tikal was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979 and it now attracts thousands of visitors annually.

During our time here, we should soon become acquainted with the more common denizens of this remarkable park, including flocks of unbelievably patterned and remarkably tame Ocellated Turkeys. This stunning gamebird is one of only two species of turkey and is restricted to the Yucatan Peninsula. Another gamebird species that is commonly encountered in flocks here is Plain Chachalaca, while we should also observe the impressive Great Curassow and Crested Guan during our time at Tikal. The strident yet melodious bubbling call of Montezuma Oropendola will be bursting around us as these attractive icterids prepare themselves for roosting in large flocks. Brown Jays will also be obvious, another common bird of open spaces. The pond area near our lodge holds some interesting birds including the nocturnal Boat-billed Heron (such a distinctive bird that it used to be considered



White-collared Manakin by Adam Riley

the sole member of a unique family), Limpkins, and if we are lucky, Ruddy Crake and Grey-necked Wood Rail. Here we can also observe the uncommon Morelet's Crocodile, another Yucatan endemic.



Orange-breasted Falcon by Dušan Brinkhuizen

We will spend time exploring this remarkable city and temple complex in the company of a local historical guide who will describe the Mayan civilisation to us and explain the significance of Tikal and the buildings that we pass, as well as the way of life and religion of the Mayan people. At the same time, we will be on the constant lookout for new birds. It's an exciting feeling to have these grand ruins towering over us while birding through this reserve that teems with wildlife. In the late afternoon, we will climb to the top of the highest temple-pyramid in Tikal measuring 70m (230ft) and completed in 731CE, in fact, the highest pre-Columbian structure in the Americas, and gaze out over an endless vista of tropical rainforests broken only by Mayan temples – a truly breath-taking experience that will no doubt be a lifelong memory! On top of this, we also stand an excellent chance of observing one of the world's rarest raptors, the dashing Orange-breasted Falcon!

We will keep an eye out for Brown-hooded Parrot, Stripe-throated Hermit, Black-headed Trogon, Chestnut-colored Woodpecker, Northern Plain Xenops, Tawny-winged, Northern Barred and Ivory-billed Woodcreepers, Plain Antvireo, cute Stub-tailed Spadebill, Red-capped and White-collared Manakins, Northern Rough-winged Swallow (the distinctive Ridgeway's subspecies), White-bellied Emerald, active Trilling Gnatwren, Black-cowled Oriole, the localised Black-throated Shrike-Tanager, Green Honeycreeper and Blue Bunting.



Yucatan Jay by Clayton Burne

The grounds around Tikal also teem with a host of North American migrant warblers, flycatchers, vireos, orioles, tanagers and grosbeaks, with notable species including White-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos, Wood and Swainson's Thrushes, Blue-winged, Golden-winged, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Black-throated Green, Kentucky, Hooded and Worm-eating Warblers, American Redstart, Ovenbird and both Northern and Louisiana Waterthrush.

Other possible highlights include White-necked Puffbird, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Dot-winged Antwren, Mangrove Vireo, Green and the localised Yucatan Jays, Green-backed Sparrow, Rose-throated Tanager, Black-faced and Blue-black Grosbeaks, the stunning yet tricky Grey-throated Chat, Blue Bunting and Yellow-billed Cacique. This region is also excellent for raptors, and we will keep an eye out for King Vulture, Black and Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Crested Eagle if we are extremely fortunate, Northern Crested Caracara, Grey, White, Roadside

and Black-collared Hawks, Double-toothed, Plumbeous and Grey-headed Kites, Laughing Falcon, Barred and Collared Forest Falcons, and American Kestrel.

Mammals are prolific, and besides the howler and spider monkeys, we should observe inquisitive bands of White-nosed Coati, which occur here in great densities, Central American Agouti, Red Brocket Deer, and Grey Fox. Jaguar and other rare species do occur, but we would be extremely lucky to observe any of these!



Agami Heron by Lev Frid

Yaxha. The ancient city of Yaxha is now situated within an extensive national park protecting vast rainforests and named for an adjacent lake ('Yaxha' means blue-green water). This city was the 3rd largest Mayan centre, reaching its peak between 250-600CE and supporting an estimated population of 42 000 people. Yaxha was rediscovered in 1904 and the site contains over 500 structures, including a twin pyramid temple complex.

We will spend the morning birding around these fascinating structures, and at times base ourselves on top of the buildings where we will obtain a superb view of the towering forest canopy. Birds are abundant here, mostly offering a new suite of lowland rainforest denizens, and visitors far less numerous than at the more famous Tikal, all adding to the magical experience. Species seen here on previous Rockjumper tours include Crane Hawk, Olive-throated Parakeet, White-crowned Parrot, Red-lored and Mealy Amazons, Wedge-tailed Sabrewing, White-necked Jacobin, Purple-crowned Fairy, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Lesson's Motmot, White-whiskered Puffbird, the multi-coloured Keel-billed Toucan, impressive Pale-billed Woodpecker, the lovely Olive-backed Euphonia, Golden-crowned Warbler and Grey-headed Tanager (another ant swarm specialist). Yaxha also supports healthy populations of the impressively loud Guatemalan Black Howler Monkey and agile Geoffroy's Spider Monkeys.



Ornate Hawk-Eagle by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Villa Maya. Our lodge is situated on the shores of a small lake where we may see a few waterbirds including, with some luck, Ruddy Crake. Several miles of trails access various habitats on the grounds and easy walking gives us access to a variety of habitats from secondary forests to swamps. Species we can be on the lookout for include Scaled Pigeon, American Pygmy Kingfisher, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Blue Ground Dove and Great Antshrike. Even Agami Heron is sometimes seen on the lodge grounds!

Ixpanpajul Wildlife Centre. This park was named after one of the more typical secondary growth trees of the region, the Ixpanpajul (*Parathesis cubana*). We'll expect to find many of

the same species we've found over the past few days, with raucous Brown Jays and Plain Chachalacas, moon-walking Red-capped Manakins, Slaty-tailed, Gartered and Black-headed Trogons, desirable Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Great Curassow, Blue Ground Dove, Wedge-tailed Sabrewing, White-collared Manakin, White-bellied Wren, Keel-billed Toucan, Mayan Antthrush, Stub-tailed Spadebill, Grey-throated Chat and Rose-throated Tanager.



Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo by Lev Frid

El Pilar. This private shade-coffee farm is perched on a nearby hillside above the city Antigua Guatemala offering dramatic views of the three surrounding volcanoes (one of them active and smoking) that loom over the town.

Much of the natural forest habitat here is protected as a conservation area and visitors are welcome to walk the region's numerous trails. We can anticipate many exciting and colourful species! Hummingbird feeders situated on the lower slopes are swarmed by a profusion of highland species, often gathering in large numbers. Several species can be seen, including White-eared, Azure-crowned, Berylline, and Rivoli's Hummingbirds, Green-throated Mountaingem and the near endemic Rufous and Violet Sabrewings.

The lower slopes are also home to Bushy-crested Jay and Emerald Toucanet, while mixed flocks may include Rose-throated Becard, Common Squirrel Cuckoo, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, scarce Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo, Acorn, Golden-fronted (Velasquez's), Golden-olive and Hairy Woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Guatemalan Flicker (a recent split). Even the scarce Collared Forest Falcon or White-breasted Hawk might appear. In the scrubby undergrowth, we'll look for the shy White-naped Brushfinch as well as Inca and White-tipped Doves, Ruddy Foliage-gleaner, and Rufous-capped Warbler.



Rufous Sabrewing by Adam Riley

Driving up to a higher elevation of around 2 000m (6 600ft), a convenient car park will allow spectacular views overlooking the volcanoes Agua, Acatenango and the smoking Fuego. A different selection of birds occur in the drier forest habitat, including the distinctive local race of Plumbeous Vireo, Blue-headed and Hutton's Vireos, Flame-colored Tanager, Hooded Grosbeak, families of Eastern Bluebirds, Rufous-collared and Black Thrush, Hermit, MacGillivray's, Red-faced and Golden-browed Warblers, Black-vented Oriole and Black-headed Siskin.

Los Tarrales. The finca of Los Tarrales is the result of three generations of concerted conservation efforts to allow the bird and other wildlife populations to successfully regenerate. Employing local Kaqchikel families living within the protected area, the reserve sustains itself by cultivating ornamental plants as well

as the processing of its shade-grown coffee. Birdlife abounds in the gardens around our accommodations and an active feeding station attracts the likes of Cinnamon Hummingbird, Velasquez's Woodpecker, Lesson's Motmot, Yellow-winged, Blue-grey and Summer Tanagers, numbers of Red-legged Honeycreeper, Melodious Blackbird, Yellow-throated Euphonia, Black-headed Saltator, Rufous-naped Wren and the striking White-throated Magpie-Jay. Great photographic opportunities indeed!



Flame-colored Tanager by Adam Riley

Our time will be spent walking a trail on the lower slopes of Los Tarrales. Here our main targets include the stunning Long-tailed Manakin, which is best located in fruiting trees, the elaborately patterned White-eared Ground Sparrow, furtive Tody Motmot, drab Guatemalan Tyrannulet, White-bellied Emerald and Gartered Trogon (a split from Violaceous) and leks of Blue-throated Sapphires (Goldentail). This is also a good site for three species of cracid – the localised Highland Guan and White-bellied Chachalaca along with the more widespread Crested Guan.

In the afternoons, we will concentrate on the trails closer to our lodge, where we will bird in more open country. Birds are abundant here, with typical species including raucous family parties of White-bellied Chachalacas, flocks of Orange-fronted, Orange-chinned and Pacific Parakeets, and small groups of Yellow-naped Amazon. Other highlights may be Collared Forest Falcon, the elongated Common Squirrel Cuckoo, Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, Blue-tailed and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, and the stunning Long-billed Starthroat.



Turquoise-browed Motmot by Adam Riley

We also have chances for entertaining Collared Aracaris, Turquoise-browed Motmot, Lineated, Smoky-brown and Golden-olive Woodpeckers, Rufous-breasted Spinetail, Barred Antshrike, Greenish Elaenia, Northern Beardless Tyrannulet and Common Tody-Flycatcher. Flycatcher diversity is excellent, with Least, Yellow-bellied, Boat-billed, Great Crested and Brown-crested all possible, along with ever-present Tropical Kingbirds and strident Great Kiskadees. A wide range of migrant and resident warblers are also likely, with Tennessee, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, American Yellow, Black-throated Green, Townsend's, Black-and-white, Wilson's and Rufous-capped Warblers, plus Ovenbird and the taxonomically unique Yellow-breasted Chat all possible.

We'll also watch out for Spot-breasted, Baltimore and Altamira Orioles, the near-endemic Prevost's Ground

Sparrow, Western and White-winged Tanagers, and both Indigo and the spectacular Painted Buntings.

Raptors are a feature here and our previous tours have recorded Cooper's, Broad-winged, Short-tailed, Red-tailed, White, Grey, Roadside and Great Black Hawks, Black Hawk-Eagle, Northern Crested Caracara, Laughing Falcon, Bat Falcon and the magnificent King Vulture.



Resplendent Quetzal by Dušan Brinkhuizen

On the mammal front, Central American Agouti, White-nosed Coati, Variegated Squirrel, Grey Fox and White-tailed Deer are distinct possibilities. A nocturnal foray here could produce Mottled and Black-and-white Owls, Northern Potoo and Common Pauraque.

Lago Atitlan. This stunning volcanic crater-lake is the deepest water-body in Central America. Atitlan has been coined by some as 'the world's most beautiful lake', and this will become self-explanatory when gazing across the blue waters surrounded by three of the most magnificent volcanoes in Guatemala: Toliman, Atitlan and San Pedro. Sadly, we are too late to find the Atitlan Flightless Grebe (the last pair died out as recently as 1989) during our time here.

Mirador Rey Tepepul. Mirador Rey Tepepul will give us opportunities to see Highland Guan, Sparkling-tailed Woodstar, Emerald-chinned Hummingbird, the fantastic Resplendent Quetzal, Black Thrush, Blue-and-white Mockingbird, Bar-winged Oriole and Azure-rumped (Cabanis's) Tanager amongst others.

Panajachel. Panajachel is a small town situated on the shores of Lake Atitlan. Here we will sample some secondary habitats outside of town where we hope to catch up with Slender Sheartail, one of the trickiest hummers in the world! If the right flowers are blooming, there is also the chance of the equally difficult Sparkling-tailed Woodstar. Some of the more regular denizens of the scrub include Lesser Goldfinch, Prevost's Ground Sparrow, and a host of boreal migrant flycatchers, warblers, orioles, and tanagers. There is a chance here of the tricky Blue-and-white Mockingbird, and one of the most sought-after species in the area: Belted Flycatcher. With a range restricted to montane dry valley scrub in Guatemala and neighbouring far-south Mexico, this bird is on most folks' wish list. Given its unique crest and plumage (let's face it, many flycatchers aren't as



Slender-tailed Sheartail by Adam Riley

showy as this one) the species will warrant a thorough search in the area.

Tecpan. The pine and oak mixed temperate forest of El Rincon Suizo in the Tecpan area gives us further chances for the delightful Pink-headed Warbler, a stunning species and one of Guatemala's most sought-after specialties. Other birds that we will look for include Acorn Woodpecker, Pacific Parakeet, Painted Redstart, Hermit, Red-faced and the monotypic Olive Warbler as well as numerous other migrant warblers, Blue-throated Motmot, Blue-and-white Mockingbird, Steller's Jay (rather different looking to the northern forms of this species), American Bushtit, Band-backed Wren, Amethyst-throated Mountaingem, Spotted and Spot-crowned Woodcreepers, Brown Creeper, Pine Flycatcher and, if we are very fortunate, Scaled Antpitta (seen on previous Rockjumper tours to this area).



Pink-headed Warbler by Lev Frid

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Moderate. Suitable for most birding / wildlife interest levels.
Birding Ease		Moderate, mostly forest birding.
Accommodation		Comfortable, some simple lodges.
Walking / Trails		Most walks on relatively flat ground. Depending on weather conditions, some areas can be muddy/slippery.
Vehicles / Roads		Mostly sealed roads between towns, changing to dirt in remoter areas. Mountain passes and eroded dirt roads can be bumpy. Most roads are winding.
Photography		Average to good. Many species are seen within the forest or in the canopy.
Annoyances		Winding roads can cause motion sickness, some small biting insects. The lowlands around Tikal can be hot and very humid.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 15;
- All lodgings;
- Drinking water;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services.
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- No tips or gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry, and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

Our Relaxed series of tours are designed to focus on having an enjoyable holiday with a bird and wildlife focus. Where possible; we have reduced or removed long drives, single night stays and poor/rustic accommodation. We have also sought to reduce or remove difficult hikes, narrow/muddy trails and otherwise oppressive environmental conditions. Early starts and night birding are mostly optional, and we will not spend much time searching for difficult and/or skulking species. These tours are not suitable for hardcore birders and listers, or dedicated photographers.

- Some of our time is spent in vehicles, and we do have a couple of lengthy drives to get to the best birding sites. The more luggage you pack the less room there is in the vehicle, so it is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack.
- Even though distances from location to location are relatively short, there can be some long driving days due to the condition of some roads, as well as the mountainous nature of the areas we visit.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour begins with a welcome dinner in Guatemala City on day 1 and concludes here after breakfast on day 15.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

La Aurora International Airport, Guatemala City (IATA: GUA) is the main port of entry and departure for this tour.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.