Panama

Canals, Quetzals & Cloud Forests (Relaxed)



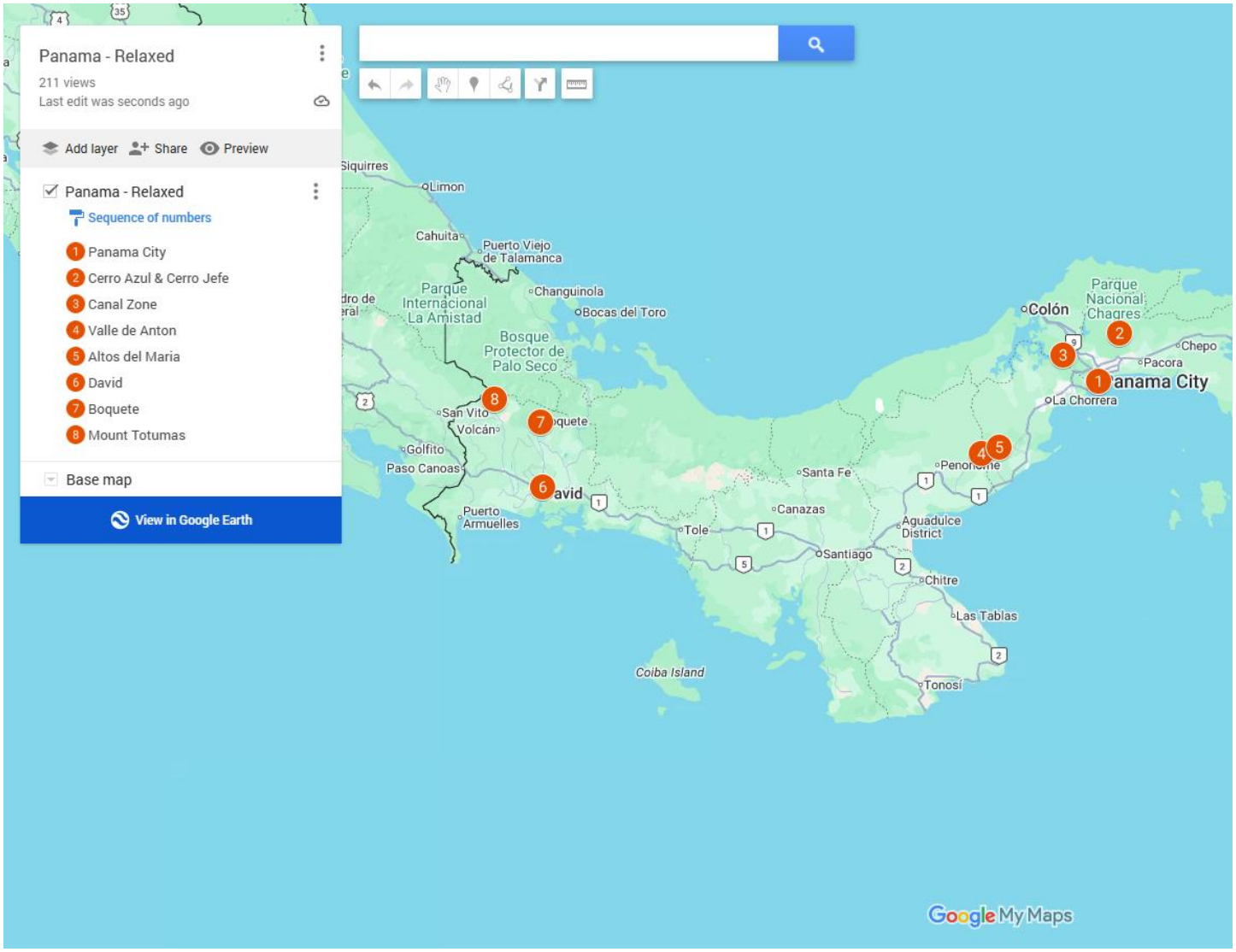
Resplendent Quetzal by Dušan Brinkhuizen

On Relaxed tour of Panama will spend a week exploring some of the more accessible rainforests and montane cloud forests the country has to offer. The native flora is simply stunning, and more than 10 000 species have already been identified within the country! Around 930 bird species – more than the number found in North America and Europe combined – make their home in this tropical paradise.

We'll spend our second week in the Western Highlands of this fascinating country, part of a chain of volcanic mountains straddling the Panamanian and Costa Rican border. They host a unique and interesting avifauna that includes many regional highland endemics, and some of the world's most spectacularly beautiful birds! We will try to locate as many of the 50+ highland endemic species as time permits. One of the obvious targets will be the awe-inspiring Resplendent Quetzal, along with a host of highland hummingbirds, tanagers, trogons, and many others! With roughly 29% of its territory protected within 15 nature reserves, Panama is fast becoming a must-visit destination for birders and nature travellers the world over.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Panama City**
Day 2	**Las Nubes feeders & Cerro Azul**
Days 3 to 5	**Canal Zone: Semaphore Hill Road, Ammo Dump Pond, Soberania National Park, Pipeline Road, Rainforest Discovery Centre & Gatun Lake Boat tour**
Day 6	**Metropolitan National Park, transfer to Valle de Anton**
Day 7	**Cerro Gaital National Park**
Day 8	**Altos del Maria surrounds**
Day 9	**Pacific lowlands & birding en route to Panama City**
Day 10	**Panama City, flight to David, transfer to Mount Totumas**
Days 11 & 12	**Mount Toumas**
Day 13	**Mount Totumas to Paraiso, transfer to David; flight to Panama City**
Day 14	**Final departure**



Birding sites in detail

Las Nubes feeders & Cerro Azul. We'll travel east of Panama City to the foothills of Chagres National Park. Here we will ascend into the foothills of Cerro Azul (750 m) and Cerro Jefe (1,000 m). These peaks, covered in elfin cloud forest, are home to some special birds, including Bay-headed, Speckled, Rufous-winged and Black-and-yellow Tanagers, the endemic Stripe-cheeked Woodpecker, Yellow-eared Toucanet and Russet Antshrike.



Violet-capped Hummingbird by Adam Riley

Aside from all these glorious birds, one of the main drawcards to this area are the hummingbirds; we will visit some of the gardens and residences in the area, including the excellent Comederos en Las Nubes bird feeders, where carefully positioned nectar and fruit feeders provide superb close-range viewing and photographic opportunities. These feeding stations attract dozens of White-necked Jacobin, Snowy-bellied and Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, Violet-capped Hummingbird, Rufous-crested Coquette, Green Hermit, Crowned Woodnymph, Violet-headed and Blue-chested Hummingbird, and both White-vented and Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer. Hummingbirds are not the only denizens prevalent at these easy meals, with Rufous-capped Warbler, Black-cheeked Woodpecker, Blue-grey, Crimson-backed, Summer, Palm and Bay-headed Tanager, alongside Shining, Red-legged and Green Honeycreeper, and both Thick-billed and Yellow-crowned Euphonia taking advantage. Las Nubes also offers forest feeding stations, providing opportunities to observe some of the more secretive understorey species, including Spotted and Chestnut-backed Antbirds, Black-faced Antthrush and White-whiskered Puffbird.



Boat-billed Heron by Adam Riley

Canal Zone: Semaphore Hill Road, Ammo Dump Pond, Soberania National Park, Pipeline Road, Rainforest Discovery Centre & Gatun Lake Boat tour. We have time to work our way through the many habitats and locations of the 'Canal Zone'. Our precise itinerary will remain fluid, adapting to whichever species or areas that provide the best returns.

Semaphore Hill, surrounded on either side by lowland humid rainforest has up to 5 species of trogon, Fasciated and Black-crowned Antshrikes, Red-capped and Blue-crowned Manakins, Broad-billed and Rufous Motmots, White-whiskered Puffbird, Double-toothed Kite, Spotted Antbird, Great Tinamou, Black-faced Antthrush, and many flycatchers, including Bright-rumped Attila, Yellow-margined and Olivaceous Flatbills, Dot-winged, White-flanked and Checker-throated Antwrens, Olivaceous Woodcreeper and White-shouldered Tanager.



Rufous Motmot by Tuomas Seimola

Nearby Ammo Dump Ponds, a large water body replete with surrounding wetlands and forest, offers a great variety of birds to be seen! Rufescent Tiger Heron, Little Blue Heron, White-throated Crake, Snail Kite, Wattled Jacana, Boat-billed Heron, Grey-necked Wood Rail, Ringed, Amazon and Green Kingfishers, along with American Pygmy Kingfisher, can be found in and around the pond. The surrounding areas are great habitats for Greater and Smooth-billed Anis, Black-striped Sparrow, Crimson-backed and Blue-grey Tanagers, Variable, Yellow-bellied and Ruddy-breasted Seedeaters, Grey-breasted Martin, Mangrove and Southern Rough-winged Swallows, Streaked Flycatcher and Tropical Kingbird, all of which are commonly found here. Over the Panama Canal, we will watch for Magnificent Frigatebird and Brown Pelican.

The private Rainforest Discovery Centre gives us access to a 40-metre-high canopy tower, perhaps one of the best towers in all Central America, never mind Panama. This is sure to be a major highlight, even for those of you who don't like heights very much. With the canopy at eye level, we can look forward to a host of species normally seen in flight or from below only. Red-lored Amazon, Sclaed Pigeon, Blue-headed Parrot, giant Keel-billed and Yellow-throated Toucans, Collared Aracari and one of our major targets for the day, Blue Cotinga. Canopy flocks often contain hidden gems, so we shall be on the lookout for Green Shrike-Vireo, Black-chested Jay, White-necked Puffbird, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Yellow-rumped Cacique and the diminutive jewel, Red-legged Honeycreeper.



Keel-billed Toucan by Adam Riley

After thoroughly gorging ourselves on a healthy treat of new species, we shall return to terra firme and spend the remainder of the day walking the Pipeline Road. This old dirt road, built to access a pipeline installed along the canal during World War II, is now surrounded by some of the best mature secondary forests in all Central America! Over 400 bird species have been recorded here. As we walk along the first portion of the road through Caribbean slope forest, we hope to see a plethora of forest species including White-bellied Antbird, Little Tinamou, Black-bellied Wren, Southern Bentbill, Golden-collared Manakin, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, White-winged Becard, Crimson-crested and Lineated Woodpeckers, White-tailed Trogon, Russet-winged Schiffornis and Streak-chested Antpitta! We also hope to

come across an ant swarm, where Spotted, Bicolored and Ocellated Antbirds, Northern Barred Woodcreeper, Song Wren, Grey-headed Tanager and others gather for a feeding frenzy. Pipeline Road is, in addition, a great place to search for rainforest mammals, including White-faced Capuchin, White-nosed Coati and Northern Tamandua. If we are lucky, we may find several other specialities, including Speckled Mourner, Spot-crowned Antvireo and Moustached Antwren.



Rosy Thrush-Tanager by Tuomas Seimola

On one morning, we'll enjoy a boat cruise on Lago Gatun, a large artificial lake completed in 1913 as part of the Panama Canal project. This is a very enjoyable, and relaxing way to spend the morning whilst taking advantage of some excellent bird and wildlife watching, and photography. We'll find several typical waterfowl, kingfishers, herons, and even large numbers of Snail Kite, as well as various species of monkey and sloth. If we're lucky, we'll also pass one or two of the massive container and cruise ships as they make their way towards the Panama Canal locks, getting a proper appreciation for the size of these gargantuan vessels.

Metropolitan National Park. This is the largest tropical forest park found within city limits in Latin America. Whilst not particularly large, only 232 hectares, the park has a staggering species record with a bird list of more than 250, as well as 45 species of mammal and more than 280 species of tree.



Lance-tailed Manakin by Adam Riley

High on our list of target species here is the endemic Panamanian Tyrannulet, whilst this is also a fabulous location to get good views of Lance-tailed Manakin. With a little luck, we could also find the desirable Rosy Thrush-Tanager, Fasciated Antshrike, Southern Bentbill or Tiny Hawk. If we find a mixed feeding flock, the action could well erupt with Lesser and Scrub Greenlet cavorting amongst migrant warblers, Slaty-tailed, White-tailed and Gartered Trogon, Dusky and White-bellied Antbird, Yellow-crowned and Brown-capped Tyrannulet, Greenish Elaenia, Panamanian and Streaked Flycatchers and up to 5 species of wren.

Cerro Gaital National Park. At an elevation of 1 000m, Cerro Gaital is covered in dense, humid cloud forests. We will take a slow walk along a rocky trail through the forest, a great place to search for Blue-throated Toucanet, Plain Antvireo, Scale-crested Pygmy Tyrant, Collared Trogon (orange-bellied form), Barred Forest Falcon, White-tipped

Sicklebill, Green Hermit, Green-crowned Brilliant, Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, White-ruffed Manakin, Common Bush Tanager and Slaty Antwren.

We will also visit the Cara Iguana track, where a blend of dry forest and open area gives us the opportunity to find some different species, including Lance-tailed Manakin, Tody Motmot, Rufous-breasted Wren, Lesser Elaenia, Yellow-olive Flatbill, Panamanian Flycatcher, Barred Antshrike, White-bellied Antbird, Garden Emerald, Long-billed Gnatwren and Pale-eyed Pygmy Tyrant.



Flame-throated Warbler by Tuomas Seimola

Altos del Maria surrounds. Ascending various back roads, we will climb to roughly 1 100m above sea level, where lush, mist-laden cloud forest and an enticing variety of highland forest birds await us. Some of the species we will be looking for here are Black-crowned and Streak-chested Antpittas, Black Guan, White Hawk, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Brown-hooded Parrot, Spotted Woodcreeper, Red-faced Spinetail, Ochraceous Wren, Spotted Barbtail, White-vented Euphonia, Yellow-eared Toucanet, Grey-breasted Wood Wren, Pale-vented Thrush, Tufted Flycatcher, Sulphur-rumped Myiobius, Smoky-brown Woodpecker and even the bizarre Brown-billed Scythebill is seen here regularly. Hummingbirds are a common sight in these highlands, and we hope to find Green Hermit, Band-tailed Barbthroat, White-tailed Emerald, Green-crowned Brilliant, Purple-throated Mountaingem, White-tipped Sicklebill and the exquisite Snowcap (very rare here)!

Pacific Lowlands. We'll be birding a combination of dry forest, scrubby fields, and sandy beaches for the likes of Pale-eyed Pygmy Tyrant, Golden-fronted Greenlet, the near-endemic Veraguan Mango, Crested Bobwhite, Northern Scrub Flycatcher, Mouse-colored Tyrannulet, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Plain-breasted and Blue Ground Doves, Red-breasted Blackbird, Striped Cuckoo, Yellow-crowned Amazon, and Brown-throated Parakeet. We'll also scan the beautiful beaches and open water for Cabot's, Royal and Elegant Terns, Franklin's and Laughing Gulls, Nazca, and Brown Booby, Least, Western and Spotted Sandpipers, Sanderling, Willet, and Hudsonian Whimbrel.



Yellow-thighed Finch by Adam Riley

Mount Totumas. Situated at approximately 1,900 m in the Chiriquí Highlands of western Panama, Mount Totumas is a magnificent private cloud forest reserve bordering the vast wilderness of La Amistad International Park.

This protected area, shared between Costa Rica and Panama, preserves one of Central America's most important tracts of

montane forest. We'll be based at Mount Totumas Lodge, surrounded by mature oak forests, moss-laden trees and luxuriant bromeliads, with an extensive network of well-marked trails providing excellent access to this remarkable habitat. The reserve supports a wonderful variety of range-restricted species found only in the highlands of Costa Rica and western Panama. High on our list of desirable birds will be the spectacular Resplendent Quetzal and extraordinary Three-wattled Bellbird, both of which breed in the surrounding forests, alongside Black Guan, Spotted Wood-Quail, Chiriqui Quail-Dove, Prong-billed Barbet, Yellow-winged Vireo and Slaty Flowerpiercer.



Violet Sabrewing by Adam Riley

The birding opportunities begin right at our lodge, where flowering gardens and hummingbird feeders attract a dazzling assortment of species, including Violet Sabrewing, Magenta-throated Woodstar, Talamanca and Scintillant Hummingbirds, White-throated Mountaingem, Lesser Violetear, Green-crowned Brilliant and Stripe-tailed Hummingbird. Venturing along the forest trails and surrounding clearings, we'll search for an impressive selection of highland specialities, including Sulphur-winged Parakeet, Band-tailed Pigeon, Blue-throated Toucanet, Acorn and Hairy Woodpeckers, Buffy Tuftedcheek, Chiriqui Foliage-gleaner, Dark Pewee, Black-faced Solitaire, Mountain Thrush, Black-and-yellow Phainoptila, gorgeous Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher, Flame-throated, Black-throated Green and Black-cheeked Warblers, Slate-throated and Collared Whitestarts, Sooty-capped and Common Chlorospingus, Yellow-thighed and White-naped Brushfinches, Flame-colored Tanager, stunning Golden-browed Chlorophonia and Yellow-bellied Siskin. Mixed-species flocks can be particularly rewarding, while the lodge's feeders and gardens provide further opportunities to enjoy the region's colourful highland birds at close range.

Boquete & Paraiso. We'll spend our time birding the river valleys and montane forests around Boquete, as well as the lower slopes of Vulcan Baru. The dormant volcano is the highest point in Panama and is one of the only places in the world where one can view both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea with the naked eye (if you climbed to the top...)



Fiery-throated Hummingbird by Adam Riley

The montane forests are almost always productive, offering views of several hummingbird species such as Scintillant, Volcano and Stripe-tailed, Lesser Violetear and Violet Sabrewing. Other attractive species may include Sulphur-winged Parakeet, Golden-olive Woodpecker, Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Flame-colored Tanager, Slaty Flowerpiercer, White-collared Swift, Blue Ground Dove, White-naped Brushfinch, Chestnut-capped Brushfinch and Yellow-bellied Siskin! Depending on season, the gardens have exquisite floral displays too.

Time permitting, we may meander along the lower reaches of the Culebra Trail – another excellent birding site just on the edge of town. Here we might bump into the superb Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Collared Whitestart, Black-faced Solitaire, Magenta-throated Woodstar, White-throated Mountain-gem or Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush whilst the river itself should produce Torrent Tyrannulet, a couple of American Dippers and possibly Green-fronted Lancebill. As we make our way back into town, we'll check for Finsch's Parakeets coming into roost in the palm trees.



American Dipper by Clayton Burne

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Moderate. Suitable for most birding / wildlife interest levels.
Birding Ease		Moderate, mostly forest birding.
Accommodation		Comfortable to very comfortable.
Walking / Trails		Most walks are on relatively flat ground. Depending on weather conditions, some areas can be muddy or slippery.
Vehicles / Roads		Sealed roads between towns, changing to dirt in remoter areas. Mountain passes can be winding. Heavy traffic in Panama City.
Photography		Average to good. Many species are seen within the forest or in the canopy.
Annoyances		Some small biting insects. The lowlands around Panama City can be hot & normally 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 14;
- All lodgings;
- Drinking water;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding 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 are NOT included on this tour. If you feel that your leader/s 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.

- It can be hot, with harsh sun in some areas of Panama, especially along the coast. Humidity levels are also high throughout most of the country.
- Mosquitoes and tiny bloodsucking flies can be numerous at times and it's advisable to pack a good supply of DEET or another effective insect repellent.

- Accommodation throughout the trip is quite comfortable and a variety of western and local cuisines are available throughout the tour.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour begins with a welcome dinner at our lodgings in Panama City on day 1. The tour will conclude in Panama City after a mid-day flight from David on Day 14.

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.

Tocumen International Airport, Panama City (IATA: PTY) 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.