

Panama Mammal Tour

Destination: Soberania National Park **Season:** April - July



The first dedicated and specialist mammalwatching tour to Panama



Expert mammalwatching guide and local guides throughout the tour



Explore various parts of Soberania National Park looking for mammals



Specialist species including Western Night Monkey, Olingos & Woolly Opossums



Night walks for nocturnal species included on every night we are in the forests

Dates:

Next Group Tour: 25th May – 3rd Jun 2023

Private / Tailored Tour information:

This tour can be booked anytime of the year as Panama has a very steady annual climate; however there are various different seasons which have different wildlife highlights. But the biggest driving factor in choosing this time of year is that it is the lower priced season, Panama has two rates and the high season rates are significantly more expensive, so with the chances of seeing all of the mammal target species being the same throughout the year, we choose the lower priced season for the trip.

But we can definitely look to arrange this trip as a private tour for any time of year.

Whilst we have a good success rate in filling tours we always suggest booking a private tour to avoid any disappointment.

The costs for a different group sizes (ranging from 1-12 can be provided on request, for people wanting to book private tours outside of our group tour dates); we aim to have this group tour scheduled for a group size of 6 people.

We also have flexibility for the duration of trip you would like to book, if people would like to spend longer in some of these locations; that is possible, subject to availability.

There are other areas we do not include on this trip which can be included if you wish, for more information on these extensions please contact us.

Prices (2023 season):

Group Tour (9 nights) £2,995 per person *single supplement not always available please enquire for more details.

Overview

Day 1:	Panama City –	
	Canopy	Tower

Days 2-3:	Canopy Tower
	Surrounding Area

Day 4:	San Lorenzo National
-	Park

Days 5-7:	Canopy Tower
	Surrounding Area

Days 8-9:	Canopy Lodge
	Surrounding Area

Day 10: Panama City / Home









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Tour Information

Introduction

Travel with an expert mammal watching guide equipped with bat-detector and thermal imaging scope ad head to one of the world's most underrated mammal watching countries.

Panama is located at the narrowest point of the Mesoamerican Isthmus, not only famous for its huge historical importance in linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans by rail and canal, but also of considerable biogeographical importance as the land bridge between North and South America.

It is this amazing biogeographical which has lead to a high diversity in this relatively small country and the diversity of the mammals found here is our main target on this trip.

Being the southernmost country of Central America, Panama has a lot of species found in northern South America as well as many species found only in Central America. All in all this makes Panama a wonderful place to either visit as a first time mammal watching trip to the region or as a trip to try and fill in missing species from previous trips to countries such as Costa Rica or Colombia.

Panama's tropical climate combined with a Pacific and Atlantic coastline, rugged mountains and altitudinal forests mean that this exciting nine night tour specializing in mammals is one of the best in the whole Neotropical region.

Whilst mammals are the major focus here there are also many species of birds, reptiles, amphibians and more that can be seen on the trip!

The trip spends most of the time around the historic and world-famous Canopy Tower (which is located inside the wonderful Soberania National Park). Whilst based in the Canopy Tower your specialist guides will take you to iconic and great mammal watching locations such as around the Canopy Tower itself and Semaphore Hill, Pipeline Road, Barro Colorado Island, Gatun Lake (via boat), Panama Rainforest Discovery Center, Metropolitan Nature Park and Fort San Lorenzo located on the Caribbean coast.

From the Canopy Tower you will have the final two nights at the award-winning Canopy Lodge. From here you will explore the El Valle's foothills for its amazing mammals and birds. This combination of base points and the various different habitats visited across the 10 days will give a great overview of the mammal species Panama has to offer.

From the diminutive Geoffroy's Tamarin to the boisterous Mantled Howler Monkey the primates are diverse and very popular with mammal watchers. There are also two species of sloth which can be seen here; the Hoffmann's Two-toed & Brown-throated Three-toed Sloths as well as a huge diversity of bat species including the very energetic and easy to see (as they feed on the hummingbird feeders) Orange Nectar Bats.

Neotropical mammals are a fascinating group of animals which include many unique and iconic members, such as sloths, marmosets, anteaters, armadillos and more. All of which are unique to the Americas.

Unlike other parts of the world such as Africa or the Pantanal of Brazil, the majority of the mammals found in Panama here are small to medium-sized, and many are predominantly nocturnal. So we have tailored the activities to maximise the chances of seeing as many species as possible. Spending time in the early morning and evening we will strive to find diurnal mammals like monkeys, agoutis, coatis and tamanduas during the day; and then after dark we will venture out with our spotlight to search for nocturnal mammals, such as kinkajous, opossums and bats. All in all we are confident that this specialist mammal watching tour to Panama will have any wildlife enthusiast chomping at the bit to visit and explore more of the Neotropics!

Itinerary

Day 1 Panama City / Canopy Tower

Arrival & Wildlife Watching

Accommodation:

Canopy Tower (Eco Lodge)

Food:

Dinner is the only meal included today.

Transportation:

Private Vehicle & Walking.

Today we will be picked up at Tocumen International Airport (we need arrivals to be before 10am in the morning (or we recommend arriving the day before and then overnighting at a hotel near the airport)) before we will be taken in our private vehicle to the Canopy Tower.

After arriving, checking in and settling in, you will meet your local guide (who will work with your mammal guide who you will have arrived in the vehicle with) on the observation deck where we may spot our first mammal, a Brownthroated Three-toed Sloth, munching on Cecropia leaves.

The mammal watching doesn't stop for dinner either as during dinner, we will be keeping an eye on the Cecropia trees, as they attract nocturnal Kinkajous, Western Lowland Olingos, Central American Woolly Opossums and Western Night Monkeys. It is not just mammals which are attracted to the Canopy Tower after dark as there are also Black-and-white Owls which are often seen around the Canopy Tower after dark.





Day 2 Canopy Tower Surroundings

Accommodation:

Canopy Tower (Eco Lodge)

Food:

All meals will be served at the tower in between wildlife watching activities.

Wildlife Watching

Transportation:

Private vehicle & walking.

This morning we will meet at sunrise on the observation deck on the Canopy Tower, this is a great opportunity to scan the treetops, where we can often see Geoffroy's Tamarins, Mantled Howlers, Hoffmann's Two-toed & Brownthroated Three-toed Sloths, Red-tailed & Variegated Squirrels and a variety of colourful birds that come to feed on the Cecropia trees. Toucans, parrots, a wide range of tanagers and flycatchers, majestic raptors and even Blue Cotinga can be seen from the observation deck.

After breakfast we will start walking down Semaphore Hill Road through the lush lowland rainforest of Soberania National Park to continue our search for mammals and other creatures. On this road there is a chance to find the two species of sloth, as well as Central American Agouti, White-nosed Coati, Mantled Howler and Northern Tamandua.

The rare Silky Anteater, as well as the secretive Tayra, have been spotted occasionally along this road. The road is a little more than a mile long and passes through some of the most beautiful forest around! We also have a great chance for forest birds including five species of trogon, Rufous & Broad-billed Motmots, and several species of antbird.

At the bottom of the hill we can check under the bridge for roosting Greater White-lined and Chestnut Sac-winged Bats. At the end of this walk, we will get picked up by one of our open-air vehicles and driven back up to the lodge for lunch

Then after lunch we will drive north to the Ammo Dump Ponds, located in the small town of Gamboa. This is a great place to look for the world's second largest rodent, the Lesser Capybara, which can be found in or near the Chagres river.

Also, in Gamboa's forested neighbourhoods, we search for Red-tailed Squirrel and Central American Agouti, a large diurnal rainforest rodent. Depending on time, we will make a quick stop at the marina on the Chagres River, the main source of water for the Panama Canal.

With a bit of luck, we can find a Neotropical River Otter or a Variegated Squirrel. Waterbirds including Wattled Jacana, Striated Heron and the beautiful Snail Kite can be seen here.

Dinner will be served back at the Canopy Tower and after dinner we board one of the Canopy Tower's open-air vehicles for a night drive down Semaphore Hill Road. Many Neotropical mammals are nocturnal, and night drives are the best way to find them! We hope this evening to find Olingo, Western Night Monkey, Paca, Central American Woolly Opossum and, if lucky, Rothschild's Porcupine!

Day 3 Canopy Tower Surroundings

Accommodation:

Canopy Tower (Eco Lodge)

Food:

All meals will be served at the tower in between wildlife watching activities.

Wildlife Watching

Transportation:

Private vehicle & walking.

This morning after an early breakfast, we will board the Canopy Tower's vehicle and spend the morning at the world famous Pipeline Road. Hundreds of species of birds, mammals and countless insects and plants have been recorded here.

This 17-km gravel road with eleven creeks has much to be explored, and is a great place for mammals, including White-faced Capuchin, Mantled Howler, Central American Agouti, White-nosed Coati, Tayra, Collared Peccary and White-tailed Deer.

We will keep an eye on the openings of tree cavities for roosting Rufous Tree Rats. There have also been sightings of three species of cats here, namely Jaguarundi, Ocelot and, rarest of all, Jaguar.

Over 500 species of birds have been recorded here, so there are good chances we will enjoy quality sightings of Crimson-crested Woodpecker, White-tailed Trogon, Spotted Antbird, Tiny Hawk or any number of special birds! We head back to the lodge for lunch.

After lunch, we will continue our wildlife adventure at the Summit Botanical Garden, just 10 minutes from the tower. Our main target here will be to find a roosting colony of Common Tent-making Bats under the large palm leaves at the entrance to the park.

Agoutis are conspicuous and unshy here, and other mammals are always a possibility. Great Black Hawk, Crane Hawk, Giant Cowbird, Yellow-backed Oriole and Masked Tityra also may be seen! After a short visit to the gardens, we will cross the road to explore the area of Old Gamboa Road and the adjacent Summit Ponds. This site boasts the nearest access to Pacific dry forest from the Canopy Tower.





The ponds are a great place to look for some secretive herons, including Boat-billed & Capped, and the diminutive American Pygmy Kingfisher, along with Spectacled Caiman and Common Basilisk, also known as the "Jesus Christ Lizard" for its ability to run across the surface of the water.

Carrying on down Old Gamboa Road south, we hope to encounter Tayra, Red-tailed Squirrel, more Two-toed and Three-toed Sloths, Jaguarundi, White-nosed Coati and other mammals we have yet to encounter.

Back at the Canopy Tower, we will review our checklist and enjoy happy hour prior to dinner. During dinner, Little Mastiff Bats may be seen flying around the dining room as they head out for their evening hunt, and we will watch for the largest bat in the Americas, the Great False Vampire Bat, hunting around the Cecropia trees out the windows.

Then after dinner we will head out on another night drive, targeting nocturnal mammals. Common Opossum, Ninebanded Armadillo, Northern Tamandua and Collared Peccary are some additional targets on our night time wildlife adventure!

Day 4 San Lorenzo National Park

Wildlife Watching

Accommodation:

Canopy Tower (Eco Lodge)

Food:

All meals will be served at the tower in between wildlife watching activities.

Transportation:

Private vehicle & walking.

Today after an early breakfast, we will drive to the Caribbean slope of Panama, only 1½ hours from Panama City, over a newly constructed four-lane highway.

The purpose of this day's tour will be to look for mammals at San Lorenzo Forest Preserve, where we will also enjoy a picnic-style lunch. This area was the site of the US Army Jungle Training School, and is also known as Fort Sherman.

San Lorenzo National Park is known for its abundance of Mantled Howlers, White-faced Capuchins and sloths. Some other elusive species, such as Jaguarundi and Western Night Monkeys are often seen. Occasionally, visitors are surprised by a herd of Collared Peccaries or a White-tailed Deer crossing the road. There is also the added benefit of visiting the old Spanish fortress of San Lorenzo, a World Heritage Site, built on a promontory at the entrance of the Chagres River. This fort was the last bastion of the Spanish Empire on mainland America and was abandoned by the Spanish in 1821. In the dark rooms of the fort, we may find Greater White-lined Bats and perhaps some other species inside.

In addition, to get to this area, we have to cross the Panama Canal, which gives us a unique view of the Gatun locks and new Agua Clara locks from below. Finally, there will be an option to return to the Tower via the Panama Canal Railway, a scenic ride from Colon to Panama City. As the sun sets over Gatun Lake, we hope to end our wildlife adventure with some herons and Snail Kites from the historic railway car.

Day 5 Canopy Tower & Surrounding Area

Wildlife Watching

Accommodation:

Canopy Tower (Eco Lodge)

Food:

All meals will be served at the tower in between wildlife watching activities.

Transportation:

Private vehicle, Private Boat & walking.

This morning after breakfast we board a motorboat for a spectacular tour on the Panama Canal. Most of the Panama Canal is actually an artificial lake, Gatun Lake, and this wildlife adventure will depart from Gamboa, just 15 minutes from the Canopy Tower. We start in the Chagres River, enjoying the abundance of water birds and keeping an eye out for Lesser Capybara. Then we pass under the historic one-way Gamboa bridge into the Panama Canal!

Along the way we will pass huge cargo ships and ocean liners and will also visit hidden coves and beautiful inlets of Gatun Lake with fascinating fauna and flora. From the boat, we will explore the small islands throughout the lake to look for primates including Mantled Howlers, White-faced Capuchins and the tiny Geoffroy's Tamarins. There is also a chance to see some interesting reptiles on this wildlife adventure, including American Crocodile (some reach over 5m in length) and its smaller relative, the Spectacled Caiman, plus Basilisks and Black River Turtles.

A little scarcer, but not impossible, are the Neotropical River Otter and, if we are really lucky, the West Indian Manatee. This species was introduced to the Panama Canal in the 1960s to control the growth of water weeds, and they have adjusted very well to this habitat. We also hope to see the tiny Proboscis Bat, often found roosting along these quiet banks. We are sure to have a fantastic morning! Lunch will be back at the lodge.

This afternoon after a little rest, we return to the Pipeline Road to visit the Panama Rainforest Discovery Center, an ecotourism and environmental education facility created and administrated by Fundación Avifauna Eugene Eisenmann. Seventy percent of the materials used in the construction of this facility were recycled from old Canal Zone houses.





We will climb the observation tower up to the top of the canopy, overlooking vast Soberania National Park. From this vantage, we scan the tree tops for mammals and hawks! Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Yellow-throated Toucan, Pied & White-necked Puffbirds and Blue Cotinga are commonly seen from the top of the tower. The platform and its hummingbird feeders offer us an opportunity to see several species prior to dusk. Two-toed & Three-toed Sloths, White-nosed Coati and Northern Tamandua may be found here!

Tonight after dinner we will head out on our last night drive to continue our search for nocturnal mammals, hoping to find Ocelot, Collared Peccary, Paca, Western Night Monkey, Silky Anteater, Rothschild's Porcupine or something else.

Day 6 Canopy Tower & Surrounding Area

Wildlife Watching

Accommodation:

Canopy Tower (Eco Lodge)

Food:

All meals will be served at the tower in between wildlife watching activities.

Transportation:

Private vehicle & walking.

After breakfast, we head to Metropolitan Natural Park, located right next to Panama City, and only 30 minutes from the Canopy Tower. The forests of the Metro Park are much drier than those around the Tower. There is a wonderful over-look at the summit of a hill, which will give us an incredible perspective of Panama City, the scenic bay and some of the closer islands. Some of the most common residents are Geoffroy's Tamarins and Variegated & Red-tailed Squirrels. Northern Tamandua, White-nosed Coati and Western Night Monkey are also a possibility for us this morning. Rosy Thrush-Tanager, Black-throated Trogon, Green Shrike-Vireo and the endemic Yellow-green Tyrannulet can also be found here!

Later this morning we will head into Panama City to the Amador Causeway to visit Punta Culebra Nature Center, a public nature facility run by the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. Our main target for this site is the Crabeating Raccoon, a shy mammal that lives in the Pacific dry forest and adjacent mangroves. Also Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloths are especially abundant and easy to find here, and Northern Tamandua is commonly seen.

After lunch, we visit one of the "must see" attractions on any trip to Panama, the world famous Panama Canal! The newly expanded Panama Canal is one of the wonders of the modern world and an engineering marvel. There are four exhibition halls at this ultra-modern museum, which includes historic artifacts used in the construction of the Canal, interactive modules, video presentations, models of the Panama Canal, and objects used in Canal operations. Models of the biota collected during the construction are also on display. Most importantly, we will watch the huge cargo ships negotiate the tight-fitting locks! After this fascinating visit we head back for happy hour and then dinner at the lodge.

Day 7 Canopy Tower & Surrounding Areas

Wildlife Watching

Accommodation:

Canopy Tower (Eco-Lodge)

Food:

All meals will be served at the tower in between wildlife watching activities.

Transportation:

Private Vehicle & Walking.

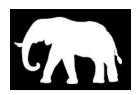
This morning, we take a well-deserved trip back to the Pipeline Road. Pipeline Road is so biodiverse that one morning here is not enough! This morning we will walk a little further into the park, reaching wetter Caribbean slope forest and hoping to see some different mammals and birds. Tayra, Collared Peccary and Jaguarundi are all possibilities this morning as we head further up Pipeline Road.

We will keep an eye out for Rufous Tree Rat and the rare Silky Anteater as well. Streak-chested Antpitta, Great Tinamou, Tiny Hawk and Slaty-backed Forest-Falcon are just some of the birds we hope to encounter this morning. After a full morning on Pipeline Road, we head back to the lodge for lunch.

For our last afternoon at the Canopy Tower, we can revisit the Chagres River around Gamboa or tailor our quest for Neotropical mammals in search of any that we have yet to see. Perhaps a Neotropical River Otter or Northern Tamandua are still waiting to be seen!

We will also pay a visit to the Gamboa Wildlife Center, a newly-opened public facility owned and operated by the APPC, Panamerican Association for Conservation. Passionately run by a team of wildlife rehabilitators and educators, this center takes in injured and orphaned wildlife from across the country. Their ambassador animal is the sloth, and they receive dozens of orphaned and injured sloths every year, along with many other species. Their goal is to rehabilitate every animal that comes through their facility in hopes that it can be released back into the wild, and educate locals and visitors to Panama about conservation.

This afternoon we will meet their staff, hear about the work they do and their conservation message, and meet the animals currently in their care. A visit to the Gamboa Wildlife Center is an enjoyable and meaningful experience!





Donations are welcome to support their work. This evening, we will meet during cocktail hour to review our growing checklist and enjoy dinner at the lodge.

Day 8 Canopy Lodge

Travelling & Wildlife Watching

Accommodation:

Canopy Lodge (Eco-Lodge)

Food:

All meals will be served at the tower in between wildlife watching activities.

Transportation:

Private Vehicle & Walking.

For our last morning at the Canopy Tower, we can enjoy the Observation Deck at dawn followed by breakfast. After checking out, we will take a short drive down to the bottom of Semaphore Hill to Plantation Road, one of Soberania National Park's trails. It is a good, easy graded dirt road, passing through a mature forest for about four miles. The road follows a small creek, the Chico Masambi River. This trail features some incredible forest, including gigantic Wild Cashew, Ficus, and Cuipo Trees that reach heights of more than 100 feet. During this walk there is a chance to find more Mantled Howlers, Geoffroy's Tamarins and White-faced Capuchins. There is also the possibility of encountering a Northern Tamandua or even a Central American Spider Monkey!

After a short walk, we return to the Tower mid-morning, load up our luggage and transfer to the Canopy Lodge in El Valle de Anton, in the foothills of Central Panama, about 2 hours west of the Canopy Tower. El Valle is located in the caldera of a gigantic volcano that erupted 3.5 million years ago. It is the largest inhabited caldera in the western hemisphere. The volcano has been dormant for many years, but there are mud baths and thermal pools in certain areas of the caldera.

Both the Canopy Lodge and the town where it is located are just delightful. When we arrive at the Lodge, it is usually hard to get to your room since visitors are hypnotized by the several colourful tanagers visiting the feeders—not to mention the very pleasant cooler temperatures! The altitude here is about 700 meters above sea level. Upon arrival, we can enjoy the flurry of activity at the lodge's feeders, where Collared Aracari, Thick-billed Euphonia, Dusky-faced & Flame-rumped Tanagers and many more species feast on the bananas. Lunch at the lodge.

After having lunch and enjoying the bird feeders, we will take a walk on some of the trails near the Lodge, and this will include a visit to Chorro El Macho at the Canopy Adventure, a 36-metre high waterfall.

The Canopy Lodge is a great place to catch up on some of the mammals we may have missed at the Tower and to add some additional foothill specialties to our lists. After dinner we will take a leisurely night walk around the lodge grounds.

Some of the nocturnal mammals often seen in this area are Gray Four-eyed, Common & Water Opossums, Rothschild's Porcupines, Western Night Monkeys, Ocelots and Orange Nectar Bats, which visit the hummingbird feeders at night!

Day 9 Canopy Lodge

Wildlife Watching

Accommodation:

Canopy Lodge (Eco-Lodge)

Food:

All meals will be served at the tower in between wildlife watching activities.

Transportation:

Private Vehicle & Walking.

After being awakened by the morning chorus of birds and having our breakfast, we will go out again in search of any other species that is still missing from our list. This time we will visit two sites: La Mesa, the flatlands up along the rim of the crater, within the protected area of Cerro Gaital Natural Monument, and Finca Candelario, a private and well-maintained property with tranquil trails and a pleasing open area to explore. Both these areas are great places to look for Western Pygmy Squirrel, Greater Grison, Rufous Tree Rat, Rothschild's Porcupine, Tayra and Jaguarundi.

After lunch and a siesta, we head to Cara Iguana, a quiet road on the outskirts of El Valle, this area boasts quality dry forest at the roadsides. Here we hope to see any mammals we have not yet encountered, perhaps White-tailed Deer or Jaguarundi, along with the likelihood of Two-toed and Three-toed Sloths and Central American Agouti. We will also check for roosting Spectacled Owls. Lance-tailed Manakin, Tody Motmot, Garden Emerald and White-winged Becard are just a few of the birding possibilities here! Our last afternoon of the tour is sure to be an enjoyable one. Back at the Canopy Lodge we will review our final checklist and reminisce about our favourite moments of the tour.





Day 10 Panama City / Departure

Departure

Accommodation:

NA

Food:

Breakfast is the only meal included today.

Transportation:

Private Vehicle.

After breakfast we depart to for Panama City to catch our return flight home, with memories of the many species of mammals, birds, insects and other wonders of the Neotropics seen and photographed on this wildlife adventure!

Your tour and all Royle Safaris services end upon transfer to the airport

Please note that the itinerary stated above is correct as our planned intentions for the tour. However adverse weather conditions and other local considerations can necessitate some modifications of the itinerary during the course of the tour; any chances will be made to make the best of the time, weather conditions and other constraints forced upon us and all changes will be made in conjunction with our terms and conditions.

Tour Inclusions

Absolutely everything mentioned in the above itinerary is included (except where it is expressly mentioned as an optional extra).

- All accommodation as mentioned above or of a similar standard as mentioned.
- All meals as mentioned in the itinerary; please note that some lunches and dinners are not included.
- Bottled mineral or purified (boiled) water will be provided throughout and on request.
- Private or shared vehicles for all transfers.
- English speaking local drivers and guides with years of experience in working in the areas we are travelling.
- Royle Safaris mammalwatching escort (where available).
- Expert naturalist guides for all activities included.
- Local guides and experts in finding wildlife in individual areas where necessary
- All wildlife watching and other activities as mentioned in the itinerary as being included.
- All fuel, tolls, taxes and other expenses relating to driving.
- Entrance fees and permits to all locations for wildlife watching mentioned.
- Field guides will be available for reference whilst on the trip.

Tour Exclusions

Nearly everything you will need is included in the price you have already paid for the tour. However there are some things not included.

- International flights to and from the tour start and end points.
- Travel insurance including any fees that result from emergency medical or evacuation needs.
- Visa fees for entering the country(s).
- Vaccinations and any medication are not included.
- Any food other than the meals provided and mentioned in the above itinerary; please not that some lunches and dinners are not included in this itinerary
- Some meals will include a drink (such as juice, tea & coffee at breakfast) but most soft drinks and alcohol are an extra expense.
- Any items of a personal nature are not included, such as souvenirs, medication, toiletries, laundry and phone calls.
- Tips are also not included. There is no hard and fast rule for tipping in Panama. However we would appreciate it, if
 you have been happy with the service of the guides and camping team then please tip a little something at the end
 of the complete excursion. For local guides we hire for individual activities please tip individually and also if there
 are tip boxes in restaurants, camps, lodges and hotels then these are generally used for tipping all of the staff.
- Any departure taxes which may be due when leaving are not included (but may be included in the cost of your flights).
- Optional activities bookable direct with various accommodations and payments due to those accommodations.