



Gulf Coast Bird Observatory's Birding Oaxaca Trip November 25 – December 4, 2022

Oaxaca, the birdiest state in Mexico, with its wide variety of habitats and elevations makes this the richest of all the Mexican state in terms of its birds. The state holds nearly 700 species of birds. On this trip, we will cover a third of the state's area, but we will certainly be in one of the most productive areas of the state.

Our trip will cover two major areas, the Valle of Oaxaca and the Coast. The two major cities we will "headquarter" out of are Oaxaca city and Huatulco city, with one night in cabins in the mountains of the southern Sierra of Oaxaca.



In the map above, the yellow arrow shows the location of Oaxaca city. Keep in mind that the state is named Oaxaca and its capital city is also named Oaxaca. The first few days we will be visiting locations near the city. Then on day 4 we make a 4 hours drive to the town of San Jose del Pacifico in the mountains. (If we were to drive from Oaxaca city to the coast it would take approximately 7 hours due to the winding road through the mountains.) This terrain however has created many microhabitats and is the reason why some unique birds inhabit such areas, like the gorgeous Blue-capped Hummingbird. The green line on the map shows the route we will cover and the red arrow shows the location of the town of San Jose, within the municipality of San Mateo Rio Hondo. The blue arrow shows our final destination area, the touristic complex of Huatulco.

On the map it is shown as La Crucecita (the name of the area of the whole complex).

Oaxaca city is located in a valley at approximately 5000 ft, surrounded by mountains that go up to 10,000 ft. The temperatures in the valley are from 55 to 78 F. Up in the Mountains (La Cumbre and San Jose del Pacifico) it will be around 40 F early in the morning but quickly rising up. At the coastal areas near Huatulco city the temperatures will be around 95F on a hot da. However most of the trip will have very pleasant conditions around 59-77F. We do have some chances for light rain, so light rain gear might be helpful at times.

Huatulco City is the newest coastal city in the state and is known as a green destination since a lot of its infrastructure is aimed to diminish the impact of the environment. For example, the city does not dump water into the ocean, all the water used in the city goes to water treatment plants and then used in all green areas in the city to water. The area has 36 beaches located in 9 large bays, five of which are part of the Huatulco National Park where no building have been allowed, thus the areas are just water, beach, and forest.

Cultural Sites

We will also visit Eric's small town named Teotitlan, where he grew up. Here we will get the wonderful opportunity to visit a local rug making shop and see the weaving and process in person. You will be amazed.

We will also visit (and bird) two major archeology sites: Monte Alban which started around 500 BC and is the largest and most important pre-Columbian archeology site. We will also bird at the Yagul site. Oaxaca is also known for its own wonderful cuisine. Home of the famous mole of every flavor, and cocoa which makes the most divine hot chocolate. And don't forget the chapulines... roasted grasshoppers! Smooth shade grown coffee is also a well know delicacy here.

IATA code for Oaxaca city airport is OAX, and IATA code for Huatulco airport is HUX

Day 1.- Arrival to Oaxaca city.

Days 2 to 5.- Birding in various habitats in the valley of Oaxaca.

- Areas to cover
1. Teotitlan del Valle, located about 45 minutes east from Oaxaca city, at about 5200 ft. The area is known for Scrub vegetation, and some of the target species in the area include Bridled Sparrow, Boucard's Wren, Dusky Hummingbird, Gray-Breasted Woodpecker, White-throated Towhee, White-striped Woodcreeper, and our first chances for Collared Towhee.



2. La Cumbre is an area of humid pine oak forest located about 45 minutes north of Oaxaca city at about 9,000 ft. This area of forest is the upper part of the Benito Juarez National Park and home to the striking Red Warbler, Dwarf Jay, Collared Towhee, Gray-Barred Wren, Mountain Trogon, Chestnut-sided Shrike Vireo, etc.
3. Las Guacamayas is another area of scrub vegetation mixed with oak forest about 45 minutes northwest of Oaxaca city and at 6,000 ft. The main targets in this area include Ocellated Thrasher, Oaxaca Sparrow, Slaty Vireo, Elegant Euphonia, Blue Mockingbird, etc.
4. Monte Alban has some interesting species of birds such as Rock Wrens, Cassin's Kingbirds, and sometimes good endemics such as Ocellated Thrasher and Slaty Vireo, but the main reason is to see the striking archaeological site of Monte Alban. Started around 500 BC this is the largest and most important pre-Columbian site in the state. After birding and enjoying the site we will make a 4 hour drive to the town of San Jose del Pacifico for a quiet evening and overnight there, and this also helps to break down the long drive to the coast.



Day 6.- Traveling Day, today we will drive from San Jose del Pacifico to the city of Huatulco, we will make stops along the way for some casual birding and to enjoy some fantastic views, overnight in Huatulco city.

Days 7 to 9 - The Oaxaca Coast.

- Areas to cover
1. Pluma Hidalgo. Our day will start low in the upper areas of tropical deciduous forest and driving up to the town of Pluma Hidalgo. Some of the species possible on this day include the Oaxaca endemic Blue-capped Hummingbird, Wagler's (Emerald) Toucanet, Mexican Hermit, Red-headed Tanager, Golden Vireo. We will have lunch at a Coffee Finca where we can sample shade grown coffee, and drive back with some birding on the way.

2. Low deciduous forest. We will be visiting several trails in the low deciduous forest near Huatulco for species such as Orange-Breasted Bunting, Russet-Crowned Motmot, Golden-cheeked Woodpecker, Citreoline Trogon, Happy Wren, Red-Breasted Chat, etc.
3. Mini-pelagic. The continental shelf in coastal Oaxaca is about only 5 miles out thus the area is a great spot for many tropical pelagic species such as Galapagos Shearwater, Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Black and Least Storm Petrel, and chances for Jaegers and Boobies.



Day 10.- Departure from Huatulco's international airport.

This trip includes:

- Hotel (Double occupancy)
- Transfers from airport to hotel and vice versa
- Vehicle, Driver and Fuel.
- All Meals (Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner)
- Boat and Fuel for mini pelagic.
- Guide and local guides where needed
- Fees to protected areas and National Parks.

COST:

Max 10 participants

\$2,650 USD per person (Double)

\$750 USD added for Single supplement

NOTE: This trip flies into Oaxaca, MX Airport, and flies out of Huatulco, MX Airport. The flights are VERY limited, and only served by a couple airlines, so booking needs to be done well in advance!

Our Guide:

Eric Antonio Martinez was born in Oaxaca, Mexico. At the age of eight his passion for birds was born, which led him to travel throughout his entire country in search of endemic birds and regional specialties. In 2008 he spent two seasons at the Long Point Bird Observatory in Ontario, Canada, monitoring bird migration; he also worked at the Navopatia field station in southern Sonora Mexico and was part of a bird banding team at the Pemex Bird Observatory in Veracruz Mexico. He now owns Mexico Birding Tours which is one of the few Mexican-owned birding companies, and leads tours in Oaxaca, Chiapas, Veracruz, the Yucatan peninsula, Baja California, and central México. Each year he spends a few weeks birding in Cuba with his Cuban wife Jilly and their daughter Dacnis.

