



GCBO Birding Tour Logistics and Facts

Welcome to GCBO's Birding Tours!

Come birding with GCBO, and our Executive Director, Martin Hagne! Have a great time birding, exploring, enjoying some extraordinary scenery, flora and fauna, dining on local cuisine, and of course getting great birds! We always connect with at least one local guide for the best local experiences.

We have a variety of trips. Many are completely organized by the GCBO, while a few are organized by other birding tour companies that we partner with. If you can't find your answers here, or in the trip descriptions on our [website](#), please feel free to email Martin Hagne at mhagne@gcbo.org.

To Register

First check the trip description on the website to see if the trip is organized by an outside company or fully by GCBO. [website](#)

For any trips fully organized by GCBO, fill in the Registration Form for that trip. You can request a form from Martin, mhagne@gcbo.org, Tricia, info@gcbo.org or you can download one from our website at [GCBO-Registration-Payment-Form.pdf](#)

Mail or Email the Registration Form along with your \$150 non-refundable deposit or a full payment to GCBO. You can also call in a Credit Card payment, but we still need your completed Registration Form. (See information for cancellations and refunds below.) If only paying a deposit, your remainder full amount is due no later than 60 days before tour departure date.

GCBO - Attn: Tricia Patton
299 Hwy 332 West
Lake Jackson, TX 77566
info@gcbo.org
979-460-0999

For any trips organized with the help of another birding tour company, please follow the instructions in the trip descriptions on our website.

Cancellations and Refunds

For any trips fully organized by GCBO, your \$150.00 deposit is non-refundable (to help defray shared expenses). If you have paid the full amount it is refundable, less \$150.00, up to 30 days before tour departure date. Certain personal circumstances may warrant a refund past the 30 days and will be reviewed by the GCBO Executive Director, or if we can fill the vacated spot(s) we can refund the amount less deposit.

If the trip is organized by an outside company, please follow the registration and cancellation instruction in the trip description on our website.

We reserve the right to cancel all or part of a tour at any time if we feel that the health and/or safety of our participants or guides are at risk, or the minimum participation requirement has not been met.

Waiting List

Our trips often sell out quickly. If a trip is full, we do keep a waiting list that you can request to be put on.

Fitness and Health Expectations

Participants should be fit enough to meet the requirements of each trip, as outlined in that trip's description on our website. Our trips vary in intensity and physical or mobility expectations. Some trips require long walks, steep inclines, high elevations, uneven or rocky surfaces, or long or/and bumpy vehicle rides. Please make sure you read the trip description for the trip you are interested in before signing up, or ask GCBO if no such info is available.

Please fill in any medical issue that may affect you on a tour on the registration form.

Other Trip Expectations

Many of our birding tours are organized to get as many species as possible, using as many habitats as possible to do so. This can make them slightly "fast" paced at times.

Participants must be willing to adhere to the tour schedule. This may mean very early mornings, late nights, short meals, or long drives between sites. We expect that all participants respect the time of everyone on the trip and be punctual for departures and meals.

Participants must be willing to follow any rules the tour leader(s) set, including for birding in the field such as staying as a group, splitting into smaller groups, communicating softly, not wandering ahead or too far behind, etc. Your chances of seeing birds will be maximized by following tour leaders' instructions.

Tour leaders may make itinerary adjustments during the course of tours if local conditions warrant. We reserve the right to send home at their expense any participant unable or unwilling to meet such expectations.

Hazards

Please be aware that many hazards can be found in nature and on birding trips. Insects such as mosquitos, chiggers, and ticks may be present, as well as venomous snakes. Thorny vegetation can be present. Uneven rocky paths can be a danger, as can be steep terrain. Please plan accordingly.

Weather and climate can be a factor and present hazards. Please seek information beforehand, if not furnished by the trip description, on what to expect. Sturdy footwear and appropriate clothing are a must to be safe and comfortable in the field. While on the tour, diligently follow all instructions of tour leaders.

Meals

Please refer to the trip description on our website to determine if meals are included in the trip fee or if you are responsible for payment of some or all. This can vary greatly between trips. We do, however, normally eat well!

Most tours include breakfast at the motel/hotel. If not, we will stop and pick up something. Depending on the location this could be a gas station, if necessary. Again, check to see if the tour pays for it or you.

We try to find sit-down type lunches (but try to make them quick). We want to maximize the amount of time we have to bird and don't always have time for such, or these places are not available in the area. If no such choices are available, especially for lunch, we will arrange for a picnic lunch, or even stop at a grocery store for supplies.

We mostly enjoy local restaurants of interest for dinner. We try to find restaurants that will have vegetarian options, but it's not always possible. Participants are always welcome to bring their own food if preferred due to food allergies or other concerns.

A few trips actually furnish snacks and drinks during the day, but many don't. All trips furnish drinking water during the tour. We encourage participants to bring a re-fillable water bottle, their own favorite snacks and drinks. We will make "supply" stops along the way for participants to stock up as well.

Lodging

All tours include lodging as part of the fee. We always choose as clean and comfortable motels/hotels as possible, but seldom high-end accommodations, and a few may be on the lower end when no choices are available.

A few trips, especially in Latin American, can be more rugged and can include haciendas or cabins, which are detailed in that trip's description on our website, and a few may even be primitive with limited electricity, hot water, WIFI, or cell connectivity.

Transportation

Transportation, whether air or land, to and from tour starting points are NOT included in the fee. You will be given information on airport arrival destination and time, as well as for departure. All tours DO include transportation once at the start location, until the end of the tour. This is normally in 12 or 15 passenger vans, but can vary. Some tours include drivers as well as the guides. On other tours, the guide serves as the driver.

A few tours include pick up at the airport (or other meeting location), and the return there. Other tours rely on participants using airport shuttles to the first nights lodging, and back again at end of tour. The tour description will outline this, or you will be notified by organizers before traveling.

Luggage Please bring what you need but consider traveling as light as possible. Luggage space will be limited in vehicles. If you have it, please use soft luggage, as soft luggage is more easily packed into the vehicles.

Our leaders will pack the vehicles, and help with luggage if needed and they are able. Try to keep bags as light weight as possible.

Entry Fees

Most tours include entry fees to birding sites, but not all do. Please check each trips description on our website, and plan accordingly for appropriate cash or payment.

Tips

Tips are included in your fee on a few trips, but not on most. Please check the trip description on our website and plan accordingly. Local guides, drivers, and restaurant workers are customarily given a tip. Check with your tour leader about what amount is appropriate if you are not familiar. And remember that great service (and great birds!) warrants a better tip.

Clothing

Since trips vary so much in weather, climate, and seasons there is no way to provide an over-all clothing list. Please refer to each trip description on our website, or inquire with GCBO.

Earth tones and darker colors are often best in any situation. It's advisable not to wear white or other such very bright colors in the field as these are not natural and can startle birds and wildlife, diminishing the viewing opportunities. In the tropics it is not advisable (at some sites not even allowed) to wear red, or similar bright colors, but to use once again, more earth tones such as dark tans, greens, grays, browns, etc.

Hats are always advisable for sun and glare protection, as is sunscreen. Bug spray is furnished on most trips, but bringing small packs of insect wipes may be advisable.

Sturdy hiking shoes are always advisable.

Bird Lists

Tour leader(s) will keep daily checklists to share at end of the day when possible. EBird will also often be utilized, and we recommend you be familiar with that format.

What to Bring (suggested items)

Binoculars

Notebook and pencil

Alarm clock (or use cell phone)

Wall cell phone charger and cord
Power bank charger for cell phone
Extra batteries

A couple of small packs of Kleenex – restrooms are not always available and not all countries have supplies in their restrooms.

Day pack

Sunblock, insect repellent & lip balm

Field guides

Ear plugs (if you are a light sleeper)

Sunglasses & extra pair of glasses

Flashlight/headlamp (for optional owling)

Re-usable water container with a good fitting screw on lid

Spotting scope (leaders will have at least one scope with)

Camera with extra batteries and memory cards and something to protect it with due to weather

Medications

Please make sure you bring any medicine that you require on the trip. If you have a prescription, make sure it is in the original container with the prescription label. Tylenol/Ibuprofen, antacid and Pepto Bismol are always a good idea on international trips. Remember that liquids can be limited in size when traveling on airplanes. There may be opportunities to purchase OTC meds on some trips but not on all.

Photography

Scenery and memory shots will be plentiful! We always encourage taking photos, but also realize that obtaining photos of birds is very difficult.

Although there will surely be many occasions when bird photography is possible, a birdwatching tour is not normally the best means of pursuing just that aim. Our trips are not geared towards staying in one site to allow lengthy photography chances.

“Digiscoping” is often compatible with the tours if you have your own scope.

Camera equipment should be packed in moisture and dust proof bags, as a precaution.

And again, remember to bring a charger, extra batteries and memory cards.

Smoking

Smoking is prohibited in the vehicles or when the group is gathered for meals, checklists, etc. and at any location where it is prohibited by law or site rules.

Foreign Trip Needs

Always make sure to refer to trip descriptions if traveling outside the US. Such things as passports and foreign currency will be needed. You may need a visa, and they are almost always the participants responsibility.

Other things to consider may be that your cell phone will not work unless you have an international plan, and if you do get a call it may be at very high rates (without the plan). You may also not have WIFI for days.

Electric wall outlets may use different plugs than in US, and even 220V instead of 110V. It's a good idea to bring vehicle phone charging cords, and even a small "power bank" charger.

Tour Fees

We offer single or double rates for trips. There may be participants that wish to share a room, so if you do not have a travel partner, you may ask GCBO if anyone else is looking to share a room.

As outlined above, the fees for tours include travel once at site and as noted in the itinerary, and also includes tour leaders (guides) and lodging, and perhaps meals on some trips. Please check the trip description on our website for any other included or not included services as they often vary between trips.

Cultural Sites and Shopping

Some tours include stops at cultural sites if they can be birded. Most GCBO tours are not set up to include general tours of such sites. However, we do enjoy some sites while birding when possible, and a few trips, especially in Latin America, will take time to visit a few famous sites.

We will stop at visitor centers when time allows for souvenirs and supplies, and at other stores as supplies are need. Please ask the tour leader if you need to stop for something specific. We generally don't set aside time to go into towns to just shop. Some lunch or birding stops may allow participants to shop a store next door or similar.

Liability

GCBO always make every effort to ensure safe travels and birding, but we also expect participants to equally act in safe manners, and understand that GCBO can't always guarantee everyone's total safety. GCBO requires you to accept responsibility for your own safety. We do not offer travel insurance, and recommend that you seek your own.

We require that you release GCBO from liability for your safety and property within the limits of the law by signing our Hold-Harmless Waiver & Photo Release before the tour starts.

Covid19

Please inquire what Covid restrictions will be in place during each trip as they could vary due to locations and outbreak status.

In general, at this point we ARE requiring all participants to be vaccinated, and therefore do not require a mask unless required by a site or location.