

# Birdlife in the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve, Mexico

"Come and find the feathered treasures of the Sierra Madre"



Illustrations by Dana Gardner

[www.sierragordaecotours.com](http://www.sierragordaecotours.com)

# Introduction



The Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve, which occupies the northern third of the State of Querétaro, stands out in Mexico, a megadiverse country, as its most ecosystem-diverse protected area.

From the oldest semi-desert in the country, enduring for around 65 million years, to the coniferous forests inhabiting the highest ridges of the mountains, life flourishes here. The extraordinary richness in its oak forests, tropical forests, riparian forests along the rivers, and the ever shady cloud forests are all part of our rich natural heritage. All of this houses 2,310 species of vascular plants, 110 mammal species including the majestic jaguar, 134 reptile and amphibian species, one third of the Mexican butterflies with 800 species, and amongst them a trove of 343 birds that include several endemic and highly threatened species.

## Itinerary

Arrival to Mexico City or Querétaro City, the state capital depending on your chosen flight.



# 1<sup>st</sup> day



You will meet early with Sierra Gorda Ecotours staff to begin the trip to Sierra Gorda. We will have breakfast at the Magic Town (Pueblo Mágico) of Bernal and continue our route to Pinal de Amoles, a town within the Sierra Gorda.

We will head to the community of Cuatro Palos and walk to the lookout point of the Cerro de la Media Luna, a winding path between ancient oak trees to the 2,700 meter high peak. The spectacular landscape is a product of the unique location, and one of the most extraordinary sights of the Sierra Gorda where one can see the transition from the semi-desert to temperate forests.

On site we will look for highland species such as Mountain Trogons, Bluebirds, Mexican Jay, Spotted Wren, Magnificent Hummingbirds and Bumble-bee Hummingbirds. In the afternoon, we will travel to the El Chuvejé waterfall, a natural waterfall measuring more than 35 meters whose crystalline waters form a stream sheltered by centennial sycamore trees. Pine flycatchers, blue-crowned motmots, Collared Forest Falcon, Mountain and Elegant Trogons, Yellow-throated euphonia, Scrub euphonia, and Flame-colored tanager can be found there.

In the afternoon we move on to Jalpan de Serra, the main town in the Sierra Gorda to stay in the cabins of the Centro Tierra and enjoy at leisure the rest of the afternoon. We will be passing by the Historic Center and the the Mission of Santiago de Jalpan, built between 1751 to 1758 by Fray Junípero Serra and was designated as a World Heritage site by UNESCO.



# 2<sup>nd</sup> day



Departure to the Jalpan Reservoir to look for species of the dry tropical forest: Ferruginous pygmy owls, Crimson-collared grosbeak, Elegant trogon, Blue crowned motmot, Blue mockingbird, Elegant euphonia, Rufous capped warbler, Green jay, Hooded and Altamira orioles and several waterfowl species. The Jalpan Reservoir is a RAMSAR site and receives most of its migratory birds between the months of October and March.

After the morning tour, we move to a spot on the Flavor Trail to have a lunch and later to the facilities of the Tonatico Ranch School, where in its oak forests we will look for the Singing Quails, Mountain Trogon, Bronze-winged woodpecker, Orange-billed Nightingale, Spot-crowned woodcreeper, Brown-backed solitaire, Magnificent Hummingbird, Bumble-bee hummingbird, Golden-browed warbler, Tufted flycatcher, and Pine flycatchers amongst other species. We will have locally grown food on site, provided by the same Ranch, and return to Jalpan. There will be a free time slot before moving to the town of Concá for an overnight stay.



# 3<sup>rd</sup> day



Early morning coffee and birdwatching in the Hotel's gardens, Ferruginous pygmy owls, Crimson-collared grosbeak, Elegant trogon, Blue crowned motmot, Gray collared becard, Elegant euphonia, Rufous capped warbler, Masked tityra, Spot breasted wren, Audubon's oriole, Broad-billed hummingbird) and later we move to Ayutla for some rest and a relaxing swim. The advantage of the canal is that it runs through the orchards of the town, where we will be looking for Squirrel cuckoo, Montezuma oropendola, and the Olivaceous woodcreeper. After which we will then eat at Camp Los Sauces. Then we move to the Rincón de Ojo de Agua Cabins in the town of San Juan de los Durán, there we will look for the specialties of the eastern Sierra Madre and its temperate forests, which include the Bronze-winged woodpecker, Black-headed Nightingale trush, Gray -breasted wood wren, Gray silky, Bumble-bee hummingbird, the rare and endemic Bearded-wood partridge and Crested guan. Dinner and overnight on site.



# 4<sup>th</sup> day



After another very early coffee we prepare to depart by vehicle to the Sótano de las Golondrinas, in the neighboring state of San Luis Potosí. This huge sinkhole offers a unique natural phenomenon, in which thousands of White-collared swifts undertake their daily journey to feed on passing insects. The daily journey of these birds has been described as a “river” in the sky, while at the same time Green parakeets circle to leave the sinkhole. After the spectacle, we will move to Aquismón for breakfast, and later travel to Xilitla, a town where the British aristocrat Edward James built a surreal sculptural garden known as “Las Pozas”. This garden, surrounded by lush vegetation, became his resting place. It is an eminently surreal site for its sculptures, famous around the world and holds truly unique masterpieces; apart from this, there are several species of birds of interest, such as the Emerald toucanet, Green parakeet,

White-crowned parrot, Tamaulipas pygmy-owl, and the Ivory-billed woodcreeper. We will spend most of the afternoon at the site and later we will move to the indigenous (Náhuatl) town of La Trinidad to spend the night in their cabins.



# 5<sup>th</sup> day

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La Trinidad is surrounded by lush cloud and temperate forests, rich in biodiversity and in an excellent state of conservation. After having breakfast, we will go around to observe Bronze-winged woodpecker, Black-headed Nightingale thrush, Hooded grosbeak, Mountain trogon, Gray-breasted wood wren, Gray silky, Bumble-bee hummingbird, Bearded-wood partridge and Crested guan. After these activities, we will walk some trails of the forest and take a meal before returning to Jalpan de Serra to conclude. Final night stay and dinner included.

**Cost includes:** Transportation to and from airport to Sierra Gorda  
Tour guides and transportation during the tour Meals, 5 breakfasts and 5 lunches (dinner not included, nor alcoholic drinks) Entrance fees  
Travel insurance Shared lodging.



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# Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve



Map of vegetation types

SYMBOLY	
	Conifer forest
	Oak forest
	Cloud forest
	Tropical subdeciduous forest
	Tropical deciduous forest
	Xerophyllous shrub
	Submontane shrub
	Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve
	Querétaro State
	Road
	River
	Human settlement
	Core area
	Agriculture
	Buffer area
	County limits

