

# Brilliant Butterflies of Panama, Itinerary 2021

In the neotropical region of the Americas, the diversity of butterflies is incredibly high; an estimated 1,800 species can be found in Panama alone. Our Canopy Family Butterfly list has over 1,000 species!

Butterflies are active year-round; however, they rely heavily on their host plants, and their activity can be quite seasonal, with more flight and visibility in the wetter months (April to December) of the year. Come join the expert Canopy Family butterfly guide(s) as we explore the lowlands of the Canal Area and the mist-laden foothills of central Panama in search of butterflies!

- Butterflies are the main focus of this tour, as we will find and identify as many species as possible.
- An average of 250 butterfly species are seen.
- Photographic opportunities are plentiful, but this is not a strictly “photographic tour.”
- While searching for butterflies we will also see birds, mammals, reptiles and other insects. Though we won’t concentrate on these, we will certainly ID as many as possible.
- Butterflies will be identified near, far and in-between, so bring camera and **binoculars!**
- The guides will have a spotting scope that can also be used for digiscoping (with your phone) for images of the more obliging species!
- A light and sheet will be used to attract moths, katydids, mantids and other insects to enjoy and photograph, but be aware that we will not be able to ID most of these.

## Day 1

### ARRIVAL AND ORIENTATION

Welcome to Panama! You will be met at Tocumen International Airport (or your hotel if you arrived the day before) by our driver and transported (about an hour) to the unique Canopy Tower, located in Soberania National Park. The Canopy Tower was a US Air Force radar station built in 1965, now fully renovated and repurposed as a nature observatory and eco-lodge in the heart of the rainforest! The 50-foot-high observation deck puts you in the canopy providing the opportunity to view canopy butterfly species at eye level, many of which are very difficult to see from the ground. Upon arrival at the Canopy Tower, you will be shown to your room and, after a brief orientation, enjoy lunch in the canopy-level dining room (depending upon arrival time.) Make sure you bring your binoculars and camera to lunch—often there are monkeys, sloths, iguanas and toucans right outside the dining room windows, not to mention BUTTERFLIES!

This afternoon we will take advantage of the great observation deck and take our first glances at some incredible canopy butterfly species! Possibilities include Thoas and Androgeus swallowtails, kite-swallowtails, Malachite, Dusky-blue Groundstreak,

Amyntor Greenstreak, Spying Hairstreak, the eye-catching Mexican and Imperial arcas, Tricolored Metalmark, Blue-based and Curve-lined theopes, White-spotted, Three-toned and Two-spotted preponas, Dia Leafwing, Molpe and White-posted metalmarks, Two-eyed Eighty-Eight, Red-striped Leafwing, Orion Cecropian, Double-banded Banner, Banded Orange, Julia, Spot-celled and Iphicleola sisters, Many-banded Daggerwing, Cramer's Satyr, the spectacular Regal Hairstreak, Costa-spotted Metalmark and White-tipped Cycadian! Many species of skippers can be seen from the tower, both up in the canopy and down at ground level, feeding at the verbena. We will hope to see Dot-collared Firetip, White-tailed Longtail, Gilbert's Flasher, Corbulo Skipper, Broteas and Canal scarlet-eyes, Dyson's Silverpatch and White-trailed Skipper. Before dinner (every night) we will do the day's checklist and go over the plans for the upcoming day. DINNER AT CANOPY TOWER.

After dark, we will turn on the UV light in hopes to attract some nocturnal insects! There are far more species of moths than butterflies in the Neotropics, and although they present challenges to species identification, we will hope to see species in several families of moths, including some large sphinx moths and silk moths! *Please note that our butterfly tours focus on the identification of diurnal lepidopterans (butterflies and skippers). We will enjoy the moths on the light sheet but there will be no attention to their identification.*

## Day 2

### AM: PIPELINE ROAD (20 MINUTES FROM CANOPY TOWER)

After breakfast, we will board our open-air "Rainfomobile" and head to the world-famous Pipeline Road! Before we arrive at Pipeline, we will make a stop at the Ammo Ponds along the way to scan the grassy roadsides for Tropical Buckeye, Queen, Glassy-winged Skipper, Cassius Blue, Golden White, White Yellow, Bordered Patch, Pompeius Skipper, Banded Longwing, Mimosa and Yellow-rimmed skippers. Not far from Ammo Ponds, Pipeline Road extends 17 kilometers through Soberania National Park on the Caribbean slope. Pipeline Road is renown as a bird-watcher's paradise, but the mature secondary forest also houses an incredible array of other wildlife. We will search for forest and understory butterflies in this lowland rainforest. Common and Menelaus morphos patrol the wide gravel road, while Ruby-spotted Swallowtail, Apricot Sulphur, Pale-clubbed and Sky-blue hairstreaks, Periander, Barne's, Shaus', and Ireea metalmarks, Guyanan Sarota, Straight-lined Theope, Idae Tigerwing, Pale-banded and Eunice crescents, Iphiclus Sister, East-Mexican Banner, Two-eyed Eighty-Eight, Whitened Bluewing, Red and Variable crackers, Many-banded Daggerwing, Terrestrial Satyr, Long-tailed Flasher, Broad Banded-Skipper and the stunning Glorious Blue-Skipper will be targets. Longwing (*Heliconius* spp.) butterflies are well represented here, and we will hope to find Doris, Sara, Erato and Cydno longwings. If we're lucky, we'll spot a Pale Owl-Butterfly roosting low on a vertical tree trunk in the understory.

To maximize our time at this fantastic location, we will have a late lunch back at Canopy Tower!

### PM: OLD GAMBOA ROAD (5 MINUTES FROM CANOPY TOWER)

This afternoon we are off to Old Gamboa Road! This is the original road that extended to Gamboa; once a passageway for traffic, now it is a wide footpath, grown over by tall grasses bordering open areas and surrounded by patches of forest and wetlands. It is a great place to search for Dimorphic Skipper, Golden White, Togarna Hairstreak, Lucianus Metalmark, Green, Hecale and Melpomene longwings, Whitened and Orange-patched crescents, Banded and White peacocks, Stub-tailed Morpho, Golden-snouted Sootywing, Two-eyed Eighty-Eight, Dusky Owl-Butterfly, Polymnia Tigerwing, Hermes and Plain satyrs, Great White Longtail, Trailside Skipper and much more. After a grand afternoon of butterflying, we will return to the tower in time to freshen up for dinner. DINNER AT CANOPY TOWER.

## Day 3

### FULL DAY METROPOLITAN NATURAL PARK (30 MINUTES FROM CANOPY TOWER) AND BIOMUSEO GARDENS

Before heading out for Metropolitan Natural Park in Panama City this morning, it is a good idea to see what butterflies can be found in the windows of the Canopy Tower, as some of the crepuscular butterflies enter the tower during dawn and dusk and sit on the windows around the dining room. Common Phanus, Split-banded and Narrow-banded owl-butterflies, Tricolored Metalmark, White-patched Emesis, White-posted Metalmark and Cramer's Satyr often find themselves inside the Tower--a great opportunity to see these butterflies up close!

The drier forests and open areas of Metro Park offer species like Tiger Mimic-Queen, Hermes Satyr, Tropical Buckeye, Erato Longwing, Emerald-patched Cattleheart, Great White Longtail, Stigma Skipper, Uzza and Thamyra satyrs, Polydamas Swallowtail, Blue-gray Satyr, Lasus Metalmark, Statira Sulphur, Panna Skipper, Tropical Checkered-Skipper, Whitened Crescent and Brown, Plain and Great White longtails are just some of the butterflies we will look for today.

After spending the morning at Metro Park we will drive to the Amador Causeway near the Pacific entrance to the Panama Canal to visit the gardens of the BioMuseo! We will have a picnic lunch when we arrive or a little later depending on the time. The gardens behind the museum are perfect for getting some up-close looks at butterflies we may not see at other locations we visit! DINNER AT CANOPY TOWER.

## Day 4

### AM: TRANSFER TO CANOPY LODGE (2 HOURS FROM CANOPY TOWER)

After breakfast and a final look around the observation deck we will head 2 hours west to Canopy Lodge in El Valle de Anton. El Valle is in the foothills of central Panama and the higher elevation means cooler temps and less humidity. We will arrive in time for lunch in the open-air dining area, where you always have to keep an eye out for butterflies! After lunch and time to get settled into your rooms, we will head to the gardens to search for True Cattleheart, Cattleheart White, Mottled Scrub-Hairstreak, Lampeto Metalmark, Common Morpho, Dirce Beauty, Banner Metalmark, One-spotted Prepona, Iphiclus Sister, White Satyr, Malachite, Eligius Flat, Falcate Skipper, Golden-snouted Sootywing and Radiant Skipper that may be found in the garden areas.

If time permits, we will take a stroll down the road beside the lodge, as the abundant roadside vegetation and forest edge attract a wide variety of species including Thoas Swallowtail, Apricot Sulphur, Black-bellied Anteros, Yellow-tufted Prepona, Starry Cracker, Zebra, Erato and Sara longwings, Rayed Sister, Blue-and-orange Eighty-Eight, Simple Patch, Narva Checkerspot, Banded Peacock, Orange Daggerwing, Stub-tailed Morpho, Green Flasher and Rita's Remella. We will return to the lodge before dusk, to freshen up for dinner. LUNCH & DINNER AT CANOPY LODGE.

We will turn on the UV light at night for moths and nocturnal insects. You can check it throughout the evening and see what's still on the sheet in the morning!

## Day 5

### AM: LAS MINAS (15 MINUTES FROM CANOPY LODGE)

Awake as the morning light hits the windows of your room. The morning chorus of birds starts at dawn, and the garden feeders attract colorful tanagers, euphonias and hummingbirds. As we enjoy a hearty breakfast in the open-air dining area, the day continues to warm up and the first butterflies become active. We will make a quick check along the creek for the first butterflies of the morning before we head to our morning destination—Las Minas Road. This dirt road, used mainly for foot travel, extends through tropical scrubland and low canopy forest. It is a haven for butterflies! We will slowly walk the road and scan the roadsides for swallowtails, hairstreaks, brushfoots and skippers, which are particularly abundant here. Simple Sarota, several metalmarks, Tutia and Diasia clearwings, Lycaste Tigerwing, East-Mexican Banner, Black-bordered Crescent, Isidora Leafwing, Sara, Sapho and Fine-lined longwings, Hermes and Rufous-margined satyrs, Pasture, Trailside and Pompeius skippers and many more can be found along this road. This area can be so active with butterflies that we barely make it a few hundred meters down the road! If time permits, we will also

visit the area of La Mesa and Finca Macarena. Forest, field, scrubby pastures and gravel roads provide excellent habitat for a great diversity of butterflies. Here we will look for the tiny yet stunning metalmarks, including Panamanian and Godman's sarotas and Deep-blue Eyed-Metalmark. LUNCH AT CANOPY LODGE.

### PM: VALLE CHIQUITO (20 MINUTES FROM CANOPY LODGE)

After lunch and a short rest (which most of us will use to look for butterflies around the Canopy Lodge gardens!), we are off to Valle Chiquito! We head out of El Valle and start our way down the slope of the ancient volcano; we descend a steep road into a valley, adorned with ferns and broadleaf trees. At a slightly lower elevation, we hope to see some different species here! The roadside vegetation is perfect butterfly habitat. Aquamarine and Phaleros hairstreaks, Zebra Longwing, Thamyra Satyr and Panna Skipper are common here. We will check under broad leaves for the stunning Pixie! As the heat of the day passes and the butterflies settle in to their forest roosts for the night, we will head back to the lodge where there will be plenty of time to freshen up before our checklist and dinner. As dusk approaches, we will watch for the crepuscular species—Pale and Scalloped owl-butterflies—which may be active around the gardens. DINNER AT CANOPY LODGE.

## Day 6

### AM: CERRO GAITAL (20 MINUTES FROM CANOPY LODGE)

After an energizing breakfast, we will make our way uphill to Cerro Gaital—the steep, forested, mist-shrouded mountain that you can see from the lodge. Cerro Gaital (3,500') is the namesake of Cerro Gaital Natural Monument, which protects more than 335 hectares of mature cloud forest in the foothills of central Panama. After disembarking from the van, we will slowly explore the first short forest trail, where even in the morning mist, we may see Dark and Banded Owl-Butterflies as they seek out their daytime roosts. Mimosa Yellow, Clearwinged Mimic-White, Blue-patched Eyed-Metalmark, Tiger Mimic-Queen and Blue-gray Satyr can be seen flying low in the cloud forest understory. We will reach a clearing and a small wetland, where a great variety of butterflies can sometimes be found, particularly hairstreaks, metalmarks and skippers—Cattleheart White, Togarna and Fine-lined hairstreaks, Golden and Bright-centered euselias, Azure-winged Eurybia, Lasus Metalmark, Westwood's and Thamyra satyrs, Red-headed Firetip and Trailside Skipper can be found here. As mid-day approaches, we will return to the lodge for lunch. LUNCH AT CANOPY LODGE.

### PM: CARA IGUANA (10 MINUTES FROM CANOPY LODGE)

In early afternoon, we will head to Cara Iguana. Here, a seldom-traveled paved road provides a perfect means to butterfly the weedy, forest edges. We will scan the edges searching for skippers, metalmarks, and hairstreaks among others, always keeping a

watchful eye out for crackers and daggerwings! As the sun lowers and the butterfly activity quiets for the day we will head back to the Lodge. DINNER AT CANOPY LODGE.

## Day 7

### SANTA CLARA FULL DAY (1 HOUR FROM CANOPY LODGE)

Today is an exciting day—after an early breakfast, we head to the Pacific lowlands to Juan Hombron and Santa Clara. We will drive to the west of El Valle and down towards the coast, stopping at any spots along the way that look promising for butterflies. Our first “planned” stop will be the road to Juan Hombron where we will check the forest and pasture edges for skippers, metalmarks, hairstreaks and tigerwings. We then head to Santa Clara and a beach house where we will enjoy our picnic lunch while watching the waves come ashore. The road in front of the beach house is bordered by forest and fields and offers excellent habitat for butterflies. After our day of butterflying in the lowlands we had back to El Valle.

OR

### ALTOS DEL MARIA FULL DAY (1 HOUR FROM CANOPY LODGE)

After breakfast we will load-up in 4x4 vehicles for the drive to Altos del Maria, a private gated community just to the east of El Valle. This higher elevation (over 3000') cloud forest offers great scenery and some different butterfly species to search out. Butterflying here will be along hilly, gravel and paved roads. We will enjoy a picnic lunch at a lake and explore a trail along a creek, if weather permits.

Your guides will determine which location (Altos del Maria or Santa Clara) is best for the day.

This afternoon is a good opportunity for us to visit the popular El Valle artisan market in the center of town. It is a great place to find hand-made Panamanian products and souvenirs. As the last of the sun's rays fade for the day, we will enjoy a lovely evening, reviewing today's butterflies with appetizers before dinner. DINNER AT CANOPY LODGE.

## Day 8

### DEPARTURE

After breakfast at the Canopy Lodge, we can check the gardens one final time, before saying goodbye and heading to the airport to catch your return flights home. The tour officially ends after breakfast.

***Please note that the itinerary is flexible and may change without prior notice due to weather, alterations in habitat or other conditions.***