

South Texas Birding: Great Coastal and Rio Grande Birding Trail



Saint Louis Zoo Travel is offering for the first time this exciting birding opportunity, geared toward both the novice and advance birder.

South Texas along the Rio Grande Valley is the top birding destination in the U.S. for diversity of species. Texas has developed the Great Coastal and Rio Grande Birding Trails that allow access to over 150 different birding hotspots. We will visit three National Wildlife Refuges, including Aransas – home of the endangered whooping crane; three State Parks dedicated to birding, including Bentsen Rio – headquarters to the World Birding Center; birding nature centers; and King's Ranch with over 100,000 acres of wildlife preserves. We will see over 130 species of birds including many easy to spot water birds and waterfowl. Roadrunner, chachalaca, green jays, neotropical cormorants, roseate

spoonbills, caracaras, golden-fronted woodpecker, Altamira oriole, as well as the whooping crane are some of the birds you can expect to see. Your trip leaders will guide you through bird identification, natural history and habitats, conservation issues, and conservation programs to help preserve our avian friends.

Trip Activity Level: Easy, up to 1.5 mile walks on level paths or viewing from van or boat.

Escorted by Dr. Richard Coles, retired Director of the Tyson Research Center and Naturalist/Ecotourism Guide and Jim Jordan, Curator of Education, Saint Louis Zoo.



For more information, contact Altair Travel at (314) 968-9600.

ITINERARY

South Texas Birding

February 28 – March 6, 2009

\$1,800 per person double occupancy, includes air from St. Louis

Single Supplement is \$335

› **Saturday, February 28**

St. Louis to Harlingen to Weslaco, TX Estero Llano Grande SP

› **Sunday, March 1**

Weslaco
Santa Ana NWR and Valley Nature Center

› **Monday, March 2**

Weslaco
Bentsen Rio State Park and Audubon Nature Center

› **Tuesday, March 3**

Weslaco to Port Aransas
Laguna Atascosa NWR and Port Aransas Bird Preserves

› **Wednesday, March 4**

Port Aransas
Aransas NWR

› **Thursday, March 5**

Port Aransas to Kingsville
Kings Ranch

› **Friday, March 6**

Kingsville to Harlingen to St Louis
Kings Ranch



DAY 1 SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28

St. Louis – Weslaco, TX

An early morning flight will leave winter behind and land us in the lower Rio Grande Valley amidst flowering and producing citrus groves around noon. We will drive to Weslaco where we will check into the Best Western Palm Aire for the next three nights. A late afternoon/early evening jaunt to Estero Llano Grande State Park, Texas's newest state park and part of the world birding center, will introduce the group to birds of the lower Rio Grande and the extensive wetland habitats. We will see roseate spoonbills, anhinga and cormorants, tricolored heron, and alligators. That evening we will have a group dinner and orientation to our exciting week. **D**

DAY 2 SUNDAY, MARCH 1

Santa Ana NWR - Weslaco

After an early hot breakfast we depart for Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) on the Rio Grande. We will step into a rare tropical world where Spanish moss drips from trees, noisy chachalacas rustle in the underbrush, and hawks soar overhead. The opportunity for guided walks and a tram tour will take you to a variety of birding areas and a chance to walk through forests as they existed in the early 1800's. After a field lunch we return to Weslaco where you can rest at the pool side or travel to Weslaco's Valley Nature Center and Settling Basin to continue birding. The Valley Nature Center allows you to walk through the native forest as it existed 100 years ago and see forest birds such as hummingbirds and golden-fronted woodpecker. A relaxing evening with new friends comparing notes ends a productive day. **B/L/D**

DAY 3 MONDAY MARCH 2

Bentsen Rio State Park - Weslaco

We head out early to take advantage of birding at the World Bird Headquarters - Bentsen Rio State Park where motorized vehicles are not allowed except for a tram. Birding blinds and towers allow you to see song birds as they come to feeding stations. You can walk a variety of trails to spot the woodland birds that seek refuge here. These include Altamira and Audubon orioles, ringed kingfisher and indigo buntings. After a field lunch we will return to Weslaco where we will visit the Frontera Audubon Nature Center and city cemetery

to learn more about the natural history of the lower valley. That evening we will enjoy a program about bird migration in the U.S. and why this area is a focal point for birding. **B/L/D**

DAY 4 TUESDAY MARCH 3

Weslaco – Laguna Atascosa NWR – Port Aransas

After breakfast we depart Weslaco for Laguna Atascosa NWR located on the Gulf of Mexico near South Padre Island. The 15-mile Bayside loop road and visitor center trail allows us to view birds in coastal mudflats and brush land habitats. This is a great place to spot green jays, waterfowl, reddish egret, and hawks and kites soaring above the large expanses of coastal wetlands. We will have our lunch near the ocean before heading north to Corpus Christi. We arrive at Port Aransas mid-afternoon and settle into our hotel on the barrier island. We will stay at the Allister Square Inn for the next two nights. A late afternoon outing to Paradise Pond and Marsh Bird Sanctuaries introduces us to coastal species. Dinner on your own from a choice of quaint ocean-side restaurants. **B/L**

DAY 5 WEDNESDAY MARCH 4

Aransas NWR – Goose Island State Park

We depart for Rockport after breakfast for an all day outing to Aransas NWR and Goose Island State Park. In Rockport, we board the Wharf Cat for a four hour birding boat tour of Aransas NWR. Our Naturalist will tell the story of the whooping crane and conservation strategies to bring back this endangered species. We can expect see over 40 species on our outing into the refuge. We will stop at points of interest on our drive back to Point Aransas. **B/D**



DAY 6 THURSDAY MARCH 5

Port Aransas – Kingsville

After breakfast we depart for Kingsville where we will visit King's Ranch, the largest working ranch in the U.S. for afternoon natural history and wildlife tour. We will learn how wildlife management and agriculture has evolved through the century and is compatible when conducted properly. Our last night is spent at the Rodeway Inn and we will have our concluding dinner. **B/L/D**

DAY 7 FRIDAY MARCH 6

King's Ranch – Harlingen – St. Louis

One last birding trip after breakfast into King's Ranch as we search for new birds in the scrub land of interior Texas. We can expect to see great kiskadee, scissor-tailed flycatcher, loggerhead shrike and long billed thrasher. After lunch we head to Harlingen for our early evening flight back to St. Louis after an exhilarating week of Texas birding. **B/L**

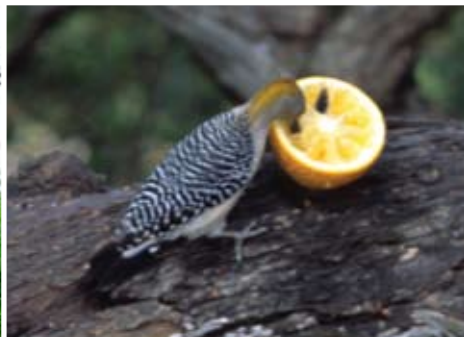
Note: All itineraries subject to change depending on the whims of the birds (and guides), personal abilities, interest, and weather conditions, etc.

Trip Price Includes:

- Roundtrip air fare on Southwest airlines from St. Louis to Harlingen, TX
- Transportation in Texas via 15 passenger vans
- Meals as indicated in itinerary
- Admission to all places visited and the Wharf Cat boat tour
- Travel insurance which includes trip cancellation and post departure insurance

Trip Price Does Not Include:

- Beverages and personal expenses
- Gratuities



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Our Zoo Travel adventures fill quickly. To be assured of space prior to sending in your reservation form, please call: (314) 968-9600. This form with deposit should be sent to:

Altair Travel and Cruises
2025 South Brentwood Blvd
St. Louis, MO 63144
(314) 968-9600

PERSONAL INFORMATION – Please fill out one reservation form for each traveler.

Full Name of Traveler Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____

(2nd Traveler) Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Date of Birth _____ Cell Phone (____) _____

Evening Telephone (____) _____ Day Telephone (____) _____

E-Mail _____

ACCOMMODATIONS

Double-Rooming with _____

Double-Please match with roommate if possible (if not I understand I will pay an additional single supplement)

Single Accommodations (very limited, not guaranteed)

I am a smoker Non-smoker

Unless specified otherwise, all boat cabins must be shared.

EMERGENCY CONTACT:

Name: _____ Phone: (____) _____

Cell Phone: (____) _____ Relationship: _____

I am in good general health – I have the following medical or physical conditions that may limit my activities:

Dietary restrictions: please describe _____

PAYMENT:

South Texas Birding package is \$1800.00 per person. This includes the airfare, transportation, hotels, admission fees, some meals as outlined on the itinerary, and travel insurance. The single supplement is \$335.00 additional.

A deposit of \$350.00 per person is required to hold space. Please send checks for deposit and final payment to:

Altair Travel and Cruises
2025 South Brentwood Blvd
St. Louis, MO 63144
(314) 968-9600

TRIP INCLUDES:

- Round-trip air from St. Louis on Southwest Airlines
- 6 night's hotel accommodations
- Transportation
- Breakfast at hotels
- Most Lunches (field Lunches)
- 4 dinners
- Entrance to Kings Ranch
- Wharf Cat Tour Fee
- Insurance

NOT INCLUDED:

- Any entrance fees not listed above
- Incidentals such as bottled water, telephone calls, snacks, clothing, emergency care, film.
- Meals not listed on itinerary
- Refund and Cancellation Policy

REFUND CANCELLATION POLICY:

Cancellations must be received in writing

60 days or more prior to departure50% of deposit

59 days to 30 days prior to departure..... 100% of deposit plus cost of airline ticket

29 days to 15 days prior to departure..... 50% of trip cost plus cost of airline ticket

14 days or less.....100% of trip cost

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

The Saint Louis Zoo and Altair Travel & Cruises, and our cooperating agents make every effort to select reliable suppliers and contractors to provide aid and other transportation services, hotels, guides, and other travel related corrections equated with such services. Each traveler agrees not to hold the Saint Louis Zoo and Altair Travel & Cruises, its, owners, employees, agents, sponsoring organizations and/or damage which results directly or indirectly from any act of omission of any person or firm which is to or does provide goods or services in connection with the trip or with any available option.

The Saint Louis Zoo and Altair Travel & Cruises, its cooperating agents and sponsoring organization shall not be liable for circumstances arising from quarantine, strikes, theft, pilferage, acts of nature, military, political, or terrorist action, civil disturbances, government restrictions, or regulations, failure of any means of conveyance to arrive or depart as scheduled, discrepancies or changes in transit over which they have no control. On advancement of deposit, the traveler agrees to be bound by the terms and conditions set forth above.

I understand that by signing below I am acting for myself and for everyone in my party in acknowledging that I have read and accepted the terms and conditions, payment, refund and cancellation policy, wildlife viewing, itinerary changes, and fees sections on this form. I also assume all risks involved with regard to this trip and agree that the Saint Louis Zoo, vendors, and Altair Travel & Cruises will in no way be responsible for any injury or damage to me or other members of my party.

Signature _____ Date _____

Please make a copy of this entire form for your records