



PO Box 16545 Portal, AZ 85632
Phone 520.558.1146 Toll free 866.900.1146 Fax 650.471.7667
Email info@naturalistjourneys.com

New Mexico in Winter – Bosque del Apache & the Sandia Crest: Sandhill Cranes & Rosy Finches

December 2-7, 2012, with a Holiday Santa Fe extension Dec. 7-9

Bosque del Apache is one of the richest wintering areas for waterfowl in the United States. Each autumn, tens of thousands of ducks (17 species!) and geese pour into the extensive wetlands and marshes of the refuge. Some years the snow geese number over 25,000! Joining them are some forty-thousand Sandhill Cranes. At dawn the noise is deafening as birds fly out of safe roosting areas to neighboring farm fields where they feed. Eagles and marauding coyotes create quite a stir among the flocks – most often signaled by an explosion of Snow and Ross's geese, or the noisy honking of Canada Geese.

Dawn is the most impressive time to witness the spectacle of massive, noisy flocks of cranes and geese as they rise off the water to disperse. Photographic opportunity abounds: catch the play of orange and pink light, often with reflections of surrounding hills and mountains in the refuge ponds. Bosque del Apache has an excellent road system laid out to give visitor's marvelous, often close-up viewing of many species. During the day we walk and drive roads of the refuge looking for birds and other wildlife. At sunset we station ourselves in a good viewing area to watch the cranes return.

The refuge and its surroundings are also excellent wintering areas for hawks and eagles. One day we'll venture south to Percha Dam and Elephant Butte Reservoir to do some birding, and – if there is interest – a soak in natural hot springs at Truth or Consequences. On our return day to Albuquerque we seek out three species of Rosy Finches and the scenic bird's eye view on the crest of the Sandia Mountains.

This is a Naturalist Journeys Sampler trip, with a blend of birding, travel photography, cultural attractions and fun!



ITINERARY

Dec. 2 – Arrive in Albuquerque / El Paso Nature Center / Drive to Socorro

Those meeting at the airport by 2PM can join us to visit Albuquerque's delightful Rio Grande Nature Center, where we take a short walk on trails through beautiful riverside bosque (closed canopy woodland). Behind large windows in the Nature Center, we watch Wood Ducks and other wintering birds at a beautiful, willow-lined pond. If arriving after 2PM, plan on taking a taxi to the hotel in Old Town, in time to join us for dinner. Meet in the lobby at 6:30PM if so.

After birding and exploring the nature center, we settle into our lodgings, then explore a bit of Old Town, decorated in holiday garb, before a welcome dinner at one of our favorite restaurants.

Accommodations at Hotel Albuquerque, Albuquerque, NM (D)



Dec. 3, 4 & 5 – Fabulous days for birding and photography at Bosque del Apache NWR

Bosque del Apache in central New Mexico is one of the richest wintering areas for waterfowl in the United States. Each autumn, tens of thousands of ducks and geese converge in the extensive wetlands and marshes of the refuge. Some years the refuge harbors over 40,000 Snow Geese, as well as thousands of Sandhill Cranes! At dawn the noise is deafening as birds fly out of safe roosting areas to neighboring farm fields where they feed. Eagles and marauding Coyotes create quite a stir among the flocks – most often signaled by an explosion of 25,000 Snow and Ross's Geese, or the noisy honking of Canada Geese.



To be at Bosque del Apache in winter is an amazing experience. Each day, we venture out at dawn to witness the spectacle of massive, noisy flocks of cranes and geese as they rise off the water to disperse.

Colors of sunrise are stunning against the backdrops of mountains, ponds, and lines of cottonwood trees. We'll also choose an evening or two to take in the sunset, at both times the cacophony of sound is as magic as the sight of mixed groups numbering up to tens of thousands of Sandhill Cranes and Snow Geese.



One admirable feature of this refuge is the layout of the road system, which usually provides excellent proximity to many species. During the day, we walk the trails and drive the roads of the refuge looking for birds and other wildlife such as Mule Deer,

Coyotes, and Porcupines. Don't be surprised if a huge Wild Turkey struts out from the brush! Many winters there are oddball wintering songbirds – one year a Prothonotary Warbler!

The refuge and surrounding areas are also excellent wintering sites for many raptors. Bald Eagles, American Kestrels, Northern Harriers, and Red-tailed Hawks are fairly common. Ferruginous Hawks may also be seen in the area. West of Socorro lays the Magdalena Mountains -- gentle slopes by Rocky Mountain standards, but lovely in their own way. A walk up scenic Water Canyon provides a good opportunity to see such forest loving species as Acorn Woodpeckers, Steller's Jays, and Western Scrub Jays. In more open woodlands we look for Juniper and Bridled Titmice, Common Bushtits, nuthatches,



bluebirds, wintering sparrows, and Pine Siskin. Calls of Rock Wrens and Townsend's Solitaires are unmistakable. If there is interest, we'll visit the fabulous new visitor center for the El Camino Real to immerse ourselves in history.

Accommodations for three nights in Socorro, NM (B, all days, Lunch Dec. 4 and D on Dec. 3)

Dec. 6 - Return to Albuquerque / Sandia Mountain Rosy Finch Quest / Festive Final Dinner in Old Town Albuquerque

Views of the city are quite amazing as we climb in elevation on our drive up to the Sandia Crest. This is a popular recreation area for residents, and we pass several picnic grounds and a ski area. There are places to bird en route, with a chance to see Northern Pygmy Owls, Williamson's Sapsuckers, Steller's Jays, Mountain Chickadees, and Clark's Nutcrackers. A portion of the drive is heavily forested, and above the nine-mile picnic area we may find more typically northern species of Pine Grosbeaks, Cassin's Finches, or Red Crossbills. Views are spectacular and eventually we reach tree line and the open, often snowy crest. There is a restaurant/shop here called the Crest House that maintains feeders, to which ALL THREE North American species of Rosy Finches come in to. We will view the feeders from below, in the parking lot, and if it's blustery, we can watch from inside! We'll bring gifts of seed to aid the effort made by local banders to mark and study the intermingled and dynamic flocks. The joy of a Sandia Crest birding day is that atop the world the birds come to us! We also may have some good raptor viewing, with Merlins and Northern Goshawks both possible.

Accommodations at Hotel Albuquerque, Albuquerque, NM (B,L,D)

Dec. 7 – Departures from Albuquerque or extension to Santa Fe

We suggest you make your flights out for 12:30 onwards, so if for any reason we have bad weather the day previous, we can make a morning run up Sandia Crest (weather and road conditions permitting). This time of year is normally pretty dry with good conditions, so if we've had success the day previous, we'll bird some other local hotspots ahead of our plan to arrive at the airport by 11:30 am for flights out after NOON. Albuquerque's airport is small and user friendly so an hour ahead is adequate. Those continuing on can plan on lunch in Santa Fe, just an hour away. (B)



HOLIDAY SANTA FE EXTENSION Dec. 7-9, 2012

Santa Fe takes on a magical air in the holiday season, when lights decorate the historic Plaza. Special music and events are held each weekend, including the Winter Spanish Market on Dec. 1 and 2. This can be booked on your own ahead of our Bosque del Apache trip, or you can join us for the following weekend when we offer a guided 2-night extension highlighting nature and culture, with great opportunities for travel photography in the city itself, at nearby Tent Rocks National Monument and the village of Chimayo. While in the city you can stroll among the many private galleries, visit the Santa Fe Cooking School, or tour any of four world class museums: The Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, the Museum of International Folk Art, the Museum of Spanish Colonial Art and the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian. Our guides are on hand to provide guidance and transportation as you explore the places of interest to you. Evenings offer options for concerts, night photography of the luminaries or simply time to dine at your leisure with friends!

Accommodations in Santa Fe (B all days, L on Dec. 7, and D on Dec. 8)

PLAN AHEAD!

Protect yourself with [Allianz Travel Insurance](#) (formerly Access America).

Offset your [Carbon Footprint](#). Show us the receipt and we'll take 50% - up to \$50.00 - of your carbon offset fee off your final payment.



COST OF THE JOURNEY

Cost of the main journey is \$1795.00 per person, based on double occupancy, from Albuquerque, NM (ABQ); extension is \$695.00. Single supplement \$375.00. This is based on double occupancy and includes airport transfers, all accommodations, most meals as specified in the itinerary, professional guide services, local park entrance fees, and miscellaneous program expenses. It does not include roundtrip airfare to Albuquerque, or items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone, drinks from the bar, gratuities for portage, or personal services.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

Please plan to arrive in Albuquerque by 2PM or before on Dec. 2nd. Plan on departures after 12:30 on Dec. 7th if leaving after the main tour, and after Noon (to enjoy breakfast and a leisurely return to the airport) on Dec. 9th. There is a convenient shuttle from Santa Fe to Albuquerque, as well as a commuter train, if you wish to extend your stay, or need to get back to Albuquerque earlier than Noon.

Naturalist Journeys, LLC is an equal opportunity service provider and committed to the goal of ensuring equal opportunity for all in employment and program delivery.

Photo Credits

Sandias, Black Rosy Finch and Gray-capped Rosy Finch; Dwayne Longenbaugh, Sundance Nature Photos; Snow Geese, Sunset Cranes, and Cranes in Water, Peg Abbott. Dancing Cranes Narca Moore Craig.