

# Southwest Desert Tour



## A celebration of Bio-diversity in the Desert

The hot arid regions of the southwest United States contain four distinct desert ecosystems: the Chihuahuan, the Mohave, the Great Basin and the Sonoran deserts. Each of these eco-types are characterized by low rainfall and extreme temperatures and are sparsely populated. Indeed, there's a popular misconception that these deserts are scrub-wastelands, devoid of life, but this perception couldn't be further from the truth. This tour takes an in-depth look at the Sonoran desert region of southwest Arizona and exposes the areas spectacular biodiversity as we explore a region that features some of the most majestic desert scenery, and the most fascinating desert wildlife, to be found anywhere in the world.

The Sonoran desert is the largest of North America's four deserts, spanning over 320,000 km<sup>2</sup> and is home to over 350 species of bird, 60 species of mammal, 20 species of amphibian and over 100 species of reptiles. By necessity, many of the species that make their home in the desert have developed fantastic behavioural, physiological and ecological adaptations to cope with such climatic extremes. We'll have many opportunities to observe and photograph these creatures in their natural environment.

Our tour will also guide you to one of Arizona's best kept secrets - within the desert region there are several insular mountain ranges, collectively referred to as the Madrean Sky Islands, that ascend dramatically from the desert floor to reach elevations over 12,000 feet (3,800m). As these mountains climb above the desert the vegetation, and associated species communities, change to take advantage of cooler and wetter climates on the mountain slopes. These areas are some of the highest biodiversity ecosystems in North America and are home to hundreds of species of southwest specialties like the Mexican spotted owl, Elegant Trogons and much more.

Throughout the tour you'll be exposed to instruction, through workshops and hands-on experience, to apply and practice many different photographic techniques. We'll practice and learn techniques for in-flights, flash photography, macro-photography, composition, bracketing and shot-setup. In addition to providing photographic instruction we'll also be able to share an abundance of information about the local flora and fauna in the areas we explore. Jared is an experienced biologist and is very familiar with the ecology of the southwest; he's an expert at finding and working around the wildlife of this region. We hope you'll join us for a photographic experience that you'll remember for a lifetime!

## Itinerary

The following schedule details each day's activities however the sequence and activities may be adjusted to suit group preferences and, of course, the inevitable shifts in weather.

<b>Day One</b>	Arrive in Tucson, Arizona in the early afternoon. Explore <a href="#">Saguaro National Park</a> with a visit to the North Park Visitor Center and Sabino Canyon for sunset with the screech owls. Then back to the hotel for a night-time slideshow and <b>workshop on nature photography</b> .
<b>Day Two</b>	We'll start with a dawn shoot focused on desert songbirds and then off to the <a href="#">Tucson Desert Museum</a> for a thrilling introduction to the wildlife of the Sonoran Desert. After dinner we'll take a sunset drive up Mt Lemmon in search of nocturnal 'critters'.
<b>Day Three</b>	Shoot desert songbirds at dawn and then down to <a href="#">Madera Canyon</a> for the day and dusk shoot before moving on to our next location based out of Huachuca City.
<b>Day Four</b>	Explore the canyons of the <a href="#">Huachuca range</a> . We'll start with Miller Canyon for Spotted Owls and the Beatty Ranch for hummingbirds before heading to Tombstone for dinner and then a night drive searching for nocturnal critters.
<b>Day Five</b>	Another exciting day in the <a href="#">Huachuca range</a> . Starting at Ramsey Canyon and then off to the <a href="#">San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area</a> for the dusk light. Then off to photograph Elf owls at the nest. Dinner in Sierra Vista then back to the hotel for a <b>talk on Spotted Owls</b> .
<b>Day Six</b>	Dawn and the <a href="#">San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area</a> and then drive to Bisbee for dinner and then on to the Chiracahua's. Stay at <a href="#">Southwestern Research Station</a> .
<b>Day Seven</b>	Hiking up Cave Creek in search of trogon nests, spotted owls, whiskered screech owls, desert cottontails, redstarts, snakes and gila monsters and then back to the <a href="#">station</a> .
<b>Day Eight</b>	Desert birds around the Chiracahua's at dawn and rattlesnakes (at the den) mid-morning. Then up to Rustler Park for montane rattlesnakes and gorgeous sunset scenics. Stay at <a href="#">Southwestern Research Station</a> .
<b>Day Nine</b>	Morning birds at the station and then off to <a href="#">Chiracahua National Monument</a> for some scenic shooting. Head back to Tucson for dinner and our last night together.
<b>Day Ten</b>	If there's time we'll shoot around the Desert museum at dawn and then head to the airport for our short flight home.

For a sample of the opportunities you'll be exposed to check out our online Arizona 2010 and 2011 galleries:

2010: <http://www.hobbsphotos.com/index.php/galleries/view/72/>

2011: <http://www.hobbsphotos.com/index.php/galleries/view/82/>

## Route Map



## What to Bring

Deciding what gear to bring on a trip is a personal and subjective decision. You should consider cost (and budget), portability (although most of our photo-shoot locations are relatively close to a vehicle so weight and size of lenses is not a huge consideration) and versatility:

- Since wildlife photography is our prime objective, we recommend a telephoto lens ranging in size from 300 to 500mm, plus a 1.4x and/or 2.0 x tele-converters.
- For the macro workshop on our tour a macro lens is useful.
- To capture amazing desert scenic images be sure to bring wide-angle, "normal," and medium telephoto lenses to allow you to take advantage of a wide variety of subjects.
- A portable storage device to store and backup your amazing images!

Most of your lens needs can be fulfilled by high quality zoom lenses produced by the brand name camera manufacturers. A versatile camera bag might contain a 10-22mm zoom, 200-400mm zoom (or a straight 300mm telephoto) plus a 500mm F4 telephoto and a 1.4 and/or 2.0 extender.

Finally, since we won't be near any camera stores remember to bring spare batteries, charging devices, storage devices, polarizing filters and your flash unit. If possible, it's wise to bring an extra camera body in case your primary body malfunctions. It is extremely important to bring a tripod.

\*The trip is ideally suited for 35mm digital photography but all formats are welcome.

## Considerations

### Proposed Tour Dates:

See website for next available tour dates.

### Tour Cost:

Trip costs are updated on our website and are based on single occupancy rates. We will meet in Tucson on the scheduled tour start date. During the tour all meals, accommodation, transport and park entrance fees are included in the tour price.

#### Personal expenses not included in tour cost:

- Airfare to/from Tucson, Arizona
- Alcoholic beverages
- Trip insurance or Medical expenses

#### Payment Terms:

- A **\$1,000.00** non-refundable deposit is required to reserve a space on this tour. The balance of the payment is due at least four weeks prior to the tour start date. For cancellations within 30 days of the tour start date all payments are non-refundable.

