



New Mexico: Wings of Winter

January 16 – 21, 2026



Sandhill Cranes at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge

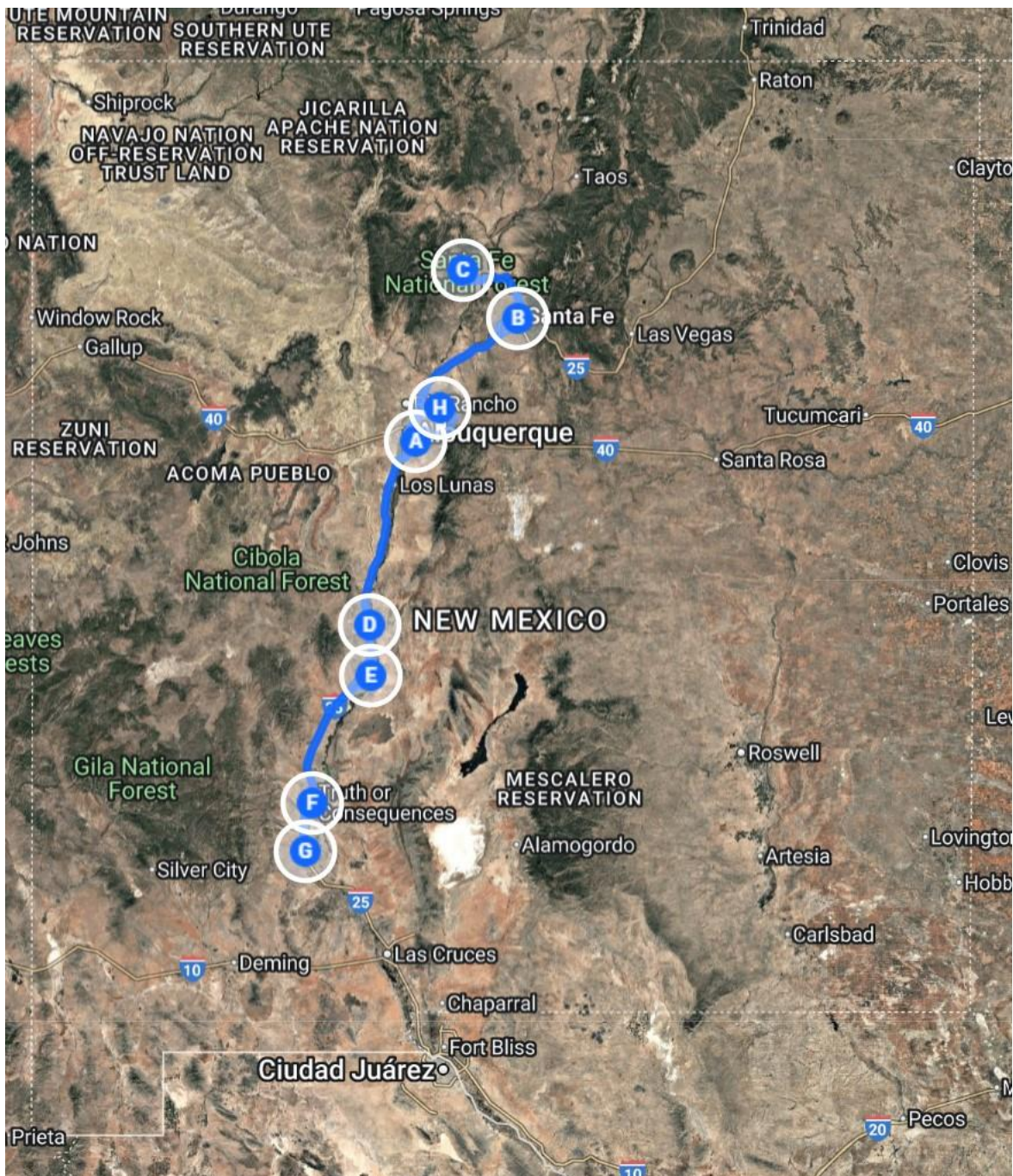


Trip Summary

Winter in New Mexico is nothing short of spectacular. Flocks of tens of thousands of Snow Geese and Sandhill Cranes fill the skies above Bosque del Apache, while rosy-finches swirl around snowy mountain feeders, and desert specialties like Crissal Thrasher and Cactus Wren haunt the high desert scrub. Over six days, we'll explore an impressive range of habitats—from the pinyon-juniper foothills near Santa Fe, to the canyons and mountains around Los Alamos, the wetlands and agricultural lands of the Rio Grande Valley, and the snow-dusted peaks of the Sandia Mountains. This diversity of landscapes offers the chance to see a remarkable variety of species, including wintering raptors, rare longspurs, and many of the Southwest's most sought-after resident birds. Along the way, you'll enjoy comfortable accommodations, first-class guiding, and the camaraderie of fellow birders as we immerse ourselves in the "Land of Enchantment" at its most vibrant season.

Itinerary in Brief

Day	Activities	Food	Lodging
1	Arrival in Albuquerque Transfer to Santa Fe	D	The Sage Hotel
2	Foothills of Santa Fe and Los Alamos Cieneguilla Petroglyph Site Bosque del Apache NWR Socorro	BLD	Holiday Inn Express
3	Bosque del Apache NWR San Antonio Wetlands Socorro	BLD	Holiday Inn Express
4	Bosque del Apache NWR Elephant Butte Reservoir Percha Dam Truth or Consequences	BLD	Sierra Grande Lodge
5	Sevilleta NWR Bernardo WMA Albuquerque	BLD	Best Western Plus Rio Grande Inn
6	Sandia Crest Elena Gallegos Open Space Departure	BL	



Destinations for the 6-day itinerary showing sites with a wide range of altitudes and habitats

Itinerary

Day 1: Home | Albuquerque, NM | Santa Fe, NM

Arrive at Albuquerque International Sunport where your guide will greet you before we make the scenic one-hour drive north to Santa Fe. Depending on arrival times, we may explore the historic downtown plaza or enjoy a short birding excursion at the Randall Davey Audubon Center. In the evening, we'll gather for a welcome dinner and orientation to the exciting week ahead.

Target Birds:

- Ladder-backed Woodpecker
- Steller's Jay
- Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay
- Cassin's Finch
- Townsend's Solitaire

Lodging: [The Sage Hotel](#)

Meals included: D



Enjoy some of the cultural and historical attractions in New Mexico's capital, Santa Fe



The Cassin's Finch is a mountain finch that can regularly be seen in the winter in the areas surrounding Santa Fe



We'll spend time looking for birds that dwell in mixed montane forests like this Williamson's Sapsucker in the hills above Los Alamos

Day 2: Santa Fe | Los Alamos | Socorro

After breakfast in Santa Fe, we'll head into the nearby mountains and canyons above Los Alamos, where pinyon-juniper woodlands and mixed montane forest provide excellent birding. Here we'll search for local specialties alongside mountain residents and perhaps encounter Bighorn Sheep or Mule Deer in the rugged landscapes.

By midday we'll continue south into the open agricultural fields and grasslands of the Rio Grande Valley. These wide-open spaces are prime habitat for raptors and wintering songbirds, and in the late afternoon we'll arrive in Socorro, our base for exploring Bosque del Apache. If time allows, we'll make an evening visit to the refuge to watch thousands of cranes and geese return to roost — one of North America's most unforgettable wildlife spectacles.

Target Birds:

- Pinyon Jay
- Juniper Titmouse
- Williamson's Sapsucker
- Steller's Jay
- Green-tailed Towhee
- Prairie Falcon
- Ferruginous Hawk
- Golden Eagle
- Chestnut-collared & Thick-billed Longspurs

Lodging: [Holiday Inn Express Socorro](#)

Meals included: B, L, D



Pinyon Jay is one of several birds we will be looking for in the pinyon-juniper scrub around Santa Fe



Huge flocks of Sandhill Cranes will be one of our primary targets at the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge



The Greater Roadrunner (left) and Townsend's Solitaire (right) are two birds we will likely find on this winter adventure



Spending time in the mountains north of Los Alamos will introduce us to a unique assemblage of species, including this Steller's Jay

Day 3: Socorro | Bosque del Apache NWR | San Antonio Wetlands | Socorro

We'll spend a full day immersed in one of North America's premier birding destinations: Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. From sunrise liftoffs of thousands of Snow Geese and Sandhill Cranes to quiet backwater marshes, the refuge offers spectacular wildlife encounters. In the afternoon, we'll explore nearby wetlands and farmlands near San Antonio before returning to Socorro for the evening.

Target Birds:

- Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Cackling Goose
- Greater White-fronted Goose
- Sandhill Crane
- Bald Eagle
- American Avocet (wintering)
- Gambel's Quail
- Greater Roadrunner
- Vermilion Flycatcher



Although less common in winter, Vermilion Flycatcher is a possibility at Bosque del Apache

Lodging: [Holiday Inn Express Socorro](#)

Meals included: B, L, D



Cinnamon Teal male in breeding plumage is a sight to behold

Day 4: Socorro | Elephant Butte Reservoir | Percha Dam | Truth or Consequences (T & C)

After an early morning return to Bosque del Apache, we'll head south toward Elephant Butte Reservoir and Percha Dam State Park. These areas add a different dimension to our birding, with opportunities for waterfowl, gulls, and wintering passerines. By evening we'll settle into the quirky town of Truth or Consequences, known for its natural hot springs — a relaxing way to unwind after a day of birding.

Target Birds:

- Western & Clark's Grebes
- Common Goldeneye
- Bonaparte's Gull
- Phainopepla
- Pyrrhuloxia
- Crissal Thrasher
- Cactus Wren



Compare Western (above) with Clark's Grebe in the field at Elephant Butte Reservoir

Lodging: [Sierra Grande Lodge](#)

Meals included: B, L, D



Birding the high desert plains

Day 5: T & C | Sevilleta NWR | Bernardo WMA | Albuquerque

This morning we'll head north again, birding en route through Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge and the agricultural lands around Bernardo Wildlife Management Area. These wetlands and fields can hold thousands of wintering waterfowl and cranes, as well as hawks and falcons hunting the fields. By late afternoon we'll arrive in Albuquerque, where we'll enjoy a farewell dinner together.

Target Birds:

- Northern Harrier
- Rough-legged Hawk (occasional)
- Merlin
- Sandhill Crane (Bernardo staging fields)
- Snow Goose flocks
- Loggerhead Shrike



Lodging: [Best Western Plus Rio Grande Inn](#)

Meals included: B, L, D

Sagebrush Sparrow can be found in several locations throughout the trip

Day 6: Albuquerque | Sandia Crest | Elena Gallagos Open Space | Afternoon/Evening Departure

We'll finish our journey with high-elevation birding in the Sandia Mountains. At Sandia Crest, feeders provide one of the most reliable winter opportunities in the U.S. to see all three species of rosy-finches together: Black, Brown-capped, and Gray-crowned. If time permits, we'll make a stop at Elena Gallegos Open Space before transferring to the airport for departures home.

Target Birds:

- Black Rosy-Finch
- Brown-capped Rosy-Finch
- Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch
- Mountain Chickadee
- Red-breasted Nuthatch
- Townsend's Solitaire

Lodging: None

Meals included: B, L



Hepburn's Rosy-Finch is a subspecies of the Gray-crowned Rosy-finch

Value

\$2,350 double occupancy

\$3,025 single occupancy

Includes:

- ✓ Driver and guide throughout the tour
- ✓ Ground transportation
- ✓ All hotels
- ✓ Meals listed on itinerary
- ✓ All fees and permits
- ✓ Water and snacks throughout the trip
- ✓ General Liability insurance and auto insurance
- ✓ 24-hour assistance in case of emergency

Does not include:

- × Flight
- × Medical insurance
- × Travel insurance
- × Evacuation costs
- × Alcoholic beverages
- × Personal expenses
- × Activities and food not included on the itinerary
- × Optional tips
- × Laundry and other items of personal nature

Please note that this itinerary cannot be 100% guaranteed, as it is only a rough guide and can be changed due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors.



What You Need to Know

Group Size:

6 -8 participants

Tour Pace:

This tour is designed for intermediate birders and photographers. We consider the difficulty level to be moderate, with most of the birding being close to roadsides and trails with slight uphill and downhill. Expect early morning starts and long drives, but we will make sure the trip is broken up with plenty of out-of-vehicle time. Rest and relaxation time will be built in throughout the tour, wherever possible.

Transportation:

You will be traveling in a 12- or 14- passenger van with windows. The maximum group size will be 8 people, including the guide. There will be sufficient room for personal baggage.

Lodging:

You will be staying at a combination of 2- and 3-star hotels and lodges throughout the tour. Each accommodation has been diligently vetted for quality and assurance. Please see websites at hyperlinks above.

Altitude:

Birding on this tour will occur between 4,000 and 10,500 feet.

Weather:

Winter weather in New Mexico is brisk. Expect temperatures in the low 30s in the evening, with days ranging from the low 30s to mid-50s F. It frequently will get into the 20s overnight, and in some places the all-time low temps are as low as 5 degrees F (exceptionally the highs can be into the 70s in the lowest elevation places, but it tends to be on the colder side of the aforementioned temperature range. Rain and snow showers, and gusty winds are possible.

Laundry:

Laundry services are available at all hotels on this trip, however, please note that laundry fees are not included in the tour pricing.

Travel Insurance:

We do not provide travel (or medical) insurance. We strongly advise that you purchase a travel insurance package. Please read our **cancellation policy** below.



READY TO BOOK THIS TOUR?

Registration and Payment Information:

Registration and all payments, including initial deposit, should be made through our [website](#). We do accept credit cards for an additional 2.9% fee, but you may also pay by bank transfer or check. We request a \$1,000 initial deposit upon registration. **Full payment is due 90 days prior to tour departure.**

CANCELATIONS: If we cancel a tour due to low attendance, severe weather, COVID-19, or other unforeseen event, participants may either move their payments to another trip of their choice or receive a full refund. If you cancel your spot on a tour more than 90 days from departure, you will be eligible for a full refund. If cancelled within 90 days of departure, no refund will be given UNLESS we are able to fill your spot(s) with another participant(s). In that situation, \$250 will be withheld for administrative purposes, but the remainder of your payment will be refunded. We highly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or a family member prior to or during a trip.