



Birds & Blossoms Nature Sketching Retreat

with Christine Elder

Rancho Primavera

Jalisco, Mexico

March 1-5th, 2017

\$1,725 Single / \$1,425 Double

Join professional biological illustrator, Christine Elder and birdwatching guide Stephen Shunk, for this relaxing four-night retreat in the Cabo Corrientes region of Pacific Mexico. We will combine nature exploration and artistic expression surrounded by the comfort and solitude of Rancho Primavera.



Join us south-of-the-border for this relaxed nature-sketching vacation. We will focus on learning and drawing the birds and tropical flora of this beautiful area of Pacific Mexico.

No prior art experience is necessary, just a playful curiosity about nature and an open-minded desire to learn and practice new skills. Even experienced artists will enhance their skills as we immerse ourselves in splendor!

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Arts instruction, complimented with the natural history and ecology of this fascinating region.
- A full day at the famous Vallarta Botanical Gardens:
 - Rated by *Trip Advisor* as one of the “Top 5 things to do in the Puerto Vallarta area.”
These private gardens were also selected by the Canadian Garden Tourism Council as one of the “Top 10 North American gardens worth travelling for”.
Their beautifully landscaped grounds have extensive collections of native orchids, palms, tillandsia, tree ferns, tropical fruit trees and a butterfly garden. We will enjoy lunch at their excellent restaurant, with dining on the deck overlooking the Horcones River and cooled by Sierra Madrean mountain breezes.
- Accommodations at Rancho Primavera, a lovely private estate nestled among the oak woodlands of the southern Sierra Madre and just outside the 16th century pueblo of El Tuito. Here we will sketch, stroll and birdwatch on this 200-acre ranch that supports over 215 species of birds, including parrots, trogons, cuckoos and several hummingbirds. Birds are easily viewed as they come to visit the many seed, fruit and nectar feeders right outside the veranda.



- A portion of our proceeds will support habitat conservation for locally endangered species.
- **Bonus: Free online course.** Your trip fee includes Christine's new online course, *Introduction to Nature Sketching*, which comprises eight modules through which you can progress at your own pace, either before the retreat or anytime afterwards. It covers basic skills for sketching and painting plants and birds in the field, taught using video tutorials and downloadable ebooks. This course normally sells for \$125, but trip participants receive it for free! Check out the [Nature Sketching Online Course](#) page on her website to learn more.

ABOUT YOUR LEADERS

You'll study with professional naturalist, teaching artist, and biological illustrator, Christine Elder. For over twenty years, Christine has taught people of all ages and ability levels to draw and paint nature's wonders. Christine's experience as a freelance illustrator includes projects for organizations such as the National Park Service, BirdsCaribbean and the Botanical Society of America.

Some of you will also know Christine as one of our regular birding guides, having traveled with us from Alaska to Florida, and to international destinations such as Italy, Mexico, Honduras and the Caribbean. In our Mexico paradise at Rancho Primavera, she will share her best secrets and techniques for sketching birds and blossoms in pencil, pen and watercolor. Learn more about Christine on her [website](#).



You will also be joined by a second guide, Paradise Birding owner Stephen Shunk, who will serve as our expert birdwatching guide and van driver.

ART INSTRUCTION

Christine helps people form a deeper appreciation and understanding of the natural world through the practice of nature sketching. She specializes in helping fledging sketchers learn foundational drawing techniques that will empower them to capture nature's beauty in a lively and realistic way. Our workshops are held in the spacious veranda of Rancho Primavera, where we will explore the basic tools and techniques for sketching birds and blossoms. Instruction will focus on using pencil, pen and water colors to capture the personality and grace of birds, and the color and delicate beauty of tropical flowers. Participants will receive and materials list upon registration.

RETREAT ITINERARY

We will spend our days at a relaxed pace, leaving our schedule flexible for a variety of activities. Mornings will start before breakfast, enjoying the dawn chorus of birds at the feeders next to the large screened porch. After a leisurely home-cooked breakfast at the lodge, we will typically start with a morning sketching workshop, an easy hike, or a half-day excursion, followed by lunch. Afternoons will include group field sketching or time on your own, for a siesta or dip in the lap pool during the heat of the day, followed by group dinners at the lodge. Some evenings may include presentations on the flora and fauna of the region, while others will allow for private relaxation. All activities are optional, in case you prefer to take a day to yourself, relaxing by the pool, watching the many endemic birds at the feeders, or visiting with Rancho Primavera's friendly dogs and horses.

The daily schedule below will remain flexible and may change due to weather or other factors, at your guide's discretion.



March 1—Flight-bound guests should arrive at Puerto Vallarta (PVR) airport before 4 pm (if you are already in the region, we will make special arrangements to rendezvous). We will meet you just outside customs, and our driver will shuttle us to our lodge at Rancho Primavera. We will drive about 1 1/5 hours in our comfortable air-conditioned van, with snacks and cold drinks provided. Our route will head south along the scenic coast and then southeast through the forested rolling hills to arrive at our destination in time for dinner and an orientation.

March 2—Dawn birdwatching on the veranda and breakfast, followed by sketching workshop. After lunch in El Tuito, we will visit local artist's gallery, Galeria Coppelia. The afternoon may include a siesta or a short hike on the ranch, with dinner and evening sketching on the veranda.

March 3—Dawn birdwatching on the veranda and breakfast, followed by lunch, an afternoon siesta, then dinner and an evening presentation.

March 4—Dawn birdwatching on the veranda and breakfast, followed by a full day at [Vallarta Botanical Gardens](#), including lunch and the afternoon sketching on the garden's beautiful veranda, with stunning views of the surrounding mountains and river canyon. Return to Rancho Primavera for dinner, then evening sketching on the veranda inspired by our trip to the gardens.

March 5—Dawn birdwatching on the veranda, followed by breakfast and departure from the ranch, with brunch on the way, arriving at the Puerto Vallarta airport by noon for scheduled departures at 2 pm or later.

ADDITIONAL RETREAT DETAILS

We will be based at Rancho Primavera, near the 16th century Mexican town of El Tuito, about two hours southeast of Puerto Vallarta, in the state of Jalisco. Field trips will be within 30 minutes' drive of our lodge.

Rancho Primavera is a quiet, rustic retreat just south of Puerto Vallarta, but it feels world's away from the bustling tourism center of the region. The ranch is a lovely private estate nestled among the oak woodlands of the southern Sierra Madre. Here, you'll be treated like family by the owners—mother and daughter team, Pat and Bonnie—who are full-time residents of the ranch. They are bilingual Americans who've lived in Mexico for decades, and they truly enjoy entertaining and cooking for their guests.





In 1996, they purchased this former mango plantation and cattle ranch and proceeded to heal its overgrazed lands by planting over 5000 native trees on the 200 acres. They were quickly rewarded by a return of the native birds and wildlife, and today, the ranch is a top destination for birding groups and nature lovers. Rancho Primavera has tallied 215 species of birds including many familiar neotropical migrants.

You can participate in as much or little as you like here. You might enjoy sitting quietly on the porch observing birds at the feeders, or perhaps you will want to swim in the lap pool, walk to one of the onsite ponds or row the boat or stand-up paddle board on their Santa Monica pond. The Ranch is a naturalist's nirvana, with ponds, streams, woods, and meadows. You'll also be entertained by the ranch's horses and friendly pooches.

The bird-feeding stations are well-stocked, and they attract a wide variety of birds, such as the Yellow Grosbeak, Yellow-winged Cacique, Black-throated Magpie-Jay, Blue Mockingbird, and Black-vented Oriole. These species compete for the feeders with the Grayish Saltators, Stripe-headed Sparrows, and Streak-backed Orioles, with several hummingbirds on the grounds. Up to 70 bird species can be seen without leaving the veranda!



Many of the region's endemic birds can also be seen at Rancho Primavera including West Mexican Chachalaca, Mexican Woodnymph, Citreoline Trogon, Russet-crowned Motmot, Golden-cheeked Woodpecker, Lilac-crowned Parrot, Golden Vireo, San Blas Jay, Sinaloa Martin, Happy Wren, Fan-tailed Warbler, and Rusty-crowned Ground-Sparrow.

ACCOMMODATIONS

You will stay in one of the five rooms available at the ranch, each equipped with two beds and a full private bathroom. Rooms have a ceiling fan but no air conditioning or heating, neither of which is needed in this season. The rooms are simple but cozy and are all within steps of the main house, where we take our meals and enjoy watching the birds. Rooms do not have TV, radios or telephones, although WiFi is available on the veranda. Join us here to escape technology for a few days!



MEALS

Your tour fee includes all meals, snacks and non-alcoholic beverages from the time we pick you up until the time we drop you off in Puerto Vallarta. We will enjoy delicious home-cooked breakfasts and dinners eaten family-style at the ranch; these will often include fresh organic fruits and vegetables, some of which are grown on the property. Lunches will be at off-site, including the lovely outdoor dining experience at the Vallarta Botanical Gardens and in El El Tuito, where we'll enjoy traditional Mexico fare.



IMPORTANT: On your registration form please alert us to any dietary concerns, and we will do our best to ensure that everyone enjoys our travel snacks and restaurant choices equally. However, it may be difficult to accommodate the most restrictive of diets. If you maintain such a diet, remember that appropriate foods may not be available at restaurants or even in local grocery stores. To prepare for these situations, you may wish to bring foods that will meet your needs.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

If you will be flying in for the retreat, we strongly recommend that you purchase travel insurance with your airline ticket. This insurance covers costs associated with flight delays, trip cancellation, illness, medical expenses, lost baggage, and emergency transportation. If insurance is not offered when you purchase your ticket, we recommend [Travel Insurance Services](#). You may also want to inquire whether you are covered by any of your existing insurance programs or credit cards.

FLIGHT ARRIVAL/DEPARTURES

Airport transfers are included in your fee. If you will arrive early or stay beyond our tour, we will do our best to accommodate mutually agreeable rendezvous plans. Flight-bound participants should arrive at Puerto Vallarta (PVR) airport by 4pm and depart no earlier than 2pm.

Customs & Immigration: A passport valid for six months beyond your return date is required for entry to Mexico and return to the USA. Once you disembark your arrival flight in Puerto Vallarta, you will go through Passport Control, where the Mexican immigration officer may ask you some questions and then stamp your passport. You will then collect your checked luggage and proceed through customs. If you do not bring checked baggage, proceed directly to the customs line. If you have any trouble getting through customs, tell them you are with a group from the USA and your leader is outside customs. We will meet you just outside customs once you are cleared for entry.



CLIMATE & WEATHER

Daily weather in Pacific Mexico is generally sunny and warm, with daytime highs in the 80s. Morning fog in the foothills and mountains often burns off shortly after sunrise. The relatively arid climate here results from the region's location on the leeward side of Mexico, but afternoon heating can lead to a thunderstorm on any given day.

WHAT TO PACK

Everyone's traveling needs are different, but the info below includes items you definitely don't want to forget. We suggest that you travel with one medium or large bag and a smaller carry-on. Your carry-on should have all of your necessities, in case your checked bags get delayed. This may include a change of clothing, money, travel documents, toiletries, medicines, and any expensive equipment such as binoculars.

For USA citizens, a passport valid for six months beyond departure from Mexico is required, with one blank page for entry stamp. Non-USA citizens should check with their local consulate/embassy for instructions.

CLOTHING

When preparing for a trip to the tropics, it is generally a good idea to pack lightweight field clothing, preferably long-sleeved shirts and long pants for protection against bugs, sun and scratches. Ideal clothing incorporates synthetic fabrics that wick away moisture, dry quickly, resist wrinkling, and have sun and insect-protection qualities. A lightweight water-resistant rain jacket (or pocket umbrella) may come in handy. For footwear, we recommend a light hiking boot. You'll also want a wide-brimmed hat and a swimsuit for enjoying the lap pool at Rancho Primavera.



Other items not to forget: Toiletries, sunscreen (preferably waterproof, SPF 25 or above), mosquito repellent, camera, sunglasses, light daypack or fanny pack, headlamp or flashlight for strolling around in the evening, and binoculars if you have them (though your guides will bring a couple of extra pairs and a spotting scope).

ART SUPPLIES

A list of suggested supplies will be sent upon registration, along with the link to your bonus online nature sketching course. We will focus on simple field sketching techniques for this short holiday (primarily pencil and pen), but feel free to bring anything you already own. Our emphasis will not be on fancy supplies, but instead on quick & easy techniques for capturing the essence of the flora and fauna we observe in our sketch books.

Visit [Christine's website](#) for a list of her favorite field supplies and videos on basic techniques for each one.



TRAIL CONDITONS

We will do some hiking on the ranch property and the botanical gardens, at a casual sketcher's/birdwatcher's pace. We will be on mostly flat dirt roads and trails, some with moderate elevation gain. All hikes are optional, and if you don't feel up to the hike you are welcome to relax at the main lodge watching the bird feeders.

HEALTH

You should be current on your routine vaccines before your trip. These vaccines include measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis vaccine, varicella (chickenpox) vaccine, polio vaccine, and your yearly flu shot. Please consult your physician regarding prophylactic medicines. In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](https://www.cdc.gov). If you are taking prescription medications or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply to get through the trip safely, plus extra days in case of a delayed schedule. Please consult your physician, as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging.

Throughout our stay in Mexico, you should avoid drinking tap water. Bottled water will be provided in all rooms and at all meals, and we will always have bottled water in the vehicle. A majority of our meals will be enjoyed at Rancho Primavera, with lunches taken in clean, well-respected local restaurants. If we ever have food "on the road," we will take the necessary precautions to ensure that its consumption will be safe for your health. However, Mexico does not have the same standards of cleanliness as most places in the USA, and food-borne pathogens do exist.

NATURAL HAZARDS

Regarding insects, we always seem to underestimate the tiny black flies that show up from out of nowhere around sunrise and sunset. These little flies bite, and the bites can itch for several days. If you are prepared, they won't adversely affect your trip. To prevent fly bites, locals swear by baby oil, but other oils will work equally well. Beyond the black flies, mosquitoes may be a problem in some places. Depending on whom you ask, the same chemical repellants will work for both the flies and mosquitoes. We also find that wearing bug resistant clothing, including long sleeves and pants, helps keep our attention on more pleasurable activities. We will bring chemical repellants, but please be prepared with your own.



Additional hazards could include biting spiders, scorpions, or other arthropods; we have never seen a snake on our Mexico trips (although, as consummate naturalists, we look forward to that day!). If the likelihood of an encounter with hazardous wildlife is especially high, we will warn you in advance. Other hazards include rough terrain, thorny tropical plants, and the most hazardous threat of them all, the sun. Make sure you bring sunscreen—preferably waterproof and SPF 25 or above—along with other sun protection.

CURRENCY

The unit of currency in Mexico is the Mexican Peso. Most places where you might want to spend some money will accept U.S. dollars, but if they do, you will typically get a very poor exchange rate on your purchases. You may want to “buy” yourself some Pesos before you leave home, or we may be able to visit a local ATM. Typical tourist facilities will usually take major credit cards, especially for souvenirs. We recommend that you inform your bank of your travel plans if you plan to use credit cards.

LANGUAGE

No worries if you don’t know Spanish! English is widely spoken in the places we’ll visit, and the staff at our lodge, where we will spend a majority of our time, are native English speakers. That said, you may want to bring a small Spanish phrase book just for fun.

RETREAT FEE

\$1,725 Single / \$1,425 Double Occupancy

Retreat fee includes: Airport transfers in a comfortable air-conditioned van; 4 nights lodging; 3 meals per day; snacks and bottled water, guiding and instruction; group activities; entrance fees; service-related gratuities; and some art supplies.

Not included: Airfare to Puerto Vallarta and any departure taxes; travel insurance; alcoholic beverages; personal items (such as telephone and laundry); and U.S. guide’s gratuity, which is never expected but always appreciated based on your satisfaction with our skills and service.

Tipping: Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, and local guides) is included in your tour fee. However, if your leader or any local guides or staff have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

Deposit: A \$100 non-refundable deposit and enrollment form are required to hold your space on this trip. Full balance is due by February 1st.

REFUND POLICY: Your \$100 deposit is non-refundable. If you cancel your reservation more than 90 days prior to the tour, you will be refunded any payments above your deposit. If you cancel between 90 and 60 days prior to the tour, you will receive a 50% refund of fees paid over the deposit. If you cancel less than 60 days prior, you forfeit your entire tour fee, unless you can fill your space with another participant. If you cancel at any time, your deposit is transferrable to any future Paradise Birding tour. We reserve the right to cancel the trip if it is not meeting the trip minimum (in that case, all payments will be refunded in full).

TO REGISTER OR FOR MORE INFORMATION

To reserve your space: Contact us to confirm available space on the retreat, then complete the registration form on the following page and return it with your deposit or full payment.

Instructor and guide, Christine Elder: christine_elder@yahoo.com

Paradise Birding owner, Stephen Shunk: steve@paradisebirding.com

Paradise Birding, P.O. Box 547, Sisters, OR 97759 | Phone: 541-408-1753





Paradise Birding Tour Confirmation and Registration

Greetings! This form will confirm your registration on the following tour:

TITLE: _____ **DATE(S):** _____

Please complete and return to the address below, along with either your nonrefundable \$100 deposit or the complete tour fee. If you have already paid your deposit, your balance is due 90 days prior to the tour for domestic, 120 days for international tours. For your convenience, we happily accept VISA, Mastercard and American Express. Please also complete the Liability Waiver found on page two. THANK YOU!

Full Name: _____ Nickname (if any): _____

Mailing Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Sex: _____ Birth date: _____ Height: _____ Weight: _____

Cell Phone: _____ Alt. Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Paradise Birding T-shirt preference; please circle your size and color. We'll do our best to accommodate you!

Size: Small—Medium—Large—Extra Large—XX Large | **Color:** Unisex (Blue—Green) or Ladies (Lavender—Yellow)

Would you like to receive periodic emailed updates & birding tips from Paradise Birding? Yes ☐ No ☐

Please tell us how you first heard about this Paradise Birding tour: _____

Roommate preference: *(If you will travel with a birding partner and wish to share a room, or if you are willing to share a room with another birder of the same sex, please indicate this here. If we are unable to match you with another birder, or where only single rooms are available, you will responsible for the single tour fee.)*

Dietary Preferences: *(Drink & food preferences. Please be specific. Our tours are often in remote regions without a wide variety of food choices, so we do our shopping for snacks and picnic lunches in advance. Also list any food allergies or dietary restrictions.)*

Medical Information: *(Please alert us to any medical or physical conditions that may affect you or your group's activities on an outdoor tour in remote locations; include any history of heart trouble, asthma, diabetes or epilepsy, as well as environmental and medication allergies. Please also include current prescription medications being taken. Use the back of this page or another sheet if necessary. NOTE: Anyone with an existing or potentially serious medical condition should consult a physician before participating in any outdoor or travel adventure.*

Emergency Contact: *(Please include detailed contact information for the person or persons we should contact in case of an emergency.)*

Name(s) and relationship(s) to you: _____

Contact number(s): _____

Credit Card #: _____ Expiration Date: _____ or Check #: _____

Signature: _____ Charge/Check Amount: \$ _____



HIKING AND BIRD WATCHING PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT and RELEASE and ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RISK

In consideration of the services of PARADISE BIRDING LLC, their officers, agents, employees, volunteers, advertisers, and stock holders, and all other persons or entities associated with this business (hereinafter collectively referred to as PARADISE BIRDING LLC) I agree as follows:

Although PARADISE BIRDING LLC has taken reasonable steps to provide you with appropriate equipment and skilled guides so you can enjoy an activity for which you may not be skilled, we wish to remind you this activity is not without risk. Certain risks cannot be eliminated without destroying the unique character of this activity. The same elements that contribute to the unique character of this activity can be causes of loss or damage to your equipment or accidental injury, illness, or in extreme cases, permanent trauma, paralysis, or death. We do not want to frighten you or reduce your enthusiasm for this activity, but we do think it is important for you to know in advance what to expect and that you be informed of the inherent risks. The following describes some, but not all, of those risks:

- 1.) Accidents can occur on land. You could slip or fall during a hike, causing damage to equipment, personal injury, or even death. You could also otherwise be injured while hiking or visiting other land-based phenomena.
- 2.) You could suffer injuries or trauma during the land and air transportation portions of the trip, in vehicles or aircraft.
- 3.) Exposure to the natural elements can be uncomfortable or harmful. You should be aware that this exposure could cause hypothermia, sunburn, illness from drinking water or food, and/or dehydration.
- 4.) You will be staying at accommodations not owned or operated by PARADISE BIRDING LLC. You could suffer injury, damage to equipment, trauma, or even death while staying at these places.
- 5.) Errors on the part of PARADISE BIRDING LLC and its employees, including insufficient instruction or assistance.

I am aware that this birding tour, including related transportation and activities, entails risks of injury or death to myself. I understand the description of these risks is not complete and that other unknown or unanticipated risks may result in injury or death. I agree to assume responsibility for the risks identified herein and other risks inherent to a birding trip. My participation in this activity is purely voluntary and I elect to participate in spite of the risks.

I certify that I am fully capable of participating in this activity. Therefore, I assume full responsibility for myself, including my minor children, for bodily injury, death, and loss of personal property and expenses thereof as a result of those inherent risks and dangers and of my negligence in participating in this activity.

I agree that if any portion of this agreement is found to be void or unenforceable, the remaining portions shall remain in full force and effect. In the event that I file a lawsuit against PARADISE BIRDING LLC, I agree to do so solely in the state of Oregon, and I further agree that the substantive law of that state shall apply in that action without regard to the conflict of law rules of that state.

I have read, understood, and accepted the terms and conditions stated herein and acknowledge that this agreement shall be effective and binding upon myself, my heirs, assigns, personal representatives and estate for all members of my family including any minors accompanying me. I acknowledge I am not relying on any oral, written, or visual representations or statements made by PARADISE BIRDING LLC, including those made in its brochure and other promotional material, to induce me to go on the birding tour. I also acknowledge that in any and all promotional material the use of the word "safe," "safe as possible," or the like does not mean, imply or suggest that this trip is without risk. I have also read and agree to comply with the PARADISE BIRDING LLC cancellation policy.

Photographic Release: PARADISE BIRDING LLC reserves the right to take photographs or film records of any PARADISE BIRDING LLC tour, program, or activity, and each trip member hereby agrees that PARADISE BIRDING LLC may use such photographs or film records for promotional, commercial, or any other marketing purposes, including Internet use.

Name (please print): _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

If under 18, parent or guardian signature: _____

Mailing Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Cell/Primary Phone: _____ Alt. Phone: _____

Name of Trip: _____ Trip Date: _____

Paradise Birding LLC | Stephen Shunk, Owner & Lead Guide

P.O. Box 547 | Sisters, OR 97759 | PH: 541-408-1753 | E-MAIL: steve@paradisebirding.com