



The Birder's Guide to Bed and Breakfasts: United States and Canada

Peggy Van Hulsteyn

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"In order to see birds it is necessary to become a part of the silence." So said Robert Lynd, and it's a sentiment any birder will understand. Circus Circus in Las Vegas, for example, does not really set the mood for birding. What you want is a serene and gentle spot--even if you're hiking an hour to get to where the birds are, it's still a plus if your bed and breakfast starts and ends the day with the appropriate touch. It was with these criteria in mind that Peggy van Hulsteyn set out to find the 250 best B & Bs near North America's top 100 avian refuges. Van Hulsteyn does more, however, than merely list convenient inns. Dedicated to the interests of birders, she tells how to get there by car, where the nearest airports are, who to contact (and how), when the best birding at any given location is, and whether they offer any tours or workshops (and if so, when). She describes in loving detail each preserve, refuge, and conservancy; tells what sorts of birds you'll find, and when; what the terrain is like; and what mammals you might see while you're there. Take, for instance, California's Big Morongo preserve, some 95 miles east of Los Angeles. One of the 10 largest oases in the United States, this six-mile canyon waters more than 270 species, from cactus wrens and Cassin's kingbirds to Cooper's hawks and vermilion flycatchers. Cottonwoods and scrub brush thrive, says van Hulsteyn, as do blacktailed mule deer, lizards, and mountain lions. Then, having given you an idea of what to expect there, she introduces four B & Bs nearby, providing the relevant particulars of rates and number of rooms; what credit cards are accepted and whether there's a senior citizen discount; and whether children are allowed, pets are welcome, and wheelchair access is available. But she provides a narrative in addition to the stats. Describing atmosphere and physical appearance, history and who the hosts are, van Hulsteyn doesn't neglect important details like wood-burning fireplaces, whirlpool spas, and what the breakfast is like.

Whether you're an avid birder looking for a peaceful launching pad or a romantic vacationer who might like to try birding while you're there, van Hulsteyn's bed and breakfast compilation is an inspiration to cancel the paper, pack your binoculars, and check out the birds. --*Stephanie Gold*

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