



Natural Selections

BIRDING, WILDLIFE, AND PHOTO TOURS



Scarlet Ibis ©Fayard Mohammed

Trinidad and Tobago; a Birder's - Caribbean-Paradise!

9 Nights/10 Days

Just off the northern coast of Venezuela, the dual-island nation of Trinidad and Tobago offers a spectacular diversity of habitats and an easy access to some of our world's most beautiful birds. With an avifauna blending the Caribbean with South America, Tobago to the north is known for its more West Indian species, while Trinidad, a mere 7 miles from the mainland, hosts a more northern, South American bird diversity.

The Trinidad portion of our island-hopping bird tour begins with the world-famous Asa Wright Nature Center and surroundings for hummingbirds, honeycreepers and more. We then move to the Northern Range, Wallerfield, Caroni Swamp with its Scarlet Ibis spectacle, and Nariva Swamp, ultimately staying at the beach-side Mt. Plaisir Estate on Grande Rivière for more birding and an evening with nesting Leatherback Turtles.

Finally, we take a local flight to Tobago and the secluded, rain forest lodge known as Cuffie River Nature Retreat. Here we'll be birding the Main Ridge Forests and visiting the scenic island of Little Tobago with its high cliffs, breaking waves, and nesting colonies of Boobies, Tropicbirds, Terns and more.

Tour Overview

Day 1: Arrive Port of Spain (POS), transfer to Asa Wright

Day 2: Birding Asa Wright, Caroni Swamp

Day 3: Birding the Northern Range

Day 4: Birding the Northern Range and Wallerfield

Day 5: Birding Nariva Swamp to Grand Riviere

Day 6: Paria Road and Trinidad Piping Guan

Day 7: Trinidad to Tobago and Cuffie River

Day 8: Birding Cuffie River

Day 9: Birding the Main Ridge and Little Tobago

Day 10: Depart Tobago (TAB) for Port of Spain (POS) and international flights home.

9 Night/10 Day Itinerary:

Day 1, Arrive Piarco International Airport (POS), transfer to Asa Wright:

This afternoon after we transfer directly to Asa Wright Lodge and once settled into our rooms, we can all dip our toes into the tropical bird world by strolling amongst the gardens (hoping for a Tufted Coquette!) or simply relaxing on the veranda while the honeycreepers and tanagers and other hummers zip about the feeders. Afternoon tea/rum punch is served daily. At dusk we may even see a local Bat Falcon hunting its namesake prey.

Meals: Dinner
Lodging at Asa Wright



Masked Cardinal ©Fayard Mohammed

Day 2, Morning birding/sightseeing, afternoon Caroni Swamp boat tour:

After some dawn birding on lodge grounds, then breakfast, we'll take a short hike to the nearby Oilbird cave on the lodge grounds. Targets here will include Oilbirds of course, but also hermits, trogons, Channel-billed Toucan, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Great Antshrike, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, Bearded Bellbird, White-bearded and Golden-headed Manakins, Turquoise and Bay-headed Tanagers, and more!

Afterwards we'll break for lunch, then head out to Caroni Rice Fields and Caroni Swamp.

Caroni Swamp is a global treasure and conservation success story, with the main draw being the unforgettable evening roost of Scarlet Ibis, flamingoes, and assorted herons and egrets. We'll

also look for mangrove/coastal specialists like Green-throated Mango, Greater Ani, American Pygmy Kingfisher, Boat-billed Heron, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Bicolored Conebill, Masked Cardinal, and roosting nightbirds (not to mention non-avian specialties like caiman, silky anteater, and tree boas).

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner (on our boat at Caroni)
Lodging at Asa Wright

Day 3, The Northern Range:

Today we'll be birding the Northern Range's Blanchisseuse Road and Las Lapas Trace. There are quite a few species in Trinidad totally or mostly restricted to this mountainous region, including White Hawk and Ornate Hawk-Eagle (good fortune required!), Lilac-tailed Parrotlet, Blue-headed Parrot, Scaled Pigeon, Channel-



Green Honeycreeper ©Gillian Rooks

billed Toucan, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Chestnut Woodpecker, Bearded Bellbird, White-bearded Manakin, Yellow-legged and White-necked Thrushes, Trinidad Euphonia, Speckled and Swallow Tanager, and an assortment of raptors, parrots, and honeycreepers.

We'll have lunch in the field, and in the afternoon pick up more birding in the Northern Range's Morne La Croix area.

In the evening after dinner, we'll have an optional night walk for Mottled Owl (rare), Spectacled Owl, and other nocturnal critters.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Asa Wright

Day 4, The Northern Range and Wallerfield:

This morning we'll start out with more birding of the Northern Range, targeting any species we missed on the previous day.

In the late afternoon we'll visit the abandoned airfields and open areas around Wallerfield. Several special bird species key in on the scattered palms within this habitat including Red-bellied Macaw, Epaulet Oriole, and Sulphury Flycatcher. Common Pauraque, Tropical Screech-Owl are also seen here and we'll take the moments just before sunset for a rum punch and watch for crepuscular and nocturnal species as they begin to emerge.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Asa Wright

Day 5, Nariva Swamp to Grand Riviere:

Today we'll head for Mt. Plasier in Grand Riviere, one of the most remote, natural, and unspoiled beach destinations on Trinidad's North coast. Along the way we'll be birding Nariva Swamp - the largest freshwater wetland in Trinidad at 60 square kilometers- by kayaks or canoes, for Blue-and-yellow

Macaw, Yellow-crowned Parrot, Pinnated Bittern, White-tailed Goldenthrout, Pearl and Plumbeous Kites, Silvered Antbird, white headed marsh tyrant among others.

After Nariva Swamp, we'll make a stop at Manzanilla Bay just to the north, for a beautiful ocean view area and refreshing ourselves before our drive to Grand Riviere. In addition to the spectacular ocean scenery here, there are often numbers of Brown Pelican and Frigate Birds present to add to this beautiful site's Caribbean ambience.

The rest of the afternoon will be spent traveling to Mt. Plasier and Grand Riviere, while birding along the way. We'll arrive Mt. Plasier in time for dinner and our night-time turtle nesting activity.

Tonight, after dinner we'll leave straight from our lodge for a Leatherback Sea Turtle evening excursion. Every year, sea turtles, including the iconic Leatherback weighing up to 1,000 pounds, return to the pristine shores here for their nesting season. Beaches here are only accessible with a special permit and local guide during nesting season. We'll obtain our permits and with our guide ply the nearby beach for nesting females and to watch the ancient ritual of digging nests, laying eggs, and returning to the sea, while following guidelines so as not to disturb or stress these beautiful, massive reptiles.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Lodging at Mt. Plaisir Estate Hotel

Day 6, Trinidad Piping Guan:

Today we'll start out early after coffee or tea and bird the roadside forests along the Paria Main Road where our main target will be the Pawi, or Trinidad Piping Guan. This is an especially birdy area and other species we'll look for along the way will be Guianan Trogon, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Silvered and White-bellied Antbirds, Plain-brown Woodcreeper, Pale-breasted Spinetail, Rufous-breasted Wren, and a variety of Tanagers.

We'll bird our way back to our hotel for a late-ish breakfast and some time to relax and enjoy our seaside surroundings.

Trinidad Motmot



After lunch at our hotel, we'll do some more local birding for species common to the area such as Common Black Hawk, Green, Ringed and (rare) Pygmy Kingfishers, and forest edge species such as Long-billed Gnatwren, Barred Antshrike, Black-tailed Tityra, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Olivaceous Saltator, and more. Gray Kingbird is also occasionally seen here.

After dinner there will be a night walk for nocturnal birds and especially Spectacled Owl which is sometimes seen here.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Mt. Plaisir Estate Hotel

Day 7, From Trinidad to Tobago and Cuffie River:

Today after breakfast we'll make our way to Piarco International Airport (POS) with birding stops along the way. If necessary, we'll make a second attempt for Trinidad Piping-Guan and then stop at the Aripo agricultural area where targets will include Savanna Hawk, Pearl Kite, and various seedeaters, tyrants and grassland birds. We'll take our early afternoon (1pm-ish) flight to A. N. R. Robinson International Airport (TAB), and once in Tobago, transfer to Cuffie River Nature Retreat. Along the way to Cuffie River, we'll stop at Tobago's "birding ponds". These are a few reservoirs, retention ponds, and water treatment plants that constitute the only freshwater habitats on the island, and we will bird these for wetland species like Least Grebe, White-cheeked Pintail, purple and common gallinules, and

even caiman!

We'll arrive Cuffie River in the afternoon/evening in time to get settled into rooms before dinner, followed by reviewing our checklist and then turning in.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Cuffie River Nature Retreat

Day 8, Birding Cuffie River:

We'll start this morning with birding of lodge grounds, for species such as Rufous-vented Chachalaca, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Trinidad Motmot, Venezuelan Flycatcher, White-fringed Antwren, Scrub Greenlet. White-tailed Sabrewing and Ruby-topaz Hummingbird (at lodge feeders), Red-crowned Woodpecker, Black-faced Grassquit and more.

The afternoon will be for relaxing at the lodge, more birding around the lodge, or even reserving an in-room massage.

After dinner at Cuffie we'll be listening and looking for White-tailed Nightjars and Common Potoo that frequent the area.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Cuffie River Nature Retreat

Day 9, Birding the Main Ridge and Little Tobago:

After breakfast, we'll begin a full day, starting with morning birding of the Main Ridge Forest, followed by an afternoon visit to Little Tobago.

Targets at the Main Ridge Forest Reserve include Great Black Hawk, Collared Trogon, White-tailed Sabrewing, Blue-backed Manakin, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, Yellow-legged Thrush, White-throated Spadebill, Golden-olive Woodpecker, Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Stripe-breasted Spinetail and more.

In the afternoon we'll make a memorable and scenic visit to the island of Little Tobago. Just off the northeast of the main island we'll journey for a short, 20-minute boat ride with our local guide, and once on the island explore breathtaking views of a seabird nesting site for Brown Booby, Red-footed Booby, Red-billed Tropicbird, Sooty and Bridled Terns, and Brown Noddy. This spectacularly scenic area consists of a remote, rocky cove with breaking waves, high rocky cliffs, and no terrestrial predators, making it a haven for these

species. We'll take our time, and the round-trip hike from boat to the main overlook, and exploring various other scenic overlooks, takes a couple of hours.

Scaly-naped Pigeons are also seen here now, first appearing around 2005, and are a peculiarity making them an interesting target during our visit. A small population has colonized the island and seeing them has been fairly predictable. In the late afternoon, we'll board our boat once again and make our way back to Tobago for dinner and our final night on Tobago.



American Flamingo ©Gillian Rooks

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Cuffie River Nature
Retreat*

Day 10, Departure:

Today we'll head home, transferring to A. N. R. Robinson International Airport (TAB) for early morning flights home, connecting through Piarco International Airport (POS).

Meals: Breakfast

Included for the duration of this itinerary:

In-country accommodations, ground transportation, tours, boat tours, meals as indicated, guide and entrance fees are included.

Not Included:

International flights, local (POS-TAB) flights, personal items such as alcoholic beverages, soft drinks,

gift shop, laundry, etc. are not included.

Travel insurance:

We highly recommend purchasing travel insurance. In the event that you need to cancel your trip due to medical or other reasons, this insurance will protect you.



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