



TOGETHER FOR NATURE

Trip Details and Tentative Itinerary The Best of Trinidad and Tobago: Birding and Wildlife

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Trip Details and Bird Highlights

Our **2024 trip begins** with a full day at Hacienda Jacana, a small ecolodge set in a privately owned farm in central Trinidad. The welcoming, well-appointed cabins here shall be our base for four nights. The grounds around the lodge range from flat to moderate inclines, and we are likely to encounter a variety of Trinidad's forest species, including **Turquoise Tanager, Silver-beaked Tanager, Bananaquit, House Wren, Lineated Woodpecker, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Boat-billed Flycatcher, Ochre-lored Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Blue Dacnis, Plumbeous Kite**, and many more. The ponds on the property also attract scores of waterbirds, so expect excellent views of **Wattled Jacana, Striated Heron, and Purple Gallinule**. A pair of **Green Kingfishers** usually attends to the ponds as well. Recently, a **Rufescent Tiger-Heron** has been seen here, so we shall keep our eyes peeled for this secretive species. Hacienda Jacana is one of the best places in the country to see another secretive bird - the **Grey-cowled Wood-Rail**.

Day two starts with an early morning bus ride to Trinidad's wild Atlantic (eastern) coastline. We arrive at a small dock at a secluded estuary, from where we board a boat to venture deeper into Nariva Swamp - T&T's largest wetland. Our expert team of local guide and boat captain navigate the narrow channels through mangrove and swamp vegetation while we keep an eye out for **Ringed Kingfisher, American Pygmy Kingfisher, Common Black Hawk, and Red-rumped Woodpecker**. All the while, we shall be searching for signs of **West Indian Manatee**. Once we arrive at Bush Bush Wildlife Sanctuary, we disembark and begin a gentle hike through this sandy island. **Red Howler Monkeys** patrol the canopy, and we would be able to hear their bellows and catch a glimpse of these beautiful primates in the tropical sun. An endemic species of monkey also resides within the sanctuary, the critically endangered **Trinidad White-fronted Capuchin**. Once we return to the dock, we journey to a nearby lodge where we shall enjoy a delicious meal. Many birds will be enjoyed here as well, including **Black-tailed Tityra and Little Cuckoo**. We shall return to our lodge for dinner.

On the third day, we depart early again with a packed breakfast from our lodge. This time, our destination is on the west coast of Trinidad. On the extensive tidal mudflats, we shall enjoy views of hundreds of migratory shorebirds including **Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Whimbrel, Willet, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher,**

Red Knot, Least Sandpiper, Semipalmated Plover, Wilson's Plover, and Black-bellied Plover. At this time of year, austral migrants will also be expected, such as **Large-billed Tern and Yellow-billed Tern.** We shall also keep our eyes out for **Gull-billed Tern** and **Mangrove Rail.** We shall visit a few wetlands along this coast, each location yielding its fair share of avian diversity. Sightings shall be enjoyed of **Pinnated Bittern, Long-winged Harrier, Red-breasted Meadowlark, Yellow-hooded Blackbird, Common Waxbill, Spotted Tody-flycatcher, Yellow Oriole, Masked Yellowthroat, Stripe-backed Bittern, Merlin, Dickcissel,** and many others. After the morning's birding session, we shall visit the home of a local artist and potter and learn of their three-decade greening project. We continue learning about the local history as we travel through Trinidad's fertile central belt, ultimately landing at a private estate where we shall enjoy birding in the late afternoon into evening. Here, we shall enjoy sightings of **Anhinga, Striated Heron, Cocoli Heron, Wattled Jacana, Osprey,** and many others. We will have dinner at this estate, after which we will embark upon a night birding mission within the property. Species to expect include **Common Pauraque, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Tropical Screech-Owl, Mottled Owl, Barn Owl, and Spectacled Owl.**

On day four, we rouse and have breakfast at the lodge, after which we journey to the remote northeast village of Grande Riviere. This village is famous for having the most densely populated beach for nesting **Leatherback Turtles.** While we will spend at least one of the two nights here with these endangered turtles, we will also learn about the conservation efforts of the Turtle Village Trust. Another major attraction of Grande Riviere is the high probability of seeing a critically endangered **Trinidad Piping-Guan,** a large, arboreal turkey-like bird that's endemic to the island. Other birds we shall keep our eyes peeled for include **Swallow-tailed Kite, Fasciated Tiger-Heron, Channel-billed Toucan, American Redstart, Guianan Trogon, Rufous-breasted Wren, Silvered Antbird, White-bellied Antbird,** and many other forest-dependent species. The couple days we spend in this village include time for rest to allow for late nights on the beach enjoying the Leatherback Turtles.

Once our two-night stay in Grande Riviere is over, we embark on the three-hour journey to the world-famous **Asa Wright Nature Centre.** Having been closed to the public since March 2020, the reopening of the Asa Wright Nature Centre is eagerly anticipated. Featuring redone rooms, trails, and restaurant, the lodge promises to be as memorable as the birds themselves. From the main viewing platform one will be able to enjoy views of **Green Honeycreeper, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, Crested Oropendola, Bay-headed Tanager, Silver-beaked Tanager, Turquoise Tanager, and White-lined Tanager.** Along the trails, we shall seek out some of the more secretive forest species, such as **Black-faced Antthrush and Little Tinamou,** while also keeping our eyes out for **White-bearded Manakin, Golden-headed Manakin, and Bearded Bellbird.** We will also journey to view roosting **Oilbirds** at a cave within the property.

Two full days at Asa Wright shall be punctuated by a day-long excursion along the Arima-Blanchisseuse Road. This lengthy road has an impressive altitude profile, and we shall be able to access some of the higher elevation habitat within which we shall seek sightings of **Speckled Tanager, Collared Trogon, Great Antshrike, Hepatic Tanager, Red-crowned Ant-tanager, Black Hawk-Eagle, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, White-necked Thrush,** as well as **Swallow Tanager,** a spectacular austral migrant. At the village of Brasso Seco, we shall enjoy a delicious lunch and an opportunity to learn about the operations of the Brasso Seco Chocolate Company, producers of award-winning chocolate. On the return journey to our lodge, we slowly make our way along the same road, keeping our eyes out for

birds throughout.

On the **final day at Asa Wright**, we depart after breakfast and make our way to Lopinot village in an adjacent valley. Here we shall visit a historically significant site and learn more about the significant indigenous influence in this part of the island. In keeping with this theme, we will have lunch at a cafe that incorporates the ancestral knowledge of the indigenous owners into its food, crafting unique and multiple award-winning dishes. All the while, we shall enjoy numerous birds visiting the garden, including **Long-billed Starthroat, Purple Honeycreeper, White-chested Emerald, Copper-rumped Hummingbird, Little Hermit, and Green Hermit**. Once satiated, we begin our forty-minute journey to the airport for the short transition to Tobago. We should arrive on the more petite island by evening, at which point we shall transfer to our lodge and get settled in for dinner.

The next morning, we wake at a comfortable time and have breakfast at the lodge. Birding is optional before breakfast, but we shall nevertheless enjoy sightings of **Trinidad Motmot, Rufous-vented Chachalaca, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Palm Tanager, Blue-grey Tanager, Black-faced Grassquit**, and many others around the lodge. After our breakfast, we depart and head into the Main Ridge Forest Reserve. This protected tropical rainforest is home to many of Tobago's specialties, and we shall spend the rest of the morning here. Birding will be done along the road as well as along walkable trails. Species likely to be encountered here include **Golden-olive Woodpecker, Red-rumped Woodpecker, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Collared Trogon, White-tailed Sabrewing, Copper-rumped Hummingbird, Grey-throated Leaf-tosser, Stripe-breasted Spinetail, White-throated Spadebill, Blue-backed Manakin, Rufous-breasted Wren, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, and Yellow-legged Thrush**. From the rainforest, we descend in the direction of the spectacularly beautiful Caribbean coast, but first make a stop for lunch at an outdoor restaurant with not only an idyllic vista but dozens of hummingbirds, including the globally threatened **White-tailed Sabrewing**. After lunch, we shall take a short walk along Bloody Bay River, where we may see species such as **Green Kingfisher, Purple Gallinule, and Green Heron**. Once we return to the vehicle, we continue to visit Bloody Bay, a classic, picturesque, crescent-shaped bay. Here, we shall enjoy the sunset with a cold beverage of choice and local entertainment. There is a beach facility with on-duty lifeguards, so we can comfortably bathe if we feel so inclined. Dinner would be waiting at the lodge.

The following morning after our sea bath and Caribbean island immersion, we have breakfast and then depart for Speyside on Tobago's northeastern tip. We may make a stop along the way for a roosting Common Potoo if it happens to be in a viewable location. Lunch shall be at a local restaurant, and we will enjoy an afternoon birding session around our lodge. Sunset shall be at Flagstaff Hill, once darkness sets in we shall begin seeking some of Tobago's nighttime birds including **White-tailed Nightjar, Barn Owl, Striped Owl, and Common Potoo**.

Our **last full day in Tobago** will be spent offshore. After breakfast, we depart via boat and head toward the Saint Giles Islands, T&T's northernmost territory. These islands are important seabird breeding sanctuaries, and here we are likely to see many species in very high numbers. Setting foot on these islands is prohibited, so we shall do all our birding from our boat. Those who are affected by seasickness are advised to take the necessary precautions. Expect possibly more than a thousand **Magnificent Frigatebirds**, as this is one of their largest colonies in the region. Also on show would be three different color morphs of **Red-footed Booby, Brown Booby, Bridled Tern, Sooty Tern, Brown Noddy, and Laughing**

Gull. We return to mainland Tobago for lunch then after a brief period to digest and settle, we board another boat for the short (10-minute) journey to Little Tobago Island, where we shall spend the afternoon. A short hike to the top of the island can easily produce excellent sightings of **Brown-crested Flycatcher, Chivi Vireo, Pale-vented Pigeon, Scaly-naped Pigeon, and Yellow-bellied Elaenia.** As we arrive at the top, the shrill vocalizations of hundreds of **Red-billed Tropicbirds** greet us. We shall spend considerable time at the lookout point enjoying these elegant birds and observing their efforts to evade the kleptoparasitic efforts of the Magnificent Frigatebirds. Later in the afternoon, we slowly hike back down the island to the waiting boat and return to our lodge for dinner.

Our final day begins with an early breakfast and departure from our lodge. The two-hour drive to the southwest of the island ends near the airport, but we interrupt our transition to stretch our legs and bird the wetlands under the roar of the occasional aircraft. Here we shall enjoy sightings of **Grey Kingbird, White-fringed Antwren, Scrub (Tobago) Greenlet, Southern Lapwing, Anhinga, Common Gallinule, Black-crowned Night-Heron, White-cheeked Pintail, Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Least Grebe, Great Egret, and Tricolored Heron.** We arrange a quick lunch and board the short flight back to Trinidad. Once we arrive on Trinidad, we head toward the Caroni Swamp. Once there is time before our boat departs, we shall do some birding in the mangroves around the dock. Our private boat in this Ramsar wetland will take us to see several incredible species, including **Black-crested Antshrike, Bicolored Conebill, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Rufous-naped Wood-Rail, Tropical Screech-Owl, Green-throated Mango, and Little Blue Heron.** Gradually, we make our way to the heart of the swamp where sights of **American Flamingos** await - only to be outdone by hundreds of Scarlet Ibis returning to their roost as the sun sets in the west. We return to our lodge for our final farewell dinner.