

Trinidad & Tobago
April 1-11, 2024

Itinerary

Day 1: Mon, Apr 1 - Arrival

Welcome to Trinidad! Afternoon arrival into Piarco International Airport (POS), where you will be met by your guide and transferred to the PAX Guesthouse, our accommodation for the first 3 nights of our T&T birding adventure. ***Night at PAX Guesthouse, Port-of-Spain***

Day 2: Tue, Apr 2 – Yurette; Caroni Swamp

After a leisurely breakfast, our T&T adventure begins with a visit to a site in the lush Maracas Valley known as the ‘Home of the Hummingbird’. Here, we’ll get up close views of as many as 14 different hummingbirds while they visit the feeders and flowers around the garden - a photographer’s delight! We stroll through the tropical garden of this magical hummingbird haven, before settling down for a lunch of local specialties. In the afternoon, we make for the world-renowned Caroni Swamp - the second largest mangrove wetland in Trinidad & Tobago. Upon arrival, we further explore the mangroves on a private flat-bottomed boat looking for such denizens as Boat-billed Heron, American Flamingo, Gray-cowled Wood-Rail, American Pygmy Kingfisher, Bicolored Conebills, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Black-crested Antshrike and the spectacular Masked Cardinal, among many others. As the sun continues to set, we will find ourselves in perfect position to witness the famed spectacle of thousands of Scarlet Ibis returning to their nightly roost while we enjoy rum punch and homemade cakes. On the return boat trip we’ll keep our eyes peeled for any other birds and wildlife we may encounter in the fading light, such as Tropical Screech-Owl, Spectacled Caiman, Cook’s Tree Boa, or Silky Anteater. A short drive sees us back at our accommodation, where we can take some time to refresh before dinner. ***Night at PAX Guesthouse, Port-of-Spain***

Day 3: Wed, Apr 3 – Gulf of Paria

During the morning, we will make stops in a variety of habitats from wetlands to sweeping semi-wild pastures bordered by mangroves looking for an array of species such as: Ruddy-breasted Seedeater, Wattled Jacana, Ringed Kingfisher, White-headed Marsh Tyrant, Pinnated Bittern, Limpkin, Black-tailed Tityra, and Red-breasted and Yellow-hooded Blackbird. After a local lunch of Indian delicacies, we make for the extensive tidal mudflats along the west coast of this varied island. In April, large numbers of Yellow-billed and striking Large-billed Terns are present, and breeding Collared Plovers can also be found. Many of the shorebirds found in Trinidad are passage migrants, and at this time of year those that overwinter can be seen voraciously feeding in preparation for the long flight north. The shallow waters of the Gulf of Paria provide a safe haven from inclement weather, and the list of vagrants to Trinidad is substantial, and includes: Maguari Stork, Terek Sandpiper, Audouin’s, Kelp and Greater Black-backed Gulls, and the rare resident Rufous Crab-Hawk has also been spotted along this stretch of coastline. ***Night at PAX Guesthouse.***

Day 4: Thu, Apr 4 – Aripo Savanna; transfer to Asa Wright

Today, an early start with a packed breakfast in hand, sees us bird the lowlands and open countryside of Aripo Savanna. Here, we will encounter entirely new bird species from those seen yesterday, such as Savannah Hawk, Gray-headed Kite, Fork-tailed Palm-swift, Bran-colored and Sulphury Flycatchers, Gray Kingbird, Gray-headed Kites, Shiny and Giant Cowbirds, Blue-black Grassquit, Grassland Yellow-Finch, Green-rumped Parrotlet, as well as Striped and Little Cuckoos. We then enjoy an al fresco lunch at a small rainforest lodge nestled in the Tamana Rainforest. A number of forest-dwelling bird species can be

found throughout the grounds, including White-bellied Antbird, White-flanked Antwren and Black-faced Anthrush, White-throated Spadebill and Short-tailed Pygmy-Tyrant. We then make our way to the newly reopened, refurbished, and world-renowned Asa Wright Nature Center - our base for the next 3 days, and an unquestionable birder's paradise! ***Night at Asa Wright Nature Lodge.***

Day 5: Fri, Apr 5 – Asa Wright Trails & Grounds

We begin this morning out on the famed verandah of the main lodge at Asa Wright. With its stunning backdrop of hundreds of acres of lush, rich tropical rainforest, we are immediately surrounded by dozens of hummingbirds (of up to 13 different species) feeding on lantana sage, vervain shrubs and numerous feeders dangling at eye level from the roof of the lodge. Photo opportunities abound as brilliant Tufted Coquettes, skittish Long-billed Starthroats, pugnacious White-necked Jacobins, robust Black-throated Mangoes, Copper-rumped Hummingbirds, White-chested Emeralds, Blue-Chinned Sapphires. and many others all hover almost within touching distance of our fingertips! Around the lodge and grounds today we'll also be on the lookout for Purple Honeycreeper, Violaceous Euphonia, Squirrel Cuckoos, Barred Antshrikes, Golden Olive Woodpeckers, a variety of tanagers including Silver-beaked and Bay-headed, and many, many more. After a delicious buffet lunch, we make the 40-minute descent to one of the highlights of the Asa Wright property - the deep fissure that is Dunston Cave, home of one of the most accessible colonies of Oilbirds in the world. An encounter with this unique and bizarre bird is not to be missed! We then enjoy another wonderful meal, before returning to the veranda to watch the night life of the forest begin to stir. ***Night at Asa Wright Nature Lodge.***

Day 6: Sat, Apr 6 – Blanchisseuse Road

Today begins with a scenic drive deep into Trinidad's mountainous Northern Range and the famous birding "highway" Blanchisseuse Road. Birding stops allow us prime views of species which favor high elevations such as: Speckled Tanager, Streaked Xenops, White Hawk, Ornate Hawk Eagle, Collared and Guianan Trogons, Channel-billed Toucan, White-necked Thrush, Yellow Oriole, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Little Hermit, and Lilac-tailed Parrotlet. A local lunch in the picturesque rural village of Brasso Seco will be followed by a cacao demonstration (featuring chocolate samples) from one of the local farmers belonging to a community initiative in the area. Here, surrounded by cocoa plants, we may also be joined by Turquoise Tanager, Lineated and Chestnut Woodpeckers, and Green Hermit. In the afternoon, we continue through the mountains to the village of Morne la Croix, and an idyllic spot known for Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Yellow-headed Caracara, Crested Oropendola and Long-billed Gnatwren. Settling down with tea and cakes (or a home-brewed rum punch should you prefer), we have the pleasure of watching Blue-headed Parrots fly into their roosts - a fantastic photo opportunity - before making our way back to our accommodation for dinner. Following our delicious three course meal those who are interested can don their headlamps and join for a night walk along the center's long winding driveway. Lined by lush forest on both sides, a stroll along this well-paved road offers an incredible opportunity for encounters with a host of nocturnal species. Trinidad Chevron Tarantulas, Coral Snakes, Spectacled Owls, Tailless Whip Scorpions, and many more are possible. ***Night at Asa Wright Nature Lodge.***

Day 7: Sun, Apr 7 – Asa Wright to Grande Riviere

On our final morning at the lodge, we explore the grounds & trails one final time looking for anything we may have missed, including a selection of antbirds, antwrens, and the striking Trinidad Motmot. We pay a visit to leks tucked away in the forest where Golden-headed and White-bearded Manakins entertain with territorial displays, and scan the trees for Orange-winged Parrot and Boat-billed Flycatcher. With luck, we may also see Gray-throated Leaf-tosser and Black-faced Anthrush. Our walk culminates at a reliable spot for up-close sightings of the remarkable Bearded Bellbird - an unforgettable encounter with

one of the loudest birds in the world. In the afternoon, we check out of Asa Wright and make for the quaint fishing village of Grande Riviere on Trinidad's rugged and dramatic north coast. Upon arrival (light-dependent), we will seek out an encounter with the critically endangered endemic Trinidad Piping-Guan as small flocks settle in to roost. This is the only reliable site remaining on Earth for encounters with a bird that once numbered many thousands of individuals, but that has been hunted relentlessly and now teeters on the verge of extinction - with less than 150 remaining! Afterwards we carry on to our accommodation and a dinner of local, Trinidadian seafood, before heading out to the beach - the one kilometre stretch of unspoiled quartz-rich sand in front of the hotel is one of the most important nesting grounds for the Leatherback Turtle in the world, and boasts hundreds of sightings during the months of March to August - as these gargantuan, prehistoric marine reptiles haul themselves up the beach, clambering over one another, to lay their eggs along this protected coastline. **Night in Grand Riviere.**

Day 8: Mon, Apr 8 – Piping Guans; Flight to Tobago

We depart early with a packed breakfast for the lush forests that are home to the endemic Trinidad Piping-Guan, known locally as the "Pawi". Even if the birds were sighted on the first evening, another encounter in alternate light will ensure that every opportunity is provided for capturing ideal views. The early morning is also when the birds are more likely to be actively feeding in the Wild Nutmeg Trees. Surrounding the guan site is a large cacao estate with a paved and largely unused road running through it. We take full advantage of being in the field at dawn to walk along the forest lined road in search of a host of other birdlife, including: the difficult Little Tinamou, Smooth-billed Ani, White-tipped Dove, White-flanked Antwren, Purple, Red-legged and Green Honeycreepers, Pale-breasted Spinetail, along with a medley of hummingbirds. We head to the airport (with stops for roadside birding along the way) in order to catch our 20-minute flight to the charming, quintessentially Caribbean island of Tobago. Given their close proximity, there is considerable species overlap, but there are also a number of birds which are either found only on Tobago, or are far easier to see here. From the airport we make the short drive to a small mangrove wetland in order to target two such species - the White-fringed Antwren and endemic subspecies of Scrub Greenlet. Our accommodation on Tobago is the idyllic Cuffie River Nature Retreat, nestled in the lush and remote Runnemede Valley and surrounded by forested mountains, cool streams, and flowering tropical plants. There is even a remarkable raised-deck saltwater swimming pool! We finish the day with a delicious dinner of local cuisine, served in the open-air dining room. **Night at Cuffie River Nature Retreat.**

Day 9: Tue, Apr 9 - Gilpin Trace; Cuffie River

After breakfast, we drive high into the mountains of the Main Ridge Forest Reserve, which we explore via a streamside trail at Gilpin Trace. This is an ancient and pristine forest draped in mosses and lianas and positively teeming with the notes of myriad deep-forest dwellers. We visit a little-known lek for Blue-backed Manakin and delight in the acrobatic antics of this beautiful species. Another treasured encounter will surely be with the absolutely stunning Yellow-legged Thrush, a typically secretive high elevation forest species - but one that along Gilpin will often perch and bathe in quiet streams - providing unparalleled photo opportunities. This is a special place and other species often sighted here include Striped Owl, Trinidad Motmot and White-winged Becard, as well as the large and striking White-tailed Sabrewing (known only to Tobago and an ever-decreasing swathe in Venezuela). Following lunch at a small restaurant just outside the boundary of the reserve, we head back to enjoy the amenities and serene environs of Cuffie River. This afternoon, participants will be free to relax, enjoy the pool, or stroll the grounds and surrounding trails in the company of your bird guides looking for Ruby Topaz Hummingbird, Golden-olive & Red-crowned Woodpeckers, Barred Antshrike, Great Black-Hawk, and Collared Trogon. As sunset approaches flocks of parrots, parrotlets, and noisy chachalacas break the silence as they return to their evening roosts. Preceded by a delicious rum punch should you so desire,

we then enjoy another distinctly Caribbean dinner before taking less than 30 steps down the driveway for a remarkable encounter with the minuscule near-endemic White-tailed Nightjar. Sightings of Common Potoo and Common Pauraque are also distinct possibilities. ***Night at Cuffie River Nature Retreat.***

Day 10: Wed, Apr 10 – Little Tobago Island

Following a relaxed breakfast, we drive along scenic bays and through colorful villages on our way to the blissful seaside town of Speyside, where we board a glass-bottomed boat for a pleasant jaunt across to Little Tobago Island. The island, one of the country's most significant wildlife sanctuaries, boasts one of the largest seabird colonies in the entire Caribbean. Disembarking onto the jetty we begin a gradual but in places sharp ascent into the dry tropical forest. The burrows of Audubon Shearwaters are dotted throughout this island and we may be fortunate enough to see this wonderful seabird out of its element and on land. Reaching the spectacular lookout over the Atlantic ocean from atop a towering cliff, we enjoy unbelievably close views of Red-billed & White-tailed Tropicbirds, Red-footed and Brown Boobies and Magnificent Frigatebirds all cruising by at eye-level. From here there are regular sightings of Bridled, Sooty, Roseate and Royal Terns together with Brown Noddies and Laughing Gulls. If the ascent may prove difficult, you have the option of remaining dockside where you can still manage good views of several seabirds. Leaving the island, the captain pauses (if sea conditions are favorable) to look for vibrantly-coloured tropical fish, and possibly Hawksbill Turtles, as we pass a former coral garden off Goat Island. After lunch at the Birder's Restaurant, we make our way back to Cuffie River, where we once again have a free afternoon to be spent at our leisure. ***Night at Cuffie River Nature Retreat.***

Day 11: Thu, Apr 11 - Departure

After breakfast, we board our pre-arranged transfer to the airport for our return 20-minute flight from Tobago to Trinidad and onward journey home.