Jamaica

Island Endemics (Relaxed)



Black-billed Streamertail by Clayton Burne

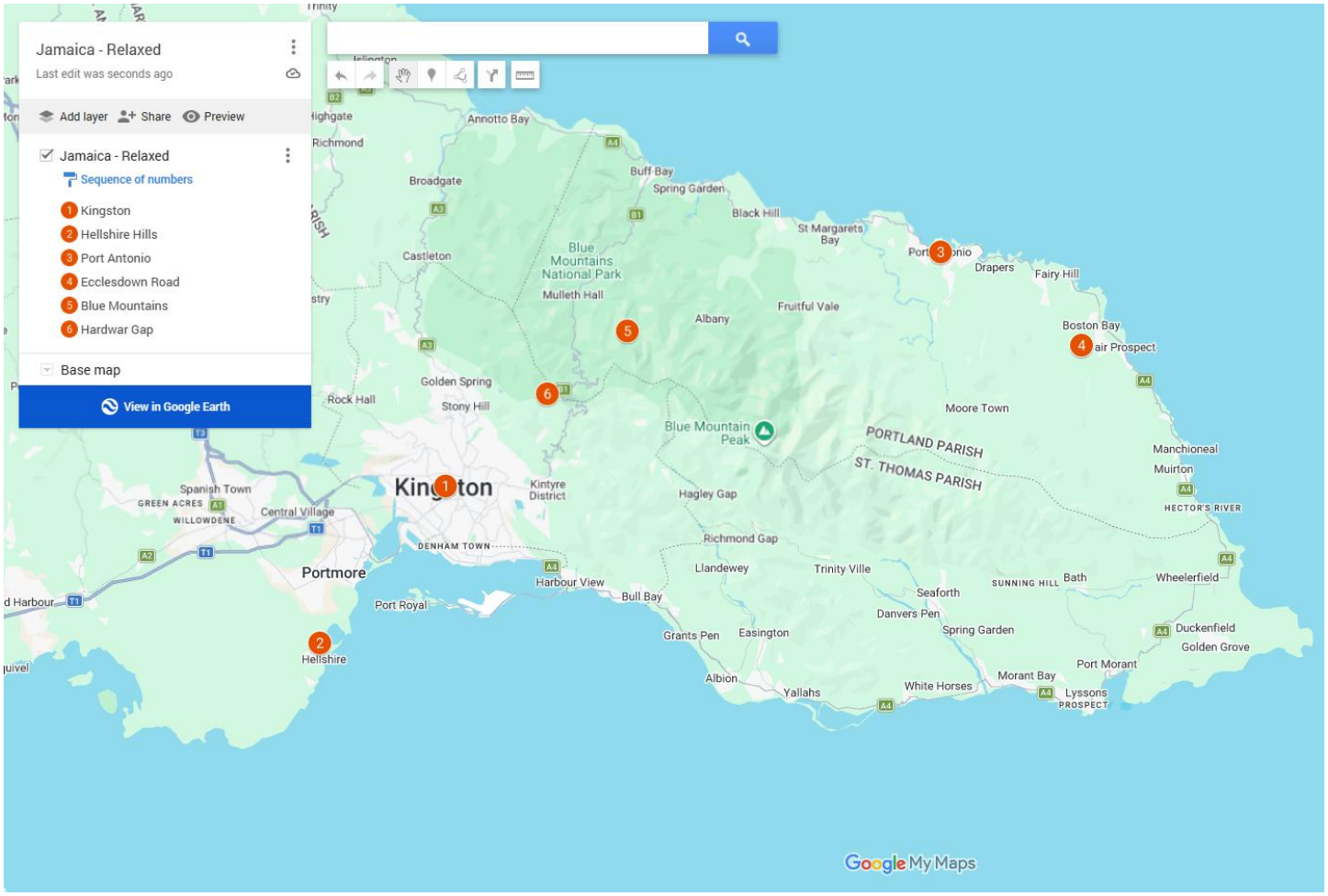
Jamaica is far more than an island of white-sand beaches, world-famous coffee and the rhythms of Reggae. Rising from the turquoise waters of the Caribbean, this mountainous island is one of the region's great biodiversity hotspots, supporting an extraordinary concentration of endemic wildlife found nowhere else on Earth.

Our six-day Jamaica: Island Endemics tour is designed to showcase the very best of the island's birdlife, with a realistic opportunity of recording all 28 endemic bird species, alongside a wealth of Greater Antillean specialities and overwintering North American migrants. From the mist-draped forests of the Blue Mountains to the lush slopes of the John Crow Mountains and the rugged coastline of the north-east, we will explore a remarkable variety of habitats in search of some of the Caribbean's most sought-after birds.

Highlights include the dazzling Red-billed and Black-billed Streamertails, the enchanting Jamaican Tody, the elusive Crested Quail-Dove, Jamaican Owl, Jamaican Becard, Jamaican Mango and the threatened Jamaican Blackbird. Combined with comfortable travel, spectacular scenery and excellent birding throughout, Jamaica offers one of the most rewarding endemic bird experiences in the Americas.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Kingston**
Day 2	**Kingston to Port Antonio via Hellshire Hills**
Day 3	**Ecclesdown Road**
Day 4	**Blue Mountains**
Day 5	**Ecclesdown Road**
Day 6	**Port Antonio to Kingston & final departure**



Birding sites in detail

Kingston. Time permitting, we'll begin our Jamaican birding adventure in a local park near Kingston, where several endemic and regional specialties can often be found. Targets may include Jamaican Woodpecker, Yellow-billed Amazon, Red-billed Streamertail, Vervain Hummingbird and Northern Potoo, providing an excellent introduction to the island's unique avifauna.

Hellshire Hills. The arid, cactus-studded landscape of the Hellshire Hills offers a striking contrast to Jamaica's montane forests. Here we will search for the characterful Stolid Flycatcher, often seen perched conspicuously atop exposed branches, while the surrounding scrub supports the restless Bahama Mockingbird. Both species are Caribbean regional endemics and characteristic inhabitants of this distinctive dry habitat.



Jamaican Tody by Clayton Burne

Ecclesdown Road. Traversing the lush foothills of the John Crow Mountains, Ecclesdown Road is widely regarded as one of Jamaica's premier birding locations. The combination of mature forest, woodland edge, gardens and flowering trees creates a remarkable diversity of habitats, making this one of the most productive birding sites on the island.



Jamaican Owl by Bobby Wilcox

Our primary targets here include the eastern Jamaican endemics Black-billed Streamertail, Jamaican Crow and Black-billed Amazon. The crow is often heard before it is seen, its bizarre bubbling calls carrying across the forested hillsides, while small groups of Black-billed Amazons frequently pass overhead or perch conspicuously in fruiting trees. The spectacular Black-billed Streamertail, one of Jamaica's two iconic "doctor birds", is often encountered feeding at flowering shrubs where males display their elegant tail streamers.

Ecclesdown Road is also one of the best sites for several of Jamaica's more sought-after endemics and specialties. We stand an excellent chance of finding the secretive Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo, known locally as the "Old Man Bird", whose unusual vocalisations often betray its presence deep within the forest. Other notable species include Yellow-billed Amazon, Jamaican Elaenia, Sad Flycatcher, Rufous-tailed Flycatcher and the striking Jamaican Becard, while the charismatic Jamaican Tody regularly provides memorable close-range views.

The area is particularly rewarding for Greater Antillean specialties and near-endemics. Greater Antillean Bullfinch, Caribbean Dove and the distinctive Jamaican race of Loggerhead Kingbird are all possible, while mixed feeding flocks may contain Jamaican Vireo, Jamaican Spindalis and Orangequit. Flowering trees attract numerous hummingbirds, including the beautiful Jamaican Mango, whose iridescent plumage gleams with shades of bronze, green and violet in the tropical sunlight.



Arrow-headed Warbler by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Bird activity is often intense during the early morning hours, with a constant chorus of calls emanating from the surrounding forest and mixed flocks moving through the canopy. Jamaican Lizard Cuckoo can occasionally be encountered along the roadside, while wintering North American migrants may include Black-and-white, Cape May, Black-throated Blue and Prairie Warblers, Northern Parula, American Redstart, Baltimore Oriole and Indigo Bunting.

The road's elevated position provides sweeping views across the forested slopes of the John Crow Mountains and out toward the Caribbean Sea beyond, making this not only one of Jamaica's finest birding localities but also one of its most scenic. With such a remarkable concentration of endemic species, regional specialties and migrant birds, Ecclesdown Road consistently ranks among the premier birding destinations in the Caribbean.

Happy Grove. The dramatic coastal cliffs around Happy Grove provide excellent opportunities to observe White-tailed Tropicbirds. These elegant seabirds can often be seen gliding effortlessly along the shoreline during the morning before heading offshore to forage over the Caribbean Sea.



Crested Quail-Dove by Bobby Wilcox

Blue Mountains. The world-famous Blue Mountains rise above eastern Jamaica in a mosaic of mist-shrouded forests draped with mosses, orchids, ferns, bromeliads and bamboo. Forming part of the UNESCO-listed Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park, this spectacular region supports some of the finest birding in the Caribbean.

Although Blue Mountain Peak reaches 2,256 metres above sea level, most of our birding will take place around Hardwar Gap, a renowned access point into the

island's montane forests. Here we will search for two of Jamaica's most sought-after endemics: the elusive Crested Quail-Dove and the threatened Jamaican Blackbird. The mournful calls of the quail-dove, known locally as the "mountain witch", often drift from the dense roadside forest, while the highly distinctive Jamaican Blackbird favours vine tangles and bromeliad-laden trees beneath the canopy.



Orangequit by Bobby Wilcox

The forests of the Blue Mountains host an impressive suite of endemic species. White-chinned Thrush, White-eyed Thrush, Ring-tailed Pigeon, Jamaican Euphonia, Orangequit, Jamaican Vireo and Olive-throated Parakeet are all possible, while the haunting song of the Rufous-throated Solitaire echoes through the misty gullies. Other key targets include Blue Mountain Vireo, Blue Mountain Elaenia and the highly localised Arrowhead Warbler. Forest-edge habitats may also produce Yellow-shouldered Grassquit, Jamaican Spindalis and the near-endemic Jamaican Oriole.

Additional highlights may include Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo, locally known as the "Old Man Bird", Jamaican Lizard Cuckoo, Rufous-tailed Flycatcher, Jamaican Woodpecker and the delightful Jamaican Tody, which frequently allows remarkably close views. The Blue Mountains also offer some of the finest opportunities to observe Jamaica's national bird, the spectacular Red-billed Streamertail.

After dark, we will venture out in search of two of Jamaica's most charismatic nocturnal species: the endemic Jamaican Owl and the widespread but often elusive Northern Potoo.



Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo by Dušan Brinkhuizen

The Blue Mountains are also an important wintering area for North American migrants. Depending on the season, we may encounter Black-and-white, Cape May, Black-throated Blue, Yellow-throated and Prairie Warblers, Northern Parula, American Redstart, Indigo Bunting, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Baltimore Oriole, among many others. With a measure of luck, we may even find the highly sought-after Swainson's Warbler.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Undemanding. Suitable for all birding / wildlife interest levels and mobility capabilities.
Birding Ease		Undemanding. Most target species provide good viewing opportunities, often from roadsides, gardens and forest edges, with relatively little time spent searching for difficult or highly skulking species.
Accommodation		Very comfortable.
Walking / Trails		Comfortable vehicle with generally short driving distances. Roads are sealed but can be uneven in places, and the winding mountain roads may affect those prone to motion sickness.
Vehicles / Roads		Comfortable vehicle with short drives. Roads are sealed but do have potholes. Roads are winding & can affect those who suffer from motion sickness.
Photography		Good to very good. Many species can be photographed from roadsides, gardens and feeding areas. No dedicated hides are utilised.
Annoyances		Potential for motion sickness on winding mountain roads. Weather conditions in the Blue Mountains can occasionally be cool, misty and wet.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 6;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short notice due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

Our Relaxed series of tours are designed to focus on having an enjoyable holiday with a bird and wildlife focus. Where possible; we have reduced or removed long drives, single night stays and poor/rustic accommodation. We have also sought to reduce or remove difficult hikes, narrow/muddy trails and otherwise oppressive environmental conditions. Early starts and night birding are mostly optional, and we will not spend much time searching for difficult and/or skulking species. These tours are not suitable for hardcore birders and listers, or dedicated photographers.

- To ensure your comfort and that of your companions, please limit yourself to one medium-sized suitcase or duffel bag (20 kg / 44 lb) and one carry-on bag, as space in the vehicles is limited.
- Warm and tropical throughout, with cooler temperatures possible in the Blue Mountains. Lightweight clothing, sun protection and a light rain jacket are recommended.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour begins with an arrival day in Kingston on Day 1. Guests arriving early may have the opportunity for some introductory birding in a local park during the afternoon. The tour concludes in Kingston in the early afternoon of Day 6.

*Guests joining post tour extensions may depart with the tour leader earlier if connecting flights require this.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Norman Manley International Airport, Kingston (IATA: KIN) is the main port of entry for international flights into Jamaica and is well serviced by most international carriers.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.