# Puerto Rico

## Forgotten Greater Antilles



**Puerto Rican Woodpecker by Bobby Wilcox**

*Surrounded by the turquoise Caribbean Sea, Puerto Rico is a rugged and mountainous island containing a wide variety of bird-rich habitats. Host to 17 endemics and numerous Greater Antillean and Caribbean restricted species, Puerto Rico has surprisingly been forgotten amongst its more illustrious neighbours - Cuba, Jamaica and Hispaniola. While the many endemics and near-endemics are the priority, the island also plays host to several wintering North American passerines. From the capital, San Juan, we will work our way through the northern coastline, cool slopes of Maricao and the dry forests of the southwest. Our tour takes in the major habitats, offering us an excellent chance of seeing all the island's endemics.*

# *Itinerary & Map*

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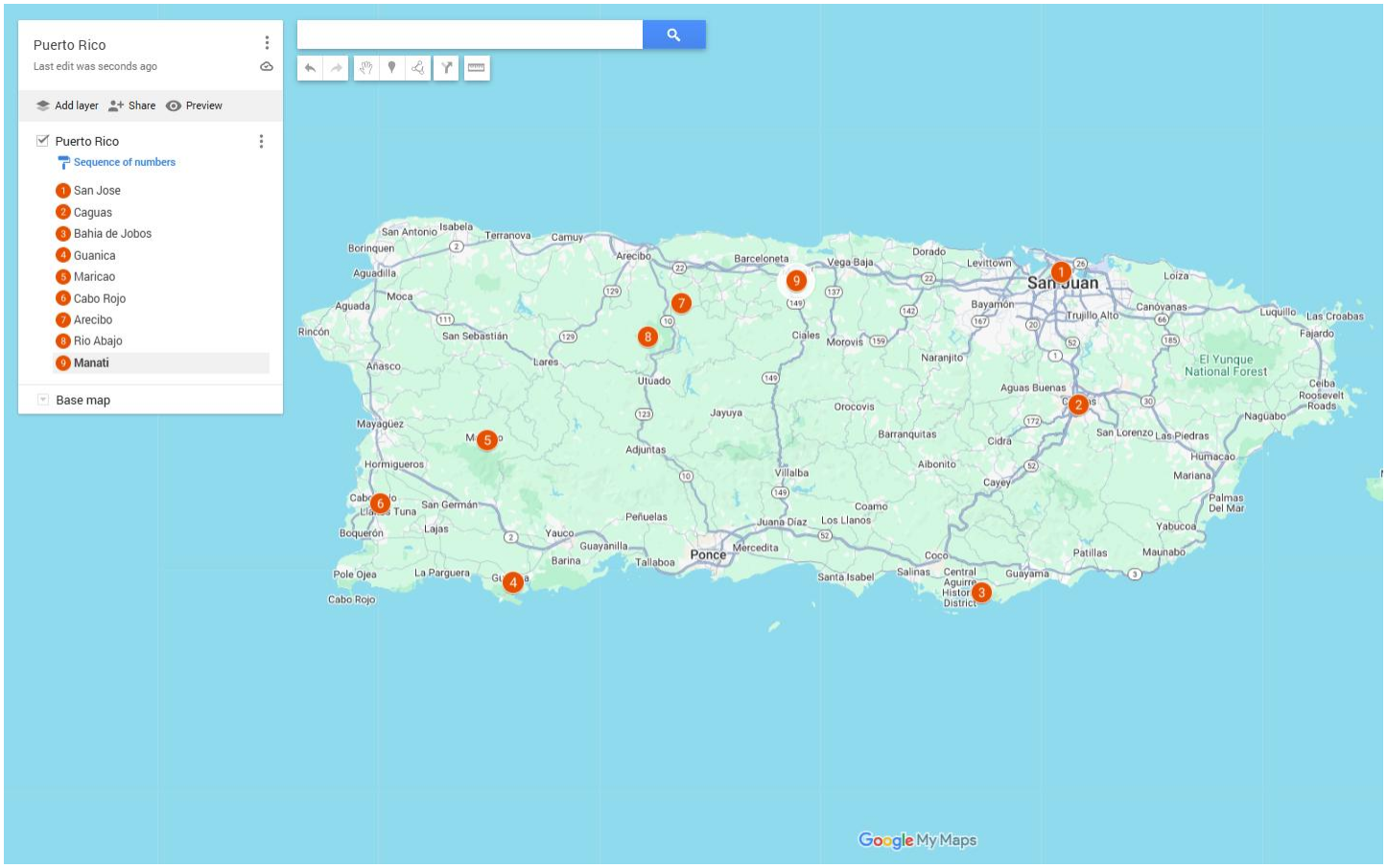
| **Day 1** | **Arrival in San Juan** |
| **Day 2** | **San Juan to Guanica via Caguas & Bahia de Jobos Natural Reserve** |
| **Day 3** | **Maricao State Forest Reserve & Cabo Rojo** |
| **Day 4** | **Guanica to Arecibo via Rio Abajo Forest** |
| **Day 5** | **Manati to San Juan** |
| **Day 6** | **Final departure** |



## *Birding sites in detail*

**San Juan area.** For those arriving early, a walk around the historic Old City of Puerto Rico will unveil the ancient defence walls as well as the 16th century Fort San Felipe del Morro and the 17th century Fort San Cristóbal. While taking in the history and culture of the city, you are likely to encounter some of the commoner island birds including Magnificent Frigatebird, Brown Pelican, Zenaida and White-winged Doves, Grey Kingbird, Eastern Red-legged Thrush, Northern Mockingbird, Bananaquit, Greater Antillean Grackle and possibly Pearly-eyed Thrasher.

The leafy gardens and tree-lined streets also host some of Puerto Rico's endemics, with Puerto Rican Woodpecker, Puerto Rican Oriole and Puerto Rican Spindalis all being distinct possibilities.



**Adelaide's Warbler by Forrest Rowland**

**Caguas.** A short stop here targets the increasingly difficult Plain Pigeon and will likely deliver good views of Scaly-naped Pigeon, Puerto Rican Spindalis, Belted Kingfisher, Puerto Rican Oriole and Puerto Rican Tody.

**Bahia de Jobos Natural Reserve.** We'll be searching this area for the key endemic hummingbird; Antillean Crested Hummingbird and Green-throated Carib, as well as Puerto Rican Woodpecker, Puerto Rican Flycatcher, Pearly-eyed Thrasher and Venezuelan Troupial.

**Maricao State Forest Reserve.** The cool slopes of the Cordillera Central are home to Bosque Estatal de Maricao. We will spend most of a morning looking for the rather recently described (1971) Elfin Woods Warbler. Resembling a Black-and-white Warbler (which winters on the island), this attractive but low density (±1800 individuals) endemic can be difficult to track down. While looking for the warbler, we are likely to bump into other endemic gems including the diminutive Puerto Rican Emerald and the much larger Green Mango.



**Puerto Rican Tody by Clayton Burne**

Puerto Rican Tanager was declared a monotypic family recently, and Maricao is perhaps the best place to find this species. Indeed, it can be fairly numerous, even calling incessantly at times. Additional endemics are present, including Lesser Antillean Pewee, Puerto Rican Vireo, Puerto Rican Oriole, Puerto Rican

Flycatcher, Puerto Rican Spindalis, Puerto Rican Euphonia and the resident endemic sub-species of Sharp-shinned Hawk.

**Cabo Rojo.** Our main targets here are the recently split Puerto Rican Mango (formerly Antillean), Caribbean Elaenia and Adelaide's Warbler. This woodland is perhaps one of the best places in the world to see Mangrove Cuckoo. We'll also find several waterfowl species, and waders such as Hudsonian Whimbrel, Stilt, Least and Spotted Sandpipers, both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and Willet. Royal and Cabot's Terns may be loafing on the beach, whilst Magnificent Frigatebirds will be floating overhead.



**Puerto Rican Amazon by Bobby Wilcox**

**Guanica.** We may visit this site in the early evening for the vocal, but difficult to see Puerto Rican Nightjar.

**La Parguera area.** There is a well-known stakeout for the endangered, endemic, Yellow-shouldered Blackbird here. The nearby mangroves are also excellent for Mangrove Warbler, Yellow-crowned Night Heron and Clapper Rail.



**Puerto Rican Tanager by Bobby Wilcox**

**Hato Viejo.** We'll explore this wetland are for West Indian Whistling Duck, Ring-necked Duck, Green-winged Teal, Glossy Ibis, and, if we are particularly lucky, the endemic, Yellow-shouldered Blackbird.

**Manati.** The open farmlands, ponds and charcas near to Manati are home to several more widespread species such as Grasshopper Sparrow, Scaly-naped Pigeon, Glossy Ibis, Puerto Rican Woodpecker, Puerto Rican Flycatcher, Grey Kingbird and Cave Swallow, as well as the introduced Bronze Mannikin, Eurasian Collared Dove, Venezuelan Troupial and Orange-cheeked Waxbill.

**Rio Abajo Forest.** Rio Abajo State Forest is one of the last refuges for the critically endangered Puerto Rican Amazon. With luck we'll find a small flock flying overhead, or individuals sunning themselves atop exposed trees. We should have time to bird the picnic

area for Puerto Rican Emerald, Puerto Rican Lizard Cuckoo, Puerto Rican Vireo, Puerto Rican Bullfinch and local subspecies of Broad-winged Hawk, Loggerhead Kingbird and Puerto Rican Euphonia.

**Coastal Road birding.** Stops at various spots along the scenic coastal highway could turn up White-tailed Tropicbird, Brown Booby, Reddish Egret, Lesser Black-backed Gull and perhaps a surprise or two.



**Elfin Woods Warbler by Bobby Wilcox**

## *Tour Grading & Key*

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| **Overall Ease** | ■ ■ ■ | An easy, enjoyable birding vacation. |
| **Birding Ease** | ■ ■ ■ | Undemanding. Limited forest birding. A few elusive species that may require extra time/effort. |
| **Accommodation** | ■ ■ ■ | Comfortable to very comfortable. |
| **Walking / Trails** | ■ ■ ■ | Moderate walks, mostly roadside/wide trail birding with a few short walks on the beach/mangroves and lodge gardens. |
| **Vehicles / Roads** | ■ ■ ■ | Comfortable van. Mostly good quality, sealed roads. |
| **Photography** | ■ ■ ■ | Good. No dedicated hides, some feeders may be visited |
| **Annoyances** | ■ ■ ■ | Can be quite warm and humid. |

# *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;
- 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 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.**

- Much of our time is spent in vehicles, as we do have to cover long distances in order to get to the best birding areas. The more luggage you pack the less room there is in the vehicle, so it is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lb) for hand luggage.
- This tour does not require a high level of fitness; however, much of the forest birding will be on foot and may require a fair amount of walking (always at a slow pace).
- Crime is problematic in certain areas of Puerto Rico. Exercise caution as you would for any big city where crime exists. Do not unnecessarily flaunt cash and valuables and do not leave valuables exposed in the vehicle.

# *Arrival and Departure Details*

The tour starts with a welcome dinner on the evening of day 1. As this is an arrival day, you are free to arrive at any time. The tour will conclude after breakfast of day 6.

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.

Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport, San Juan (IATA: SJU) is the main port of entry for international flights to Puerto Rico and is well serviced by most major airlines.

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.**