Puerto Rico

Gateway to the Greater Antilles



Puerto Rican Tody by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Our Rockjumper Gateway Tour has been specially designed to introduce birders to the excitement of Caribbean birding in a relaxed and approachable way. Travelling through scenic coastal landscapes, wildlife-rich wetlands, dry forests and misty mountain woodlands, we will search for many of Puerto Rico's charismatic endemic birds including the delightful Puerto Rican Tody, spectacular Puerto Rican Amazon, striking Puerto Rican Spindalis, colourful Puerto Rican Woodpecker, the remarkable Puerto Rican Tanager and the dazzling Green Mango and Puerto Rican Mango.

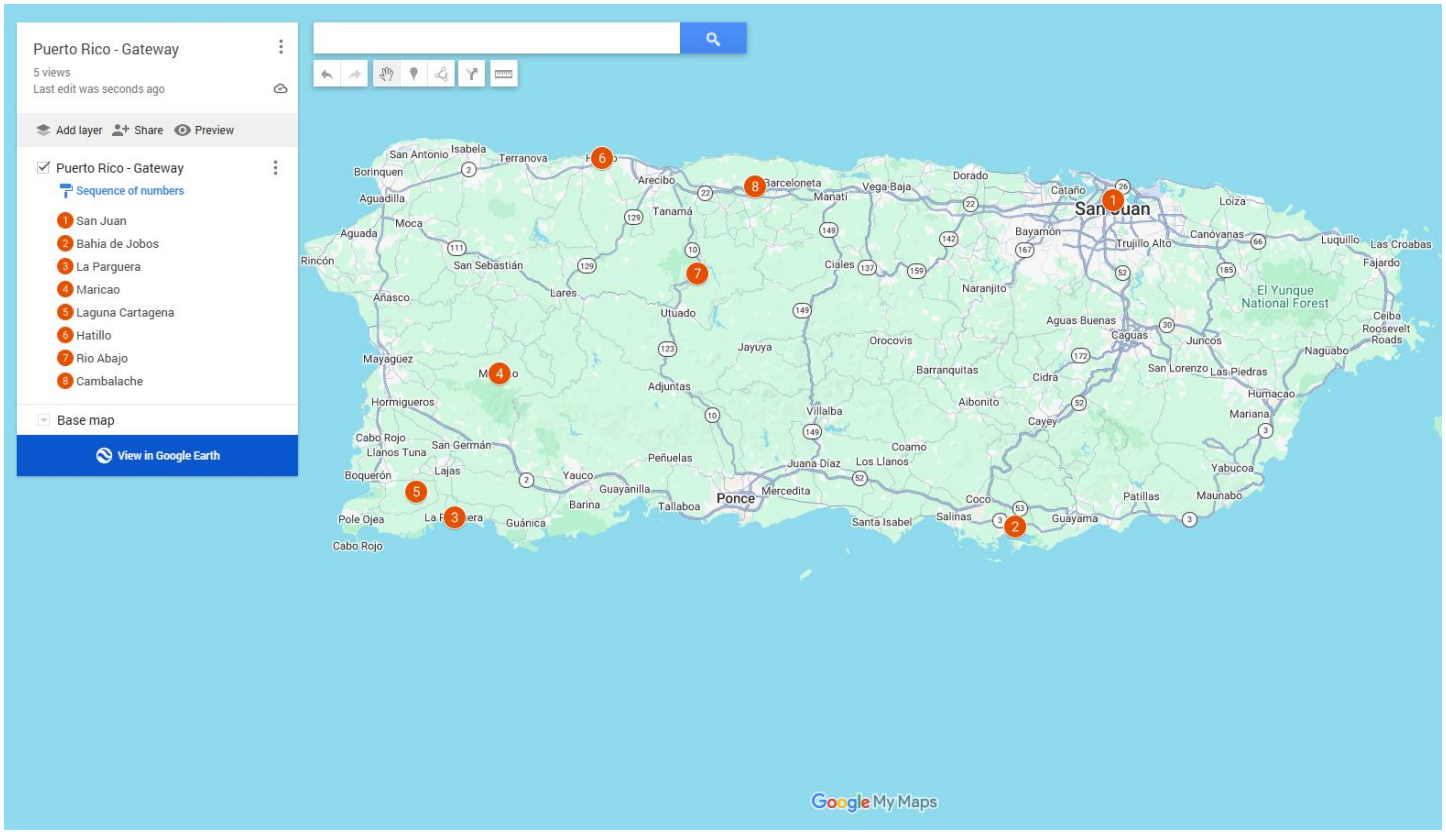
Other highlights may include Antillean Crested Hummingbird, Adelaide's Warbler, Yellow-shouldered Blackbird, Puerto Rican Nightjar, Mangrove Cuckoo and the localized Elfin Woods

Warbler. Along the way we will enjoy a wonderful diversity of habitats, from the cactus-studded dry forests of the southwest to lush mountain forests and expansive coastal wetlands supporting a rich variety of Caribbean birdlife.

Beyond the excellent birding, Puerto Rico offers comfortable accommodations, manageable travel distances and a welcoming Caribbean atmosphere, making it an ideal destination for travellers embarking on their first tropical birding adventure. Combined with a relaxed pace, scenic surroundings and unique experiences such as visiting the famous bioluminescent waters of La Parguera, this tour provides the perfect gateway into the fascinating world of Caribbean birding.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in San Juan, Puerto Rico & welcome group dinner**
Day 2	**San Juan to La Parguera via Bahia de Jobos & Caguas**
Day 3	**Maricao & La Parguera**
Day 4	**Laguna Cartagena, transfer to Hatillo**
Day 5	**Rio Abajo & Cambalache State Forests**
Day 6	**Hatillo & return to San Juan**
Day 7	**Final departure**



Endemic species

Excellent **photography** opportunities

Optional **night** birding

Coastal & Caribbean **scenery**

Scenic highland **landscapes**

Birding sites in detail

San Juan & Old San Juan. Our tour begins in the vibrant Caribbean city of San Juan, where guests will gather for a relaxed welcome dinner on the evening of Day 1. Depending on arrival times, there may be opportunities to independently explore parts of historic Old San Juan, with its colourful colonial architecture, lively plazas and scenic waterfronts providing an enjoyable introduction to Puerto Rico and its rich Caribbean heritage.

Even casual birding around the city can be rewarding, with species such as Magnificent Frigatebird, Brown Pelican, Grey Kingbird, Bananaquit and Greater Antillean Grackle all possible before our island birding adventure begins in earnest.



Puerto Rican Woodpecker by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Caguas & Bahia de Jobos Natural Reserve. Leaving San Juan behind, we begin our journey south through the scenic Puerto Rican countryside. A stop near Caguas provides our first opportunities for several of the island's most attractive endemic birds, including Puerto Rican Tody, Puerto Rican Spindalis, Puerto Rican Oriole and Puerto Rican Woodpecker, while Scaly-naped Pigeon and Pearly-eyed Thrasher are also regularly encountered.

Continuing towards the southern coast, we explore the wetlands, mangroves and coastal woodlands of Bahía de Jobos Natural Reserve, one of Puerto Rico's premier lowland birding destinations. This bird-rich region offers excellent opportunities to search for two of the island's most sought-after regional specialties, the dazzling Antillean Crested Hummingbird and Green-throated Carib, alongside Puerto Rican Flycatcher, Puerto Rican Woodpecker and a variety of other Caribbean birds.



Adelaide's Warbler by Dušan Brinkhuizen

The reserve's extensive wetlands and mangrove systems support numerous waterbirds, shorebirds and migrant species, while woodland edges may produce Pearly-eyed Thrasher, Venezuelan Troupial and a variety of other lowland specialties. The combination of productive birding, beautiful coastal scenery and warm Caribbean landscapes makes this a memorable introduction to Puerto Rico's remarkable birdlife.

La Parguera. Situated on Puerto Rico's scenic southwest coast, La Parguera combines productive birding with a relaxed Caribbean atmosphere and beautiful coastal scenery. Mangroves, lagoons and coastal woodland support a rich variety of birdlife, making the area one of the island's premier birding destinations.

Among the highlights here is the endangered Yellow-shouldered Blackbird, one of Puerto Rico's most localized and sought-after endemic birds. Other species that may be encountered include Puerto Rican Mango, Puerto Rican Flycatcher, Clapper Rail, Yellow-crowned Night Heron and a variety of waterbirds and shorebirds associated with the region's wetlands and mangrove systems.



Green-throated Carib by Bobby Wilcox

For those interested, optional evening birding may provide the opportunity to search for the highly localized Puerto Rican Nightjar as its haunting calls echo through the dry forest after dark. Beyond the birding, La Parguera is renowned for its spectacular bioluminescent bay, where millions of microscopic organisms illuminate the water after sunset, creating one of Puerto Rico's most memorable natural experiences.

Maricao State Forest. The cool mountain forests of Maricao provide a refreshing contrast to the warmer coastal regions. Winding mountain roads, lush forested slopes and moss-covered trees create one of Puerto Rico's most scenic birding environments.

Maricao is home to several of the island's most sought-after endemic birds, including the localized Elfin Woods Warbler, a species found nowhere else in the world. While searching for this attractive endemic, we are also likely to encounter Puerto Rican Emerald, Green Mango, Puerto Rican Vireo, Puerto Rican Flycatcher, Puerto Rican Euphonia and Puerto Rican Spindalis.

This region is also one of the best places to appreciate the remarkable Puerto Rican Tanager, recently elevated to its own monotypic family and often encountered moving noisily through mixed feeding flocks.



Puerto Rican Tanager by Dušan Brinkhuizen

The peaceful mountain scenery, cooler temperatures and relaxed pace make Maricao one of the highlights of the tour.

Rio Abajo Forest. Rio Abajo protects one of Puerto Rico's largest remaining tracts of native forest and offers enjoyable birding in a scenic landscape of forested limestone hills, valleys and woodland clearings. The reserve is internationally renowned as one of the principal strongholds of the spectacular Puerto Rican Amazon, one of the rarest parrots in the world and one of the island's greatest conservation successes.

Although sightings can never be guaranteed, Rio Abajo remains one of the best places to search for this highly endangered endemic, with small groups sometimes seen flying above the forest canopy during the early morning. The forest also supports a variety of other Puerto Rican specialties, including Puerto Rican Bullfinch, Puerto Rican Vireo, Puerto Rican Euphonia, Puerto Rican Emerald and Lesser Antillean Elaenia, while local forms of Broad-winged Hawk and Loggerhead Kingbird may also be encountered.



Elfin Woods Warbler by Bobby Wilcox

Birding here is generally relaxed and rewarding, with productive roadsides, forest clearings and quiet woodland habitats providing excellent opportunities to appreciate some of Puerto Rico's most sought-after birds.

Cambalache State Forest. The attractive forests of Cambalache provide an excellent complement to Rio Abajo and offer further opportunities to search for Puerto Rico's remarkable endemic birdlife. Woodland trails, quiet roads and forest edges support a variety of species, making this an enjoyable location for additional birding and photography.

Among the species we may encounter are Puerto Rican Tody, Puerto Rican Lizard Cuckoo, Puerto Rican Emerald, Puerto Rican Vireo, Puerto Rican Euphonia and Puerto Rican Bullfinch,

together with a variety of widespread Caribbean birds. The relaxed pace and attractive forest setting make Cambalache a pleasant final opportunity to enjoy Puerto Rico's unique avifauna before returning to San Juan.

Hatillo & Northern Coastal Plains. As we make our way back towards San Juan, we may visit several productive sites in the Manatí area and along Puerto Rico's northern coastline. These final birding stops provide opportunities for additional views of some of the island's endemic and widespread Caribbean species, as well as any key targets still outstanding.

Possible species include Scaly-naped Pigeon, Puerto Rican Woodpecker, Puerto Rican Flycatcher, Cave Swallow and Glossy Ibis, while wetlands, coastal lagoons and offshore viewpoints may produce species such as Reddish Egret, Brown Booby, White-tailed Tropicbird and a variety of gulls and terns.

Our final evening together provides a wonderful opportunity to reflect on an enjoyable introduction to the birds, scenery and relaxed Caribbean atmosphere of Puerto Rico.



Scaly-naped Pigeon by Bobby Wilcox

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Designed specifically for first-time international birders and travellers. A relaxed-paced tour with comfortable accommodations, manageable travel distances and limited strenuous activity.
Birding Ease / Pace		Easy. Birding is conducted at a relaxed pace with a strong emphasis on enjoyable and visually rewarding Caribbean species rather than difficult or highly technical birding.
Accommodation		Comfortable hotels and lodges with private bathrooms, reliable amenities and good access to birding areas.
Walking / Trails		Generally easy walking on roads, wide trails, boardwalks and lodge grounds. Most birding is conducted from roadsides, open viewpoints and short walking trails.
Vehicles / Roads		Travel is conducted in comfortable vehicles on generally good roads. Driving distances are moderate and broken up with regular birding and sightseeing stops.
Climate		Warm tropical conditions throughout most of the tour, with cooler and more comfortable temperatures in the mountain forests around Maricao. Coastal areas can be warm and humid.
Photography		Good to excellent. Many species are seen well in open habitats and several locations offer particularly rewarding photography opportunities.
Annoyances		Warm temperatures, humidity and occasional tropical rain showers may be encountered. Mosquitoes and biting insects can occasionally be present in wetter areas. Some early mornings are necessary for optimal bird activity.

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 7;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve & site entrance fees;
- All guiding services,
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- International and domestic flights unless specifically stated;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Optional gratuities for your Rockjumper leader/s;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Typical additional personal costs may include travel insurance, airport hotels, alcoholic beverages, personal shopping and optional tour leader gratuities.

Single Supplement: Many accommodations use twin-bed rooms. Guests who prefer private accommodation may request a single room for an additional fee. If you elect to share accommodation but a suitable roommate cannot be found, the applicable single supplement will become payable. We will always make reasonable efforts to match guests wishing to share.

Tipping: Gratuities for drivers, hotel staff, restaurants and local services are included on this tour. Tipping your Rockjumper leader/s is entirely optional and based on your satisfaction with the tour.

- **Tour prices are fixed in the primary currency shown in bold on our website. Prices listed in other currencies are approximate and may vary slightly due to exchange rate fluctuations at the time of final invoicing.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement may be offered to confirm departure.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour-related costs and may need to be adjusted accordingly.**
- **Designated tour leader/s may change due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only and minor adjustments to the order of travel, accommodations or sites visited may occasionally be necessary.**

Rockjumper Gateway Tours are specially designed for travellers taking their first steps into international birding travel, as well as those seeking a more comfortable and approachable tropical birding experience. These tours combine enjoyable birding, comfortable accommodations and manageable travel days with a relaxed pace and a high level of support throughout the journey.

While birding remains the primary focus of these tours, the overall pace and structure are designed to be enjoyable and accessible rather than intensive. We avoid demanding hikes, difficult travel schedules and overly strenuous birding conditions wherever possible, allowing guests to focus on enjoying the birds, wildlife, scenery and overall travel experience.

Gateway Tours are intentionally designed around comfort, atmosphere and enjoyable birding experiences rather than long species lists or physically demanding schedules. These tours provide an ideal introduction to tropical birding travel while still offering exciting wildlife encounters and memorable birding throughout.

These tours are not suitable for guests seeking demanding, fast-paced, highly target-driven birding experiences or intensive photography-focused itineraries.

Some days begin with optional early morning birding when bird activity is at its best, followed by breakfast and a relaxed pace through the remainder of the day. Afternoons generally include additional birding, scenic travel between locations or time to enjoy the surroundings and accommodations. Optional evening birding may occasionally be offered in search of nocturnal species such as Puerto Rican Nightjar.

Guests are welcome to participate at a pace comfortable to them throughout the tour.

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that luggage is kept to a reasonable minimum. Kindly limit baggage to 20kg (44lb) for checked luggage and 8kg (18lb) for hand luggage.
- Puerto Rico experiences warm tropical conditions throughout much of the year. Lightweight clothing, sun protection and adequate hydration are recommended, while a light jacket may be useful in the cooler mountain forests around Maricao.
- Accommodation throughout the tour is comfortable and well situated for birding and sightseeing. Puerto Rico offers an excellent variety of western and Caribbean-style cuisine.
- Puerto Rico has a well-developed tourism infrastructure, and electricity, Wi-Fi and mobile coverage are widely available throughout most of the tour.
- As with travel anywhere in the world, normal common-sense precautions should be exercised regarding valuables and personal belongings, particularly in urban areas.

Arrival and Departure Details

Day 1 of the tour is set aside as an arrival day, allowing guests time to settle in after their international journey. Guests may arrive in San Juan at any time during the day, with a welcome dinner held in the evening to meet your fellow travellers and tour leader before the tour begins. The tour will conclude in San Juan after breakfast on Day 7.

The above information regarding arrivals and departures is intended as a general guide only. Precise arrival and departure details will be provided in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive earlier and/or depart later and require assistance with additional accommodation or travel arrangements, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Please do not book any flights until the Rockjumper Team has officially confirmed the tour.

Rockjumper Gateway Tours are specifically designed around destinations with straightforward entry requirements for most travellers, with little or no visa or travel authorization requirements typically necessary. At the time of booking, we will advise guests of any known visa, entry or travel authorization requirements relevant to the tour.

Visa and entry requirements can vary depending on nationality and may occasionally change at short notice. Guests are ultimately responsible for ensuring they meet all entry requirements for the countries visited and should verify the latest information with the appropriate consulate, embassy or official government authority prior to travel.