Trinidad & Tobago

Relaxed: Tropical Island Birding

1st June to 11th June 2024 (11 days)

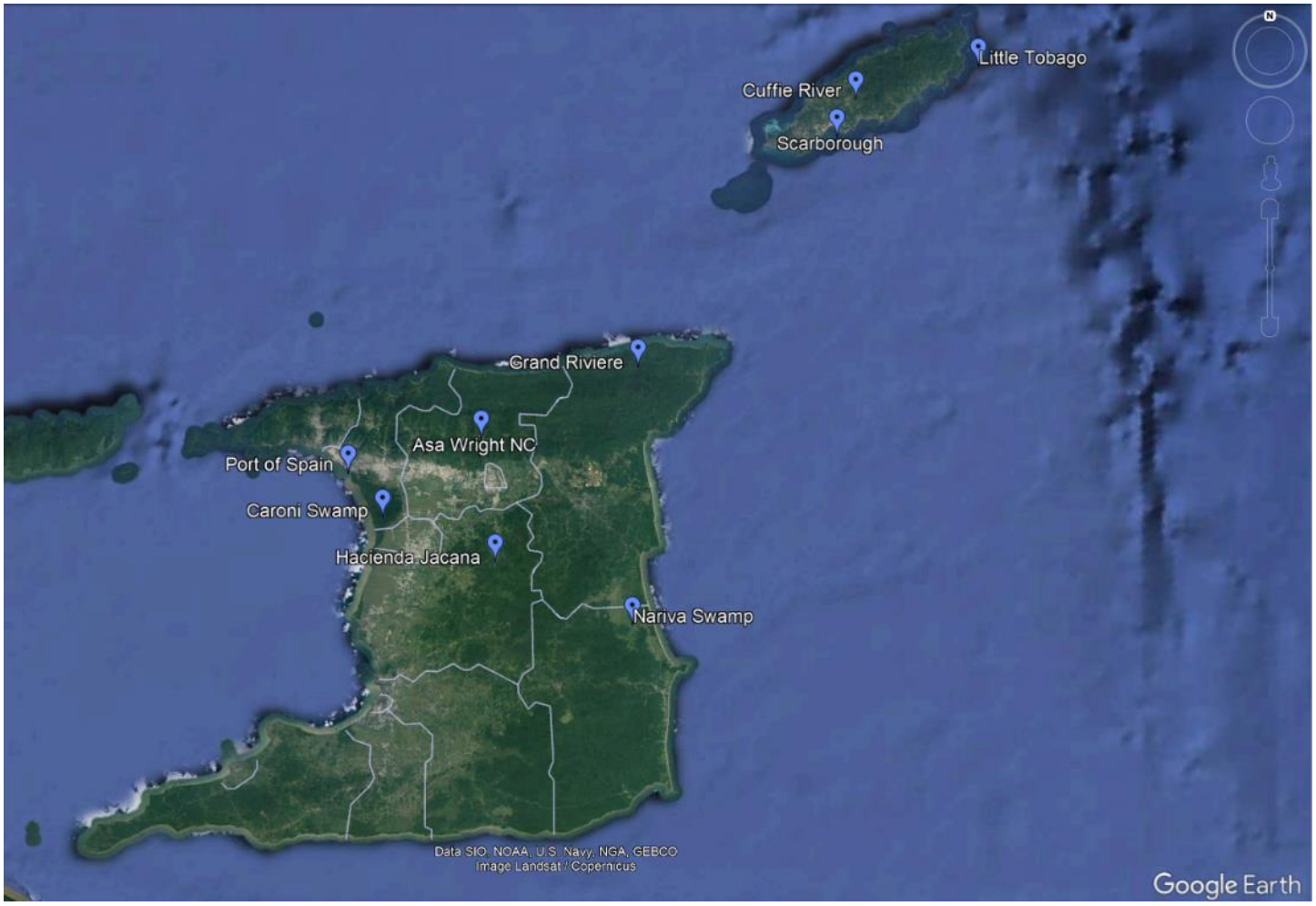


Purple Honeyeater by Adam Riley

The tropical islands of Trinidad and Tobago in the southern Caribbean are situated just off the coast of north-eastern Venezuela. It is this archipelago's unique position, combined with a mixed terrain ranging from coastal plains to mountains, that makes it such a superb birding destination. Our tour covers the entirety of these beautiful islands, utilising fantastic accommodations in prime birding habitat. This is birding at its best and a perfect introduction to the Neotropics for those new to the habitat, combined with everything the seasoned birder could want with resident endemics and specialties that include the Bearded Bellbird, the breathtaking Scarlet Ibis, Trinidad Motmot, Tufted Coquette, and the critically endangered Endemic Trinidad Piping Guan. Photographers should also come prepared to be overwhelmed, since not only do these islands offer an impressive diversity of colourful birds such as macaws, toucans, tanagers, motmots, and hummingbirds, but many of the views are simply spectacular!

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Port of Spain, Trinidad, transfer to Hacienda Jacana**
Day 2	**Hacienda Jacana**
Day 3	**Day trip to Asa Wright Nature Centre**
Day 4	**Caroni Rice Fields & Caroni Swamp**
Day 5	**Woodland & Waterloo**
Day 6	**Hacienda Jacana to Grand Riviere**
Day 7	**Grand Riviere area**
Day 8	**Grand Riviere to Port of Spain, flight to Scarborough, Tobago**
Days 9 & 10	**Cuffie River & Little Tobago**
Day 11	**Tobago to Trinidad & final departure**



Birding sites in detail



Ruby-topaz Hummingbird by Forrest Rowland

Hacienda Jacana. Our days will likely begin with the raucous noise of Crested Oropendola bubbling in song and a host of other exotic sounds. Even from the comfort of our veranda, we can expect to see a menagerie of colourful tropical birds. The feeders attract an abundance of Bananaquits, the ubiquitous Palm, Blue-grey and White-lined Tanagers, and extravagant Green and Purple Honeycreepers.

Morning walks on the expansive grounds may produce Tufted Coquette, Ruby-topaz Hummingbird and Copper-rumped Hummingbirds in the verbenas, Silver-beaked, Turquoise, Blue-grey and Palm tanagers as well as Channel-billed Toucans, Red-bellied Macaws and Orange-winged Amazons in the trees overhead.

Mid-morning gives us the opportunity to enjoy the pool, or take a canoe ride on the pond for up close views of Wattled Jacanas, Purple Gallinules and Green Kingfishers amongst others.

After dinner, we can take an optional stroll around the grounds, for Common Paraque on the driveway and Spectacled Caiman in the pond.

Asa Wright Nature Centre. A walk along the well-manicured trails surrounding the lodge might produce booming Bearded Bellbird, Grey-throated Leaftosser, lekking Golden-headed and White-bearded Manakins, White-bellied Antbird, Guianan Trogon, Channel-billed Toucan, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Turquoise and Bay-headed Tanagers, Violaceous Euphonia and Golden-fronted Greenlet, which often responds well to whistled pygmy owl calls. We can also expect to find Forest Elaenia, Long-billed Gnatwren and Chestnut Woodpecker, amongst others.

We'll also spend plenty of time birding from the nature centre, where birds flock to the hummingbird and fruit feeders, outstanding viewing and photographic opportunities are unlimited! Grey-fronted Doves and Cocoa



Collared Trogon by Adam Riley



Green Honeycreeper by Adam Riley

Thrushes compete with Red-rumped Agoutis under the feeding areas, while dozens of hummingbirds swarm around the sugar feeders, often coming to within inches of our faces. The most numerous of these are usually White-chested Emeralds and Copper-rumped Hummingbirds, but we can also expect to see the fantastic White-necked Jacobin, Green and Little Hermits, Black-throated Mango and hopefully the tiny Tufted Coquette. Southern Beardless Tyrannulet and Barred Antshrike are regularly heard nearby, while Grey-lined Hawk is usually sighted not too far away.

Caroni Rice Fields & Caroni Swamp. This specialised mangrove forest contains several genera of mangroves, showing classic examples of plant adaptation in this unique, brackish water community. From the comfort of a boat, we can watch Neotropical Palm Swifts whirling around overhead, as well as Neotropical Cormorant, Anhinga, Striated Heron, White-cheeked Pintail, Large-billed Tern, Pied Water Tyrant and Red-capped Cardinal. To cap off what promises to be a fantastic afternoon's birding, this evening we will watch the spectacular flight of brightly coloured Scarlet Ibis, returning to their mangrove roosts at dusk, surely amongst the world's most dramatic natural moments, and one of the most celebrated events of a visit to Trinidad and Tobago!

Woodland & Waterloo. Today we make our way south to Woodland and Waterloo, which are large expanses of wetland, and tidal flats and savannah grasslands, as well as sheltered wooded areas. Here we can look forward to sightings of a large variety of raptors including Long-winged Harrier, Short-tailed Hawk, Common Black Hawk, as well as vultures, caracaras, bitterns, Bicoloured Conebill, Black-crested Antshrike, and various woodcreepers. There is also a good chance here for Striped Cuckoo, Masked Yellowthroat, Cocoi Heron, Bran-coloured Flycatcher, and one of the only reliable sites on the island for Spotted Tody-Flycatcher.



White-necked Jacobin by Adam Riley

Blanchisseuse Road. We head towards the north coast today, birding the



Trinidad Piping Guan by Adam Riley

Blanchisseuse Road en route. Key species to search for include Streaked Xenops, Speckled Tanager, Ornate Hawk-Eagle and Blue-headed Parrots. We'll likely enjoy lunch at a small village community of Brasso Secco, learn of their chocolate-making local initiative, sample, and perhaps purchase their chocolate, before making our way north to Grande Riviere.

Grand Riviere. We take a short 5 minute drive to the most reliable location on the island for sightings of the critically endangered Trinidad Piping Guan. Locally known as the Pawi, this elusive specialty is most regularly found feeding in the nutmeg trees. After hopefully seeing and photographing one of the rarest species on the planet, we'll continue to bird this productive roadside forest edge, where White-flanked Antwren, Silvered Antbird, Purple Honeycreeper, Yellow-rumped Cacique, which builds a pendulous hanging nest, Yellow-headed Caracara, Orange-winged Amazon, Yellow Oriole, White-winged Swallow and Grey-breasted Martin overhead, Blue-chinned Sapphire feeding on the flowering shrubs, Lineated Woodpecker, Scaled Pigeon, the superb Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Guianan Trogon, Black-tailed Tityra and the scarce Trinidad Euphonia.

In the late morning, we'll take a short birding walk through a forest that culminates in a vast cave, complete with natural pool and waterfall. A wonderful experience in one of Trinidad's largest expanses of primary forest. We'll have some time to enjoy our beachfront hotel where we can enjoy a swim in the sea or river.

In the evening we'll enjoy an unforgettable wildlife spectacle as gargantuan Leatherback Turtles haul themselves onto the beach to within a metre of where we'll be standing to lay hundreds of eggs. If we are really lucky, we may even witness hatchlings emerging from nests where other females laid earlier in the season. As only red light can be used to observe the turtles at night, we'll also head back down to the beach in the early morning for likely encounters with females who were late to arrive to the beach in the evening. It is these turtles that provide prime photography opportunities while they travel along the beach to return to the sea.



Speckled Tanager by Clayton Burne

Tobago. Tobago forms the final link in the chain of mountains extending from Venezuela's coastal range on the edge of the South American continental shelf. In contrast to Trinidad, Tobago's climate and rainfall more closely resemble that of the Lesser Antilles with drier and windier conditions. Opportunisitic stops en route to our lodge are



Violaceous Euphonia by Adam Riley

are likely to produce Rufous-vented Chachalaca, Pale-vented Pigeon, Eared Dove, Fuscous Flycatcher and the endemic Trinidad Motmot.

Cuffie River. After arriving at our lodge, we have time to relax while watching the hummingbird feeders for Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, White-necked Jacobin and Red-crowned Woodpecker. Trinidad Motmots and Rufous-tailed Jacamars are regular fixtures at this tranquil eco-lodge. We'll take a short pre-dusk walk along the river for encounters with these and other species seen far more easily on Tobago than on her larger sister island of Trinidad.

We walk slowly along the river-side path in search of early risers, sure to include Barred Antshrike, Rufous-vented Chachalaca and Spectacled Thrush before taking a relaxed breakfast. Mid-morning, we'll take a short drive to two of the best birding sites in the Main Ridge Forest Reserve for memorable encounters with Blue-backed Manakins, Yellow-legged Thrush, White-tailed Sabrewing and White-throated Spadebill.



White Hawk by Adam Riley

The lodge's saltwater pool is visited by Short-tailed Swifts, whizzing in to drink mere inches from anyone taking a swim! Various tanagers and Rufous-breasted Hermits flit among the cecropias and other fruiting trees surrounding the pool deck. There is a large covered viewing area where we can set up scopes and view the surrounding birdlife, or retire to play table tennis or cards in the large games area. For the adventurous, there is an opportunity for an afternoon snorkel in one of the most beautiful bays in the entire Caribbean.

Little Tobago. On one day, we'll visit a popular local restaurant in Speyside for lunch, before boarding a boat to visit Little Tobago. A short 20 minute ride later, we'll be enjoying a seabird spectacle sure to last long in our memories. Red-footed and Brown Boobies, Sooty,



Scarlet Ibeses by Adam Riley

Roseate and Bridled Terns, as well as Brown Noddies join hundreds of Red-billed Tropicbirds in nesting on these towering forested cliffs. Drawn to the abundance of pelagics, the pirate of the seas, Magnificent Frigatebirds, are also here in large numbers, intent on pursuing and harassing and even grabbing these species mid-air in order to steal the meals that parents are diligently bringing back to their waiting nestlings.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease	☐ ☐ ■	An east, enjoyable birding vacation.
Birding Ease	☐ ☐ ■	Undemanding. A few elusive species that may require some extra time/effort.
Accommodation	☐ ☐ ■	Comfortable to very comfortable.
Walking / Trails	☐ ☐ ■	Easy walks, mostly roadside/wide trail birding with a few short walks on the beach/mangroves and lodge gardens.
Vehicles / Roads	☐ ☐ ■	Comfortable. Mostly good quality, sealed roads. Drives are mostly short. Boar rides in mostly comfortable conditions.
Photography	☐ ☐ ■	Good to very good. Dedicated feeders at multiple sites.
Annoyances	☐ ☐ ■	Can be quite warm & 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 11;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;

- Boat trips as noted in the itinerary;
- 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.**

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour will begin with a group departure from Port of Spain to our lodge on day 1. The tour will conclude at Piarco International Airport on the morning of day 11, after an internal flight from Tobago.

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.

Piarco International Airport (IATA: POS), Port of Spain, Trinidad is the main port of entry and departure for international flights to Trinidad 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. The following website provides detailed information about visa eligibility and assistance with online applications options where viable: Visa HQ for Travel

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