

Birding Trinidad & Tobago

December 3 – 12, 2024



Based at the world-renowned **Asa Wright Nature Centre and Lodge**, a 200-acre wildlife sanctuary in Trinidad's rainforested Northern range, Trinidad's **Grande Rivierre** and the Tobago's **Cuffie River Nature Retreat**, a small family-run lodge in the heart of the Tobago rainforest, participants will travel with expert second- and third-generation local guides to visit several unique and diverse natural areas on both islands.

DEC 3, TUESDAY - DAY 1 ARRIVAL

Arrival at Piarco International Airport in Port-of-Spain (POS). Welcome to Trinidad!

After you clear Immigration and retrieve any checked bags, you'll meet the driver-guides outside the Customs area and prepare for the short transfer through the city of Arima and up into Trinidad's Northern Range to our home for the next five nights, the Asa Wright Nature Centre.

Settle into your rooms and enjoy the Veranda of the main house where many species can be spotted.

Bird species frequently spotted on the grounds: trogons, flycatchers, bellbirds, toucans, manakins, hummingbirds, tanagers, antbirds, woodpeckers, wood creepers, ant wrens.

Afternoon Tea is served every day from 4pm – 5pm. Dinner at 6:30pm

Overnight at Asa Wright (D)

DEC 4, WEDNESDAY - DAY 2 CENTRE GROUNDS AM/ARIPO NIGHT BIRDING PM.

Awaken to the raucous noise of the Crested Oropendola and a host of other exotic sounds. A first-time visitor to Asa Wright might see 20-30 life birds before breakfast, and 40 species overall. Birding from the veranda at dawn is one of those life-changing experiences. After a hot breakfast at 6:30am, we will start with a guided tour of the several trails that traverse this rich and diverse wildlife sanctuary and a short history lesson about the origins of the nature center. On our introductory walk we should see such species as Bearded Bellbird, White-bearded and Golden-headed manakin, Violaceous Trogon, the **endemic Trinidad Motmot** (formerly Blue-crowned Motmot), Channel-billed Toucan, Chestnut Woodpecker, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Turquoise and Bay-headed Tanager.

The Centre is situated in a typical valley of Trinidad's Northern Range. These sites have been traditional centers of coffee, cocoa, and citrus plantations and many of these plants are still maintained at the Centre. Natural second-growth has taken over and festooned the abandoned plantation vegetation with vines and a host of epiphytes. The whole effect is one of being deep in a tropical rainforest. The afternoon will include a visit to the Dunstan Caves for the Oilbirds. Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, Tufted Coquette, Barred Antshrike, Green Honeycreeper are among the many species that can also be seen.

Overnight at Asa Wright (B, L, D)

DEC 5, THURSDAY - DAY 3 ARIPO SAVANNAH AND NARIVA SWAMP.

We will wind our way out of the Northern Range to Trinidad's east coast and the Nariva Swamp, the largest freshwater herbaceous swamp on the island. Along its edges are "palm islands," where the tall Moriche Palm is common. Here too we will see a unique mangrove community, made up primarily of the stilt-rooted rhizophora mangrove, which often reaches a height of 80 feet. Along the way we will look first in the lowland habitats for such species as Savannah Hawk, Long-winged Harrier, Yellow-headed and Crested Caracara, Red-breasted Blackbird, Southern Lapwing, White-headed Marsh Tyrant, and Green-rumped Parrotlet. In the coastal area we will have an opportunity to look for Pinneated Bittern, Pearl Kite, Azure Gallinule, Wattled Jacana, and Red-bellied Macaw. Keep a lookout in the surf for the fascinating Four-eyed Fish. Time permitting, a little farther south we will visit a unique, marsh island called "Bush Bush", where we may encounter Moriche Oriole, recently reintroduced Blue-and-Yellow Macaw, as well as Red Howler and Capuchin monkeys.

Overnight at Asa Wright (B, L, D)

DEC 6, FRIDAY, DAY 4 - BRICKFIELD/WATERLOO TEMPLE IN THE SEA/CARONI BIRD SANCTUARY

We depart for an area locally known as "Waterloo," the best area for finding pelagic species and migrating birds in Trinidad with its extensive tidal mudflats along the west coast. Of significant interest are birds arriving from mainland South America. Many of the shorebirds found in Trinidad are passing migrants. During the appropriate seasons, resident birds are augmented in varying numbers by Wilson's Plover, Spotted, Solitary, Pectoral, White-rump, and Stilt sandpipers, American Golden Plover, and occasionally Hudsonian Godwit. The shallow waters of the Gulf of Paria provide a safe haven from inclement weather and the list of rarities in this area is substantial. It includes the only Maguari Stork, Derek Sandpiper, Kelp and Greater Black-backed Gull to be found in the islands. In some areas near Carli bay, we can find rare resident Rufous Crab-Hawk. Also of significant interest is the beautiful Hindu Temple of the Sea, in view from our birding areas and well worth a visit. Additional cultural sites can be added to this day as time allows.

Waterloo and coastal birding highlights: Frigatebird, Brown Pelican, Neotropic Cormorant, Great and Snowy egrets, Little Blue and Tricolored herons, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Black-necked Stilt, Southern Lapwing, Willet, Hudsonian Godwit, Whimbrel, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Semipalmated and Black-bellied plovers, Short-billed Dowitcher, Laughing Gull, Royal Tern, and Black Skimmer.

We will have lunch at a local restaurant, then bird our way to Caroni Swamp. Here we board a motorized, covered flat-bottom boat, cruising along the mangrove channels, witnessing all facets of wildlife (watch for Ruschenberger's Tree Boa and Silky Anteaters). We'll then moor the boat in a large lake in a quiet spot in the mangroves, awaiting the Scarlet Ibises to come in after feeding all day, to roost for the night.

Birding highlights at Caroni: Long-winged Harrier, Yellow-hooded Blackbird, Bicolored Conebill, Masked Cardinal, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Green-throated Mango, Northern Waterthrush, Anhinga, Striated Heron, White-cheeked Pintail, Large-billed Tern, Pied Water Tyrant, Black-crested Antshrike, Common Potoo, flamingoes, and the Scarlet Ibis.

Overnight at Asa Wright (B, L, D)

DECEMBER 7, SATURDAY, DAY 5 BLANCHISSEUSE ROAD NORTHERN RANGE.

The Northern Range is actually the north-easternmost extreme of the Andes chain and extends as a band of forested hills, right across the northern Caribbean coastline of Trinidad. The forest supports a bird species list of well over 200, and productive birding is found off Blanchisseuse Road.

We have lunch in the quaint village of Brassco Seco in the Community Centre where cocoa plantations are still active. You will have the opportunity to experience a chocolate demo from the local chocolate factory.

Then we drive birding as we go along the mountains to the village of Morne Le Croix for an afternoon.

Enjoy local rum punch and cakes while we watch blue headed parrots heading in to roost.

Birding highlights in Blanchisseuse; trogons, flycatchers, tanagers; Speckled Tanager, Swallow Tanager, antbirds, toucans, woodpeckers, wood creepers, manakins, hawks, Blue-headed Parrots, Bat Falcon etc

Overnight at Asa Wright (B, L, D)

DECEMBER 8, SUNDAY, DAY 6 TRANSFER TO GRANDE RIVIERRE.

Check out of **Asa Wright Nature Centre** after breakfast.

We bird en route to **Grande Riviere** with a stop at the Toco lighthouse where the Caribbean Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean. Grand Riviere is famous for its nesting giant Leatherback Turtles during the months of March-August and Trinidad's endemic specie, the Piping Guans. Lunch will be in the field today.

Birding highlights at Grande Riviere: Grey-headed, Plumbeous and Swallow-tailed Kites, Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift, Channel-billed Toucan, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Silvered and White-bellied Antbirds and Black-tailed Tityra.

Check in at your second lodging, **Mt. Plaisir Estate Hotel** where dinner will be provided.

Overnight at Mt. Plaisir Estate Hotel (B, L, D)

DECEMBER 9, MONDAY, DAY 7 PIPING GUAN/BIRDING THE MONTEVIDEO TRACE.

Today we will have an early start – around 6 am, the best time for spotting the Piping Guans. We'll hike up Montevideo Trace, reaching a hilltop and a large clearing where, among the nutmeg trees, we will view the endangered Trinidad Piping Guan. We'll then proceed along the Montevideo Trace for other key species in the area like the Silvered Antbird, White-bellied Antbird, White Flanked Ant Wren, Golden-headed Manakin, Red-legged Honeycreeper just to name a few.

Overnight at Mt. Plaisir Estate Hotel (B, L, D)

DECEMBER 10, TUESDAY, DAY 8 FLIGHT TO TOBAGO/BIRDING BON ACCORD LAGOON, TOBAGO PLANTATION/CUFFIE RIVER

After an early breakfast, we journey to the airport for an early afternoon flight to Trinidad's twin island, Tobago. Heading to Cuffie River Nature Retreat, we make a few stops along the way at the Bon Accord lagoons and other lowland areas. You're likely to see White-tailed Saberwing, Ruby Topaz Hummingbird, Red crowned Woodpecker plus more at the feeders.

Overnight at Cuffie River Nature Retreat (B, L, D)

DECEMBER 11, WEDNESDAY, DAY 9 – GILPIN TRACE MAIN RIDGE FOREST/LITTLE TOBAGO ISLAND/GLASS BOAT TOUR

After breakfast, you'll be picked up by your guide for a drive high into the mountains in the historic Gilpin Trace Reserve.

Birding highlights at Gilpin Trace: Trinidad Motmot, Collared Trogon, White-tailed Sabrewing, Great Black Hawk, Blue-backed Manakin, Yellow-legged Thrush, Red-crowned Woodpecker, White-fringed Antwren, Plain Antvireo, White-throated Spadebill, Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Stripe-breasted Spinetail, Red-rumped and Golden-olive woodpeckers, White-necked Thrush, and Gray-throated Leaf-tosser.

Stop for lunch at Bird Watcher's Restaurant where local owners take pride in their locally sourced food.

In the evening time, we board a *glass-bottom boat* for a pleasant cruise to little Tobago island, the best area for pelagic species. On Little Tobago island, the walk to the seabird lookout is steep (staircase), but you walk at birder's pace. The island, one of the country's most significant wildlife sanctuaries, offers incredible views of rare sea birds, both from the boat and by walking a trail up to a lookout point on the island where tropical Dry Forest occurs. Leaving the island, the Captain will take time to look for colorful fish and possible hawksbill sea turtles as we pass a former coral garden off Goat island.

Birding highlights on Little Tobago: Red-billed Tropicbird, both Red and Brown Boobies, Bridled Tern, Chivi Vireo, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Pale-vented Pigeon and Scaly-naped Pigeon.

Overnight at Cuffie River Nature Retreat (B, L, D)

DECEMBER 12, THURSDAY, DAY 10 -- HOMEWARD BOUND This exciting and educational vacation draws to a close as we depart for the international terminal and our homeward flight.

Accommodations:

Asa Wright Nature Center: In 2022, Asa Wright Nature Centre granted HADCO Experiences a concession to operate the famed ecolodge at Spring Hill Estate. The rooms are fully ensuite with included WiFi, air conditioning and in-room safes.

Venture onto the verandah to discover Ruby-topaz Hummingbirds, Great and Barred antshrikes, Purple and Green honeycreepers, Squirrel Cuckoos, and Tufted Coquettes; a true sight to behold is the botanic garden. These are among the many species that can be easily seen throughout the resort as you take a dip in the refreshing Clearwater Pool or walk on one of the many trails within the tropical rainforest. The impact on our environment is minimized by thoughtful choices and regenerative practices.

Mt. Plaisir Estate Hotel: Mt. Plaisir Estate Hotel provides spacious rooms and suites, each designed with a blend of Caribbean charm and modern amenities. Each room has its own patio overlooking the picturesque surroundings. The rooms are tastefully equipped with essential amenities including air conditioning, complimentary Wi-Fi, in-room safe and ensuite bathrooms. Rooms are designed to provide a relaxing and inviting atmosphere, allowing guests to unwind and enjoy their stay amidst the natural beauty of the region.

Cuffie River Retreat: All guest rooms are spacious, tastefully furnished and fully ensuite. All rooms have a private balcony from which you can enjoy delightful views of the rainforest and the birds. The current census reveals 100 species to be found at the Retreat and its environs. These include all of the most sought-after exotic birds such as the White-tailed Sabrewing, Blue-backed Manakin, Ruby-topaz

Hummingbird, Collared Trogon, Trinidad Motmot, Yellow-legged Thrush, Common Potoo, Striped Owl, and Gray-throated Leaf-tosser. Many feathered friends come visiting at your window and in your room.



Your Guide: Laurie Foss

Laurie started birding in 1971 at the urging of her high school science teacher in Wisconsin. After moving to Austin in 2003 she discovered the joys of Hill Country birds and birding. As a member of Texas Ornithological Society, Travis Audubon, as well as other local, state and national birding organizations, Laurie has been active in Texas leading field trips teaching birding classes, making presentations to various types of groups as well as working and advocating for habitat conservation.

Laurie has led birding tours for JB Journeys to Central America and the Caribbean and has been a tour leader for the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival and the Laredo Birding Festival.

Now retired and relocated back to Wisconsin, Laurie plans to be involved in the local birding community there as well.

Laurie will be assisted by local guides.

COST:

- \$5,500 per person in double room with 8. With 6, \$5,800 per person.
- \$500 single supplement. Limited singles available. *A single may be a smaller room (with private bath) for one person or a double room at single price.*
- Minimum 6 to operate, maximum 10 participants.
- To confirm your spot, please [complete this reservation form](#). Deposit is \$1,000 per person and final payment due September 1, 2024.
- **Cancellation:** After 30 days, deposit is non-refundable. Once paid in full, from 90-60 days prior to departure, 50% penalty. Inside 60 days – non-refundable. Name changes may be allowed. There is no refund for unused parts of the tour.

TRAVEL INSURANCE is highly recommended. Please start here at [TravelGuard](#) but feel free to look elsewhere, like [Squaremouth](#), a comparison tool. We recommend trip cancellation coverage as well as comprehensive medical coverage that includes medical evacuation. MedEvac can be purchased separately as you'll see in TravelGuard's offerings.

Also, if you are paying for your trip by credit card, check with the card company to see if they cover any insurance for travelers.

INCLUDED:

Transportation as listed by van
9 nights lodging with taxes
Guide services of Laurie Foss, plus local guides
Entry fees to parks, etc
Meals as listed
Basic gratuities for group meals, hotels and drivers

NOT INCLUDED:

International airfare to/from Piarco international Airport (POS)
Private transfers if not on group flight
Drinks during meals
Travel Insurance
Personal expenses
Gratuities to local guides-suggestions:
 \$15-20 per person per day to Laurie, your main guide, and \$10 to second guide.