

Puerto Rico - “the heart & soul of the Caribbean”



Island Summary:

Puerto Rico - the easternmost island in the Greater Antilles, and an island home to at least 17 species of bird found nowhere else on the planet, along with numerous Antillean and Caribbean specialties. Surrounded by the glittering azure waters of the Caribbean Sea, this often overlooked Greater Antillean island supports a wide variety of species-rich habitats from the humid tropical rainforests of the Sierra de Luquillo range, to the cool slopes of Maricao and the dry forests of Guanica - the birding on Puerto Rico is relatively accessible and extremely productive.



The strikingly-coloured Puerto Rican Woodpecker and a pair of Puerto Rican Amazons (photos © H Morales-Nieves)

Highlights:

Explore intact patches of native woodland that supports many of the island’s widespread endemic species, including the **Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo**, **Adelaide’s Warbler**, **Puerto Rican Pewee** and **Puerto Rican Bullfinch**.

Discover the myriad of endemic birds, plants and wildlife that call the national rainforest their home. Enjoy relaxed and fruitful birding along short and well demarcated trails and be treated to good looks at such species as the endemic **Puerto Rican Tanager**, brilliant-green endemic **Puerto Rican Tody**, striking **Puerto Rican Spindalis**, noisy **Puerto Rican Vireo**, unassuming **Puerto Rican Flycatcher** and near-endemic **Puerto Rican Mango**, along with other Antillean and wider Caribbean specialties such as **Loggerhead (Puerto Rican) Kingbird** (endemic and distinctive subspecies *taylori*) and **Mangrove Cuckoo**. Visit the best site on the island to see the endemic and critically endangered **Puerto Rican Parrot**, as well as the endangered endemic subspecies of **Broad-winged Hawk** and critically endangered “**Puerto Rican**” **Sharp-shinned Hawk** - an endemic subspecies (*venator*) which may soon be recognised as a full species, but is in imminent danger of becoming extinct before this happens.

Participate in a spot of night-birding for encounters with endemics **Puerto Rican Nightjar** and **Puerto Rican Screech-Owl**, and make a stop at the most reliable sites for endemics **Yellow-shouldered Blackbird** and the simply stunning **Puerto Rican Woodpecker**.

Explore the verdant montane forest, where the undoubted star of the show is the rare **Elfin Woods Warbler**. This biodiverse habitat is home to many of the island's other endemics and endemic subspecies such as **Puerto Rican Oriole**, **Puerto Rican Spindalis**, **Puerto Rican Euphonia**, together with the distinctively iridescent **Puerto Rican Emerald** and impressive **Green Mango**.



Puerto Rican Spindalis (photo © A Morales); Puerto Rican Tanager (photo © H Morales-Nieves)

Other things to do in Puerto Rico:

- Take a nighttime dip in one of only 5 bioluminescent bays in the world and experience the magic of this natural wonder. The underwater spectacle created by this rare ecosystem can also be enjoyed from a glass-bottomed boat.
- Enjoy a walking tour of Old San Juan and discover the city's rich history and heritage.
- Descend beneath the surface by visiting the cave system beneath the island's central mountain range. Learn about the geological formation of the island, and see historical artifacts that belonged to the early Taíno tribes.
- Discover the art of cheese-making, and sample a variety of locally-produced cheeses using milk from cows living in the surrounding pastures. A hands-on, and tasty experience!
- Tour a coffee hacienda and experience how one of Puerto Rico's main agricultural products is produced from fruit to cup!