

# Trinidad & Tobago



A trip to Trinidad & Tobago is a sensational stand-alone birding holiday, or you can combine it with a visit to islands in the Lesser Antilles for a truly exquisite Caribbean birding adventure!

## Trinidad - “Land of the Hummingbird”

### Island Summary:

Welcome to the South American island of the Caribbean, where hummingbirds abound! Trinidad is a melting pot of cultures and a land of vibrant colours. The famed two day (but in actual fact, month-long) Trinidad Carnival showcases the many facets of the Trinidad people, while the island’s lush tropical landscape and abundant wildlife are a birder and naturalist’s paradise! The extravagant colours and majestic displays of Trinidad’s plethora of South American species is bound to delight you as you travel through the island’s variety of ecosystems.



*Scarlet Ibis returning to roost (photo © Ryan Chenery - Birding the Islands); Cook's Tree Boa (photo © Norman Budnitz - Birding the Islands client)*

### Highlights:

Boarding a skiff, delve deep into the heart of one of the largest mangrove wetlands on the island to witness the spectacle that is the roosting of Trinidad’s national bird: the magnificent **Scarlet Ibis**, which arrive in their thousands as the sun descends low in the sky at dusk. The surrounding forest is home to an array of insectivorous species such as **Bicolored Conebills**, **Rufous-browed Peppershrike** and **Straight-billed Woodcreeper**, which are often seen darting in and out of the tangled foliage at the water’s edge on the hunt for unsuspecting insects; while a dash of glittering green flitting amongst the mangroves signals the presence of the impressive **Green-throated Mango**. En route to their roosting site, keep an eye out for skulking **Grey-necked Wood Rail**, **American Flamingo**, as well as roosting **Common Potoo** and, if you are fortunate, **Boat-billed Heron**. Also, be on the lookout for other nocturnal creatures such as **Cook's Tree Boa** and **Silky Anteater** slinking through the tangled mangrove roots, while **Spectacled Caiman** lurk in the murky waters. In the forest’s edges, **Tropical Screech Owls** perch in wait, ready to swoop down on their prey.



*Long-billed Starthroat (photo © John Dyson - Birding the Islands client); ; Black-throated Mango (photo © Keith Clarkson - Birding the Islands client)*

Stroll along trails deep within the rich tropical rainforests, home to a huge variety of spectacular species, including: **Trinidad Motmots**, **Oilbirds**, **Channel-billed Toucans**, **Bearded Bellbirds**, **Blue-chinned Sapphires**, **Golden-headed Manakins**, and **Silver-beaked Tanagers**. At times, you may find yourself in a sea of hummingbirds as up to 13 different species reside here, including **Tufted Coquettes**, skittish **Long-billed Starthroats**, pugnacious **White-necked Jacobins**, and robust **Black-throated Mangoes**, which feed on lantana sage and vervain shrubs and hover delicately just out of reach!

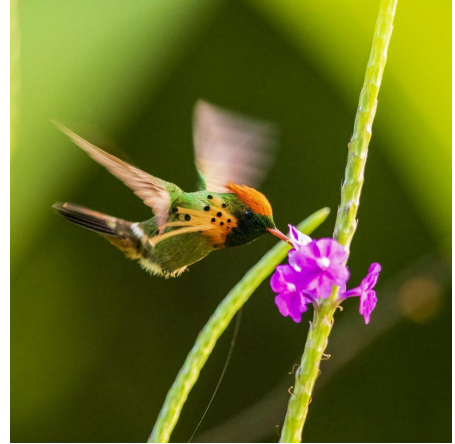


*Bearded Bellbird (photo © Faraaz Abdool - Birding the Islands); White-bearded Manakin (photo © Beatrice Henricot - Birding the Islands client)*

Journey on a safari through open grasslands to seek out such species as **Savannah Hawks** and **Crested Caracaras**, flocks of **Saffron Finches** and **Red-breasted Meadowlarks**, **Grey-headed Kite**, **Yellow-headed Caracara**, **Fork-tailed Palm-swift**, **White-tailed Goldenthrroat**, **Bran-coloured Flycatcher**, **Grey Kingbird**, and **Ruddy-breasted Seedeater**.

Travel high into the mountains of the Northern Range to find yourself in the company of high elevation specialists such as the **Blue-headed Parrot** and **Speckled** and **Hepatic Tanager**, and while there, have an excellent chance of encounters with **White Hawk**, **Ornate Hawk-Eagle**, **Streaked Xenops**, and **Lilac-tailed Parrotlet**.

Visit the lush primary forests of the north coast, one of the last remaining strongholds of one of the rarest species on the planet - the **Trinidad Piping-Guan**. Depending on the time of year you visit, you may even have the opportunity to see nesting **Leatherback Turtles** on the beach just moments from this site!



*Trinidad Piping-Guan (photo © Keith Clarkson - Birding the Islands client); Tufted Coquette (photo © Faraaz Abdool - Birding the Islands)*

It is the sheer volume and variety of these, and myriad other dazzling and enchanting species, that have served to make Trinidad a mecca for birders the world over.

### **Other things to do in Trinidad:**

- Treat your taste buds to a mesmerising selection of Caribbean street food at Queen’s Park Savannah.
- Relax on the golden sands and soak up the stunning views of Maracas Bay and snack on a ‘Shark and Bake’ (shark fritter) - one of Trinidad’s local specialties!
- Hike the trails that weave their way into the Mount Saint Benedict hills and sample the famous locally-made yoghurt - packed full of locally-grown fruit.
- For something completely different, take a trip to La Brea Pitch Lake - the largest natural asphalt deposit in the world - and marvel at the history and mystery that lurks beneath the surface of this unusual natural wonder!
- Indian heritage is widespread in Trinidad, and a visit to the Hindu Temple at Waterloo - a stone’s throw from magnificent birding at Caroni Swamp - is a testament to the enduring faith of this ancient culture.



*Leatherback Turtle (photo © Alexandra Chenery - Birding the Islands); American Flamingos (photo © Dr Fayard Mohammed)*

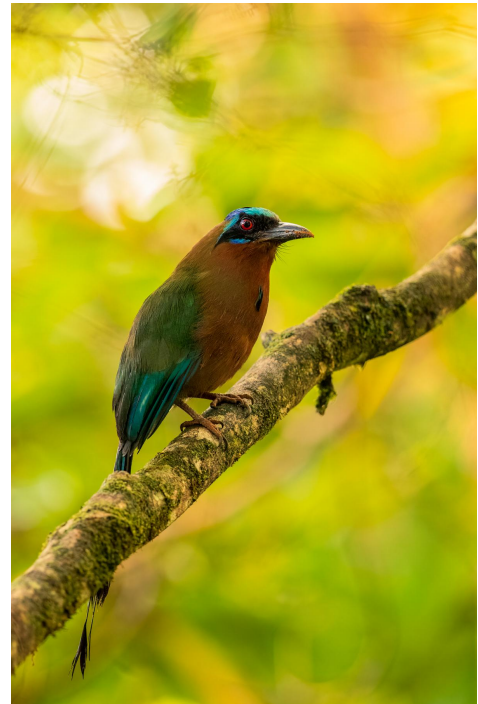
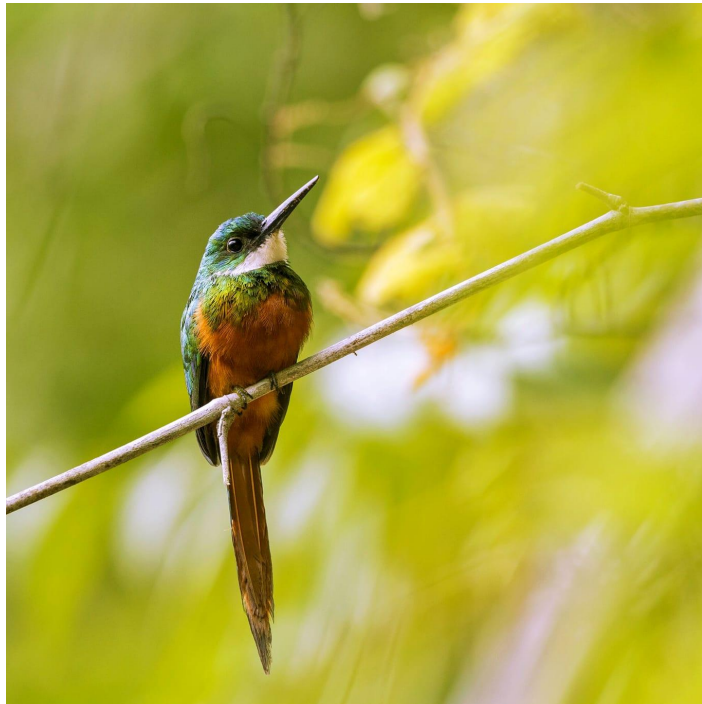
## Tobago - “A Caribbean Island Paradise”

### Island Summary:

Tobago is geologically, culturally and ornithologically rather different from its larger sister island of Trinidad. Given their close proximity, there is considerable species overlap on these two islands, but there are a number of species which are either found only on Tobago, or are far easier to see here. With rainforest that has been protected since 1765(!), the wild and untamed beauty of Tobago’s biodiversity is yours to discover!

### Highlights:

Explore the famous Main Ridge Forest Reserve for an audience with the breathtaking **White-tailed Sabrewing** (known only to Tobago and the Paria Peninsula of Venezuela). Other key species in the area include **Venezuelan Flycatcher**, **White-throated Spadebill**, **Plain Antvireo**, **Blue-backed Manakin**, **Yellow-legged Thrush**, **Red-legged Honeycreeper**, **Chivi Vireo** and **Giant Cowbird**. Both **Trinidad Motmot** and **Rufous-tailed Jacamar** are much more easily seen here than in Trinidad, and keeping your eyes on the skies may afford sightings of a soaring **Great Black-hawk**.



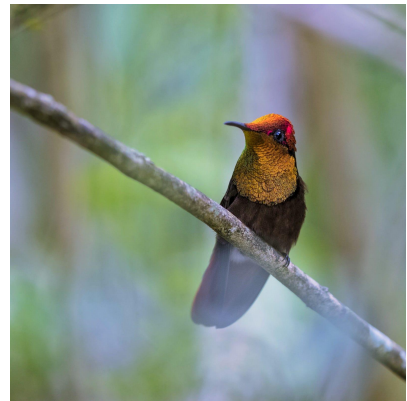
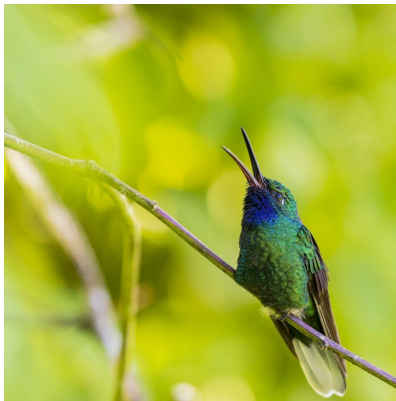
*Rufous-tailed Jacamar (photo © Faraaz Abdool - Birding the Islands); Trinidad Motmot (photo © Faraaz Abdool - Birding the Islands)*

Board a glass-bottomed boat for the short crossing to Little Tobago Island, where the skies will be filled with **Red-billed Tropicbirds** and **Magnificent Frigatebirds** (anyone who has seen Sir David Attenborough’s *Life of Birds* will need no introduction to the wonders awaiting you here). Nesting seabirds likely to be encountered are **Bridled** and **Sooty Tern**, **Red-footed** and **Brown Boobies**, and **Audubon’s Shearwater**. You may even happen upon nesting **White-tailed Tropicbirds**, and a daytime-roosting **White-tailed Nightjar**. The return boat ride provides a window into the life of the thirty-some species of tropical fish who make their homes in and around the world’s largest living Grooved Brain Coral and surrounding reefs; Hawksbill Turtles are also a common sighting here.



*White-tailed Nightjar (photo © Faraaz Abdool - Birding the Islands); Red-billed Tropicbird (photo © Keith Clarkson - Birding the Islands client);*

Take some time to relax at your eco-villa, and while sipping on home-made fruit-juices, be dazzled by the staggering array of hummingbirds coming into the sugar-water feeders right in front of your eyes! At any one time you could be looking at one or all of: **Black-throated Mango, Rufous-breasted Hermit, Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, White-necked Jacobin, Copper-rumped Hummingbird, and White-tailed Sabrewing.**



*White-tailed Sabrewing (photo © Faraaz Abdool - Birding the Islands); Copper-rumped Hummingbird (photo © Keith Clarkson - Birding the Islands client); Ruby Topaz (photo © Faraaz Abdool - Birding the Islands)*

Explore the island's wetlands, which are frequented by such water-loving species as **Least Grebe, Anhinga White-cheeked Pintail, Black-bellied Whistling-duck, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Masked Duck, Belted Kingfisher and Mangrove Cuckoo**, along with a variety of herons and more common wetland species.

Encounter multitudes of **Rufous-vented Chachalacas, Pale-vented Pigeons and Eared Doves** in the dry lowland forests, where **Trinidad Motmots** and **Rufous-tailed Jacamars** are also abundant, and species such as **Yellow-breasted** and **Fuscous Flycatchers** pluck their prey from the air.



*Nine-banded Armadillo (photo © Faraaz Abdool - Birding the Islands); Striped Owl (photo © Faraaz Abdool - Birding the Islands)*

### **Other things to do in Tobago:**

- Visit the Tobago Cocoa Estate to learn about the rich history of Trinitario Fine/Flavour Cocoa and indulge in a spot of chocolate and rum tasting.
- Don a snorkel and be amazed by the kaleidoscopic colours of Buccoo's coral reefs and mysterious Nylon Pool. If you visit around Easter, you can even take in the spectacle that is the Buccoo Goat and Crab Race Festival!
- Eat like a local at any one of Tobago's numerous (and mouthwateringly delectable) street food stalls, and sample the island's signature dish of curried crab and dumplings!
- Discover the breathtaking biodiversity that awaits in the deep blue waters of Speyside - the dive Mecca of the Caribbean!
- Bathe in natural pools beneath cascading waterfalls in Tobago's butterfly-filled forests.