

Honduras & Grand Cayman

Pico Bonito Lodge & Blue Seas

Thursday 25 January - Monday 05 February 2018

Leaders: Nigel Jones and local guides

2018 Cost **£4,599** single room supplement **£750**



Honduras is the largely undiscovered gem of Central America. It is usually thought that Costa Rica is the leader as far as protected land areas go, but no, Honduras is the “Shining Star” and leads the field, with the highest percentage of protected areas. The national parks and reserves are home to over 700 species of birds and although there is only one true endemic species (Honduran Emerald), Honduras is one of the richest parts of the North Central American endemic bird area, holding the largest proportion of the region’s endemics. Amongst the country’s marvellous birdlife are Keel-billed and Tody Motmots, Lovely Cotinga, Ruddy Crane, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Wine-throated Hummingbird, Bushy-crested and Black-throated Jays, Rufous-browed Wren, Gartered Trogon and Mottled Owl. We stay for seven nights at the luxurious Pico Bonito Lodge, located within the Pico Bonito National Park, where there are an array of avian gems to enjoy in the lodge gardens and trails, including the superb Lovely Cotinga. Field excursions will be made from Pico Bonito to a number of excellent birding locations. On this tour we avoid travelling via the USA by using British Airways flights to and from Grand Cayman and spend a total of three nights there – this will allow us the opportunity of some relaxed birdwatching and snorkelling, with a few interesting species, such as White-tailed Tropicbird, Vitelline Warbler and La Sagra’s Flycatcher. Travel with Nigel and see why this trip is another great addition to the suite of Caribbean holidays.

ITINERARY

Day 1

We leave London in the morning on a direct flight to Grand Cayman and make the short transfer to our hotel for dinner and a stay of one night.

Days 2 to 8

We fly from Grand Cayman to Honduras. On arrival we meet our local guides and drive to the superb Pico Bonito Lodge, a highly acclaimed rainforest resort, set within the 270,000 acre national park, where we stay for seven nights. The lodge has beautiful bird-laden gardens, rainforest trails, observation towers and fantastically varied birdlife. The rooms are luxurious and our time here will be relaxing and enjoyable. The landscaped swimming pool will also entice you to enjoy a refreshing swim during the heat of the day.

During our time here we shall make various excursions, some close by and some further afield. We can explore the grounds near the lodge to begin, finding Blue-crowned Motmot, Gartered Trogon and Olive-throated Parakeet. Hummingbirds may include White-necked Jacobin, Violet-crowned Woodnymph and Rufous-tailed Hummingbird. Clay-coloured Thrushes are common and Black-cowled Oriole and Yellow-winged Tanagers light up the bushes. Above the lodge we can walk some of the trails that skirt the national park. Here we can look for Tody and Keel-billed Motmots, Black-headed and Gartered Trogons, White-breasted Wood Wren, Northern Royal Flycatcher, Stub-tailed Spadebill, Rufous Mourner and both White-collared and Red-capped Manakins. There are even tinamous here, with Great, Little and Slaty-breasted.

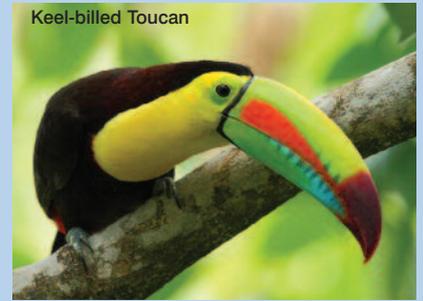
One of the most beautiful species we can hope to see on this tour is the Lovely Cotinga and, as the lodge has two towers and a viewing platform close by, we can hope to spot one of these beauties as it sits on the tree tops and gleans fruit. Other birds to be looked for here include King Vulture, White Hawk, Keel-billed Toucan, Collared Aracari, White-chinned and White-collared Swifts, Grey-chested Dove, Black-cheeked Woodpecker and Golden-hooded Tanager. During the evenings we can also look for Great Potoo, Mottled and Black-and-white Owls and Vermiculated Screech-owl.



Lovely Cotinga



Vermiculated Screech-Owl



Keel-billed Toucan

Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Fly to Grand Cayman
- Days 2-8** Pico Bonito Lodge, Honduras
- Days 9-10** Grand Cayman
- Day 11** Depart Grand Cayman
- Day 12** Arrive London

Party Size

Maximum of 12 clients.

Accommodation

Comfortable accommodation in twin/double and single rooms, with private facilities.

Transport

By private coach and minibus.

Includes

All flights, meals, accommodation, transport, entry fees, services of the leaders, airport taxes and tips.

Gradings

- Good
- 250
- Warm to Hot
- Low
- Special
- Relaxed
- Good
- Easy
- Scheduled



Collared Aracari

On one day we head due south to the Aguan valley, which is a dry valley, hosting some special species. Here we look for the endemic Honduran Emerald, a small hummingbird, which is relatively common in this habitat, and likes to feed on flowering cacti. This will not be the sole reason for a visit here though, as Lesser Roadrunner is possible, along with Salvin's Emerald, Cinnamon Hummingbird, White-lored Gnatcatcher, White-bellied Wren, both Spot-breasted and Altimara Orioles, as well as a few wintering neotropical migrants, such as American Redstart, Ovenbird, Tennessee Warbler and Wood Thrush.

No birding tour is complete without a boat trip and we visit the Cuero y Salado Wildlife Refuge, where we board motorboats to explore the waterways and mangrove habitats. Five kingfishers may be found (Ringed, Belted, Amazon, Green and American Pygmy), along with Boat-billed and Agami Herons, Sungrebe, West Indian Manatee, American Crocodile and both Mantled Howler and White-faced Capuchin.

Nor far from the lodge, lies the Rio Santiago Nature Resort, a private 150 acre rainforest preserve, we can watch the hummingbird feeders and marvel at the 20 species which visit. They may include Violet-headed, Magnificent, Scaly-breasted, Cinnamon, Ruby-throated, Rufous-tailed and Stripe-tailed Hummingbirds White-necked Jacobin, Purple-crowned Fairy, Stripe-throated and Long-billed Hermits, to name a few. Along the edge of the Rio Santiago we may find Sunbittern or Torrent Tyrannulet.

Days 9 & 10

We catch a flight back to Grand Cayman where there will be time to relax and enjoy the lovely climate of this island with its delightful sandy beaches and warm blue sea. The island is quite small, only 35km by 8km and very flat. We can watch the Magnificent Frigatebirds as they fly along the coast and see Royal Terns fishing close offshore. We shall visit the Botanic Gardens and look for West Indian Woodpecker, La Sagra's Flycatcher, White-crowned Pigeon, Caribbean and Zenaida Doves, Loggerhead and Grey Kingbirds, Vitelline Warbler, Western Spindalis, Cuban Bullfinch, Yellow-faced Grassquit, Greater Antillean Grackle, West Indian Whistling-Duck, as well as wintering birds from North America such as Grey Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Northern Parula, Common Yellowthroat, Palm, Yellow, Cape May, Prairie, Yellow-throated and Black-and-white Warblers. There are also parts of the island covered with mangroves and palms and here we can look for Cuban Parrot, Mangrove Cuckoo, Smooth-billed Ani and Caribbean Elaenia. The open areas of water around the mangroves can also hold many wintering shorebirds and ducks. Later we can explore the cliffs on the south of the island to find White-tailed Tropicbird and perhaps a passing Brown Booby.

Days 11 & 12

We have much of the day for birding in Grand Cayman, or having a swim and looking at the coral reef fish. In the afternoon we transfer to the airport to catch our flight to London, where we arrive the next day.