

# Trinidad & Tobago at Leisure

## Caribbean Paradise

**Monday 16 April - Saturday 28 April 2018**

Leaders: Paul Rogers and local guides

2018 Cost: **£4,499** single room supplement **£630**



**T**rinidad and Tobago – the southernmost pair of islands in the Caribbean – make up one of the world's smallest states. The national language is English and the birds are typically South American. These islands provide an easy introduction to a bewildering new set of families that confront the first-time visitor to Latin America. We visit a wide range of habitats on these small islands, including elfin forest, montane and lowland rainforest, savannah grassland, mangrove, fresh and saltwater swamps, ocean beaches and coral reefs.

Our stay on Trinidad will be mainly based at the famous Asa Wright Nature Centre. This is a former coffee, cocoa and citrus plantation where it is a delight to stay. The view from the veranda over the Arima Valley is breath-taking, and to be able to see seven species of hummingbird visiting the feeders outside the window is something never to be forgotten. The Centre is conveniently situated near the island's Northern Ranges – essentially a spur of the Andes – and is excellent for many montane bird species. For two nights, we shall move to the north coast at Grand Riviere, where we will have the chance to see nesting Leatherback Turtles and hopefully the endemic Trinidad Piping Guan. Later, our stay on Tobago will enable us to see a few specialities that do not exist on Trinidad, and we shall be able to explore an excellent sea-bird island and some beautiful coral reefs. Bring your mask and snorkel – if that takes your fancy!

Without a doubt, this tour will offer not only excellent birding, but also good food and a warm welcome from these Caribbean people. We have now run over 60 tours to the islands, and we are proud to announce that Ornitholidays has carried more birdwatchers to Trinidad and Tobago than any other birding company in the world. Our experience here is unrivalled and we believe we have the right formula to make sure that this is a holiday that you will never forget!

### ITINERARY

#### Days 1 to 6

We leave London on our flight for Trinidad, where we arrive in the late afternoon and transfer to the Asa Wright Centre for a stay of six nights. We awake to an early morning bird watch from the Centre's veranda and we can expect to see 30 or more species before breakfast, as the birds are attracted to feeders and fruiting bushes. Our first hummingbirds should include White-necked Jacobin, Tufted Coquette, Copper-rumped and Blue-chinned Sapphire. Crested Oropendolas and Orange-winged Parrots will be calling loudly; Palm Tanagers and Bananaquits will be everywhere. After breakfast, we will explore the extensive grounds of Asa Wright. Sightings should include colourful species like Trinidad Motmot, Channel-billed Toucan and Golden-olive Woodpecker as well as a range of flycatchers and tanagers. After lunch, we will continue bird watching in the grounds. The afternoon route will include a visit to a White-bearded Manakin lek, where the displaying males dance and utter a sound that resembles exploding popcorn. Other exciting birds we may find include the noisy Bearded Bellbird and three species of trogon.

The programme for our stay at the Centre is varied and we shall visit a number of habitats. A full day will be spent on a visit to the Nariva Swamp and the eastern coast. The nearby mangrove is one of the best sites to see Silvered Antbird, Black-crested Antshrike and American Pygmy Kingfisher while on Trinidad. The coast here has a long fringe of coconut palms and we shall search for Grey Hawk,



Trinidad Motmot

Scarlet Ibis



Yellow-headed Caracara and Pearl Kite. Water levels within the swamp fluctuate and influence the birds recorded, which may include Pinnated Bittern, Long-winged Harrier, gallinules, Limpkin and White-tailed Goldenthrout.

On one day, we shall drive up to the Northern Ranges and pass over the ridge towards the sea. At this high point we can hope to see trogons, more flycatchers and maybe a beautiful White Hawk or Swallow-tailed Kite, as well as White-collared and Chapman's Swifts. Turkey and Black Vultures will be a common sight as they patrol the slopes. Fantastic blue Morpho butterflies float between the trees here. Two special tanagers here are Speckled and Blue-capped. We will have a picnic lunch at Brasso Seco, watching Brown Pelicans and Magnificent Frigatebirds and you may decide to have a dip in the sea here.

We spend one morning visiting the Oilbird caves in the grounds of AWNC where some of these unique nocturnal frugivores will be seen at their roost. The rest of the day can be spent exploring the trails, looking for Little Tinamou, Guianan Trogon, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher and Black-faced Ant-Thrush.

On another day, we visit Waterloo on the west coast for shorebirds and a variety of gulls and terns that should include Black Skimmer, Large-billed Tern, Willet, Semipalmated Plover and Greater Yellowlegs. Later that day we will take a boat trip through Caroni Swamp to see the spectacle of hundreds of Scarlet Ibis coming to roost, setting alight the mangrove bushes with their colour. Several species of heron and egret can also be seen in great numbers. On the outward part of the cruise, we will keep a lookout for Masked Cardinal and Common Potoo, whilst during our return to the landing stage Boat-billed Heron and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron might be seen.

**Days 7 & 8**

After breakfast we visit Aripo, part of the only remaining grassland in Trinidad which provides a home to many unusual species of birds. We can hope to see Savannah and Zone-tailed Hawks, Sulphury Flycatcher and Yellow-rumped Cacique. The Aripo area is used for raising water buffalo for meat production, and the open fields are good for seeing Southern Lapwing, Red-breasted and Yellow-hooded Blackbirds, Giant and Shiny Cowbirds as well as Green-rumped Parrotlet, Yellow-throated Spinetail and Ruddy-breasted Seedeater. Later, we transfer to the Mount Plaisir

Estate, on the coast at Grand Riviere. The next day, our main goal is to find the endemic Trinidad Piping Guan, a bird that has been hunted to near extinction but has a small population here. We also hope to find Grey-headed Kite, Turquoise Tanager, Giant Cowbird, Violaceous Euphonia and Rufous-browed Peppershrike. In the evening we shall spend some time on the beach by the hotel, hoping to watch enormous Leatherback Turtles as they come ashore to lay their eggs – a fantastic sight.

**Days 9 to 11**

After breakfast, we drive to Piarco Airport and catch the late-morning flight to Tobago. Near to the airport we might see our first Blue-backed Manakin, as well as Rufous-vented Chachalaca and Red-crowned Woodpecker. Afterwards, we will spend a little time at some wetlands where we hope to find White-cheeked Pintail, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck and American Purple Gallinule, as well as adding to our list of waders. We then transfer to Blue Waters Inn, our base for the next three nights, with its idyllic beach setting and views across to the island of Little Tobago.

One afternoon we take the glass-bottomed boat to Little Tobago and during the crossing marvel at the coral reefs with their multi-coloured fish and varied sponges. On the island, we look for Red-billed Tropicbird, Magnificent Frigatebird, Audubon's Shearwater, Brown and Red-footed Boobies. Royal Terns and Laughing Gulls will be in attendance. There will be one full-day excursion and this will be to the rain forested hills to the north of Roxborough. We start by walking along the Gilpin Trace, where we may find the endangered White-tailed Sabrewing. Venezuelan and Fuscous Flycatchers, Blue-backed Manakin, Plain Antvireo and Yellow-legged Thrush are among other species we would hope to see. After a picnic lunch at the lookout overlooking Bloody Bay, we will walk down part of the Roxborough road. Species to be sought include Red-legged Honeycreeper, Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Rufous-tailed Jacamar and Great Black Hawk. We can also walk along the Starwood Trace up behind the hotel. This will allow us to catch up with some of Tobago's special birds, such as Scrub Greenlet, Black-faced Grassquit, White-fringed Antwren, Ruby-topaz Hummingbird and Caribbean Martin.

**Days 12 & 13**

The morning can be spent at leisure, taking a last swim or walking along one of the local traces. Later, we catch our return flight back to London, where we arrive early next morning.



Tufted Coquette

**Outline Itinerary**

- Day 1** Fly to Trinidad
- Days 2-6** Asa Wright, Trinidad
- Days 7-8** Mount Plaisir, Trinidad
- Days 9-11** Blue Waters, Tobago
- Day 12** Depart Tobago
- Day 13** 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
- 190
- Warm to Hot
- Low
- Special
- Relaxed
- Excellent
- Easy
- Scheduled



Trinidad Piping Guan

To make a booking please call Ornitholidays on **01794 519445**