

# Ultimate 12-Day, 2-Island Trinidad & Tobago Tour With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



866.900.1146

800.426.7781

520.558.1146

info@caligo.com

www.caligo.com

or find us on Facebook at

Caligo Ventures



We call this tour **ULTIMATE** as it is designed to showcase the best of Trinidad and Tobago. Compared to our 10-Day, 2-Island Classic Tour, it is more varied and covers more of both islands. Experience time at two additional lodges; Mt. Plaisir at Grand Riviere and the beachside Blue Waters Inn on Tobago. These lodges offer not only the ultimate in birding variety, but also the chance to take some breaks to pursue your interests, be they birding, butterflies, photography, or simply relaxing in a tropical setting and letting the birds come to you.

Depending on the dates and itinerary you choose, begin at one of two well-regarded Port of Spain hotels—either the Hyatt Regency Trinidad, a full-service hotel perched on the edge of the Gulf of Paria, or Pax Guest House, an historic boutique lodge nestled high above the city, adjacent to the Mount St. Benedict Monastery and wild forest land. Regardless of which hotel you start your tour from, the itinerary will be the same but you will end your tour at the other hotel. Enjoy the same number of nights in each hotel with Tobago in-between.

While on Trinidad, explore from the verdant mountains of the Northern Range, to the lowland grasslands of the northern savanna's Aripo Agricultural Station. Spend two nights at a boutique, beachfront lodge on Trinidad's northern coast, Mt. Plaisir, where lush forests provide a stronghold for the endangered Trinidad Piping-guan. Scope the eastern coast on a full-day field trip to Nariva Swamp, and see the Scarlet Ibis at Caroni National Park as we boat through canals and waterways.

On Tobago the bird viewing platform at Cuffie River Nature Retreat allows for birds-eye viewing and accessible photography opportunities. Blue Waters Inn offers swimming or snorkeling right from their beach. Guided walks in the historic Main Forest Ridge Preserve lets you find more secretive forest species, while a short uphill trek to a lookout on Little Tobago Island rewards one with acrobatic tropicbirds, two species of boobies and Magnificent Frigatebirds at eye level.

## Ultimate Tour Highlights

- Experience outstanding comfort at the Hyatt Regency, our base for exploring the mountains, savanna and mangroves of Central Trinidad.
- Enjoy big vistas and hummingbirds at Pax Guest House—a quiet oasis just a short ride from coastal birding and the cultural hub of Port of Spain.
- Relish two nights at Mt. Plaisir Estate Hotel on the ocean at Grande Riviere.
- Look for the highly endangered Trinidad Piping-guan and in season, Leatherback Turtles.
- Arrive to a frenzy at Cuffie River Retreat's feeders, perfect for observation and photography. Enjoy creative tropical architecture; let the breeze be your ventilation in this peaceful mountain retreat.
- Enjoy Blue Waters Inn's boutique air-conditioned ocean-front accommodations with private bath and porch or patio, and a picturesque vista across Batteaux Bay.
- Marvel at tropical seabirds and tropical fish on a boat tour to Little Tobago Island.
- Visit Tobago's historic Main Forest Ridge Reserve with an expert local guide.
- Explore mangrove swamps, sandy beaches, and rocky coastlines for wetland, coastal and pelagic birds.
- Witness skies turned crimson with thousands of Scarlet Ibis as they fly in to roost at Caroni National Park.
- Travel with the island's most expert guides who offer robust knowledge and friendly, world-class guiding skills.

## Tour Summary

12-Day /11-Night Neotropical Birding & Nature Tour with Local Expert Guides. \$3890, double occupancy, \$4690 single occupancy from Port of Spain, Trinidad. Summer discounts may apply. Airport is Piarco International Airport (POS).



## Itinerary

### Day 1 Arrive & transfer to Hyatt Regency Hotel for Introductory Dinner

Welcome to Trinidad! Upon arrival at Piarco International Airport, you are met by a local Caligo Ventures representative who drives you a short 25 minutes to your lodgings for the next three days. Depending on the dates and itinerary you choose, begin at one of two well-regarded Port of Spain hotels - either the Hyatt Regency Trinidad, a full-service hotel perched on the edge of the Gulf of Paria, or Pax Guest House, a classic boutique lodging high above the city, adjacent to the Mount St. Benedict Monastery and wild forest land.

*Note: If your flight arrives late, consider arriving a day early (additional cost), and enjoy an unscheduled morning. While our guides meet all flights, many travelers prefer to start the group tour well-rested.*

### Day 2 Birding Trinidad's Northern Range

Today's scenic, day-long excursion takes us high into the Northern Range on the Blanchisseuse Road. We make frequent birding stops and then enjoy a local lunch in picturesque Brasso Seco (with 4 or fewer participants a picnic lunch will be provided). We then continue through the mountains to the village of Morne la Croix to enjoy watching parrots flying in to roost.

Today also offers the opportunity to examine the strange world of leaf-cutter and army ants, as well as the chance to photograph butterflies, orchids, and other tropical flora.

Birding Highlights: Swallow-tailed Kite; Common Black Hawk; Bat Falcon; Collared Trogon; Ornate Hawk-Eagle; Channel-billed Toucan; with good fortune Trinidad Piping Guan; Short-tailed Hawk; both Streaked and Euler's Flycatchers; Rufous-tailed Jacamar; Blue-headed Parrot; Lilac-tailed Parrotlet; Orange-winged Parrot; both Cocoa and Plain Brown Woodcreepers; Dusky-capped, and Slaty-capped Flycatchers; Rufous-breasted Wrens; Trilling Gnatwren; Golden-fronted Greenlet; both Speckled and Hepatic Tanagers; and Yellow-rumped Cacique



### Day 3 Coastal Birding and Night Birds

The best area for finding shorebirds in Trinidad is the extensive area of tidal mudflats along the west coast—an area generically locally known as “Waterloo”. We plan our departure time with tides in mind. Of significant interest are birds arriving from mainland South America. From February to November large numbers of both Yellow-billed and the striking Large-billed Terns are present whilst from mid-April to October breeding Collared Plovers can be found. 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-rumped 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, Terek Sandpiper, Kelp and Greater Black-backed Gulls to be found in the islands. In some years 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.

We return to the Hyatt for lunch, something quick at the patisserie or perhaps try the always-fresh sushi bar. Take a well-deserved break or a dip in the pool

The group leaves the hotel between 3:30 and 4:00 PM for an optional night bird excursion, complete with your rum punch and hot dinner in tow. An unused airfield is the first birding stop (pre-sunset), then to a grove of palms that attract Red-bellied Macaw and Moriche Oriole. Next, set out on a slow drive for spotting night birds.

Waterloo and Coastal Birding Highlights: Magnificent 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.

Night Bird Outing Possibilities: Fork-tailed Palm-Swift; Sulphury Flycatcher; Moriche Oriole (extremely rare); White-tailed Nightjar; Common Pauraque; Common Potoo; Tropical Screech-Owl; Barn Owl; and Spectacled Owl (if you’re lucky).



## Day 4 Aripo Savannah | El Susanne Rainforest Lodge | Mt. Plaisir

Today is an early start as we bird the lower elevations and we need to time this with bird activity. Pick up your bagged breakfast early or take it with you in the van. Be sure to double-check departure times with your guide.

A remnant of a once major lowland habitat, the seasonally-wet Aripo Savannah is surrounded by sugar cane fields. Today we explore the tropical birds unique to this habitat, as well as the distinctive flora that has adapted to the savannah's harsh conditions—alternating from wet to dry.

We then embark on a short drive to the hospitable El Suzanne Rainforest Lodge. Enjoy a locally sourced lunch and search out more key birds. Nestled in the Tamana Rainforest, and bounded by the Cumuto River (a tributary of the Caroni), this hidden gem features forest birding alongside a large, comfortable terrace and dining area.

From here we depart for Grand Riviere, making scenic stops on the rugged coastline. Endemic Trinidad Piping Guans, known locally as Pawi, lure us to this side of the island. In Grande Riviere, we uncover this critically endangered bird's final stronghold. Experts estimate there may be fewer than 300 left on Earth.

For part of the year Grande Riviere's beaches are home to the world's densest congregation of nesting Leatherback Sea Turtles. On some nights, hundreds of these gigantic turtles populate the beach. Most nest between April and July, however they are also likely to be seen from March through August, and occasionally they are spotted at other times of the year.

As we arrive at our hotel, relax and enjoy gourmet local cuisine while dining alfresco at the eccentric and relaxing Mt. Plaisir Estate Hotel. Our rooms overlook the beach, so you enjoy a perfect view of nesting turtles. Leave your balcony door open at night and drift off to sleep as waves crash on the beach below.

Birding Highlights Aripo Savannah: Plumbeous Kite; Gray-headed Kite; Shiny Cowbird; Giant Cowbird; Yellow-rumped Cacique; Blue-black Grassquit; Grassland Yellow-Finch; Moriche Oriole (extremely rare); Fork-tailed Palm-Swift; Sulphury Flycatcher; Savannah Hawk; both Striped and Little Cuckoos; Ruby Topaz Hummingbird; White-tailed Goldenthrout; Green-rumped Parrotlet; both Crimson-crested and Lineated Woodpeckers; White-throated Spadebill; Short-tailed Pygmy-Tyrant.

## Day 5 Morning in Search of Piping Guans | Flight to Tobago | Cuffie River Nature Retreat

Once hunted to near extinction, the Trinidad Piping Guan (locally known as Pawi), has been the focus of considerable local conservation efforts. The bird has responded well, slowly increasing in numbers and visibility. This morning we will scrutinize the wild nutmeg trees that are their preferred feeding habitat.



The birding is excellent in Grande Riviere and the morning may reveal 60 or more species. Much of the birding is done from a wide forested track, where you can easily enjoy superb viewing areas. Having hopefully found the Pawi, we will continue driving down a steeply wooded slope into riverine forest where we continue birding until mid-morning.

Return to Mt. Plaisir in time to pick up your sack lunch and your luggage, and depart for the two-hour plus drive to Piarco Airport and your flight to Tobago. Check in at the airport is quick, and so is the 25-minute flight!

Once you land in Tobago, local expert birding guide Jason Radix, greets you in his air-conditioned bus. Welcome to the distinctly Caribbean and laid-back Tobago. You make a few stops for birding, so keep your sunscreen, hat, and binoculars at hand. We then travel through vibrantly-colored hillside villages to the Cuffie River Nature Retreat. Once you arrive, enjoy the late afternoon to stroll the grounds, take a dip in the pool, or just relax.

Cuffie River Nature Retreat is a small inn; please ask the staff for any needs, such as tea, beer, or wine, a pool towel, etc. Dinner is announced daily, usually at 7:30 PM. Food is local and specially prepared, so relax and enjoy this wonderful dining experience! Perhaps you'll see and hear a Common Potoo right outside the dining area as you linger over dessert.

Birding Highlights at Grand Riviere: Trinidad Piping Guan; Southern Lapwing; Lilac-tailed Parakeet; Gray-headed and, in season, Plumbeous Kites; White Hawk; Bat Falcon; Lineated and Crimson-crested Woodpeckers; Grayish Saltator; Silvered and White-bellied Antbirds; Black-tailed Tityra; Trinidad Euphonia; and mixed flocks of colorful tanagers.

Common Tobago Species en Route to Cuffie: White-cheeked Pintail; Short-tailed Swift; Trinidad Motmot; Yellow-crowned Night Heron; Green Kingfisher; and Spectacled Caiman

Common at Cuffie's Feeders: White-tailed Saberwing; Ruby Topaz Hummingbird; White-necked Jacobin; Bananaquit; Spectacled Thrush; Barred Antshrike; and sometimes at night, Common Potoo!

Cuffie River Nature Retreat was recognized as the 2011 "Sustainable Property of the Year" by the Tobago House of Assembly and the tradition remains strong today. Viewing platforms for birders have recently been expanded too.

## Day 6 Cuffie River Trails & Adventure Farm

In keeping with Tobago's laid-back vibe, today is easy-going. In the morning we explore a nature trail close to the lodge, walking from the entry with the lodge's expert guide, Desmond. While we never move faster than a birder's pace, the trail is up and down small hills, so a walking stick may be handy.



Return to the lodge for a delicious lunch and brief rest before traveling off site to Adventure Farm, a delight for birders and the culinary-inclined. The farm is a mix of varietal fruit trees rimmed by natural forest. Enjoy a winding trail through the property spending time at fruit and hummingbird feeders. Tropical Mockingbirds provide a serenade.

We return to Cuffie River Nature Retreat in time for a swim or a break before dinner. Be sure to be at a good viewpoint for sunset, as hordes of parrots, parrotlets, and noisy chachalacas fly in to roost—quite a spectacle! After dark, check the driveway’s streetlight for night birds.

Adventure Farm Bird Highlights: Trinidad Motmot; White-tipped Dove; Pale-vented Pigeon; White-necked Jacobin; Ruby Topaz Hummingbird; Spectacled Thrush; Blue-black Grassquit; Black-faced Grassquit; and Red-crowned Woodpecker.

Cuffie River and Tobago Birding Highlights: Rufous-tailed Jacamar; White-tailed Sabrewing; Blue-backed Manakin; Yellow-legged Thrush; Rufous-vented Chachalaca; Ruby Topaz Hummingbird; Collared Trogon; Red-crowned Woodpecker; White-fringed Antwren; Orange-winged Parrot; Fuscous, Yellow-breasted and Venezuelan Flycatchers; Caribbean Martin; Scrub Greenlet; Common Potoo; and White-tailed Nightjar.

## Day 7 Gilpin Trace on Tobago’s Main Ridge Preserve | Blue Waters Inn

Say farewell to Cuffie River Nature Retreat after breakfast and bring your luggage when you join your guide for a drive high into the mountains in the historic Tobago Main Ridge Forest Reserve, the world’s oldest legally protected forest. Scientific American once said that “the protection of Tobago’s forest was the first act in the modern environmental movement.”

Tobago’s mountain forests are home to 210 species of birds. On a trail into the forested interior, we look for a number of elusive species, including White-tailed Sabrewing, a large hummingbird once thought to be extinct. Sabrewings were rediscovered after hurricanes caused extensive forest damage in the 1960s.

We also seek out Blue-backed Manakin, Yellow-legged Thrush and other Tobago specialties, including Red-crowned Woodpecker and White-fringed Antwren. After a satisfying walk, we then travel through vibrantly-



colored hillside villages to the Blue Waters Inn, a delightful small inn right on the beach. Spend the afternoon birding locally or relaxing by the shore.

Blue Waters Inn is equipped for great seaside experiences, including swimming, kayaking, casual snorkeling, and diving. The restaurant's signature dishes include fresh-caught lobster and kingfish, crisp coconut shrimp salad and distinctly Caribbean flying fish wraps. A pool and the sea await!

Bird Highlights on the field trip to 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 Antwren; White-throated Spadebill; Olivaceous Woodcreeper; and Stripe-breasted Spinetail; Red-rumped and Golden-olive Woodpeckers; White-necked Thrush and Gray-throated Leaf-tosser.

## **Day 8 Little Tobago Island's Birds | Glass Bottom Boat Tour | Free Afternoon**

This morning (or afternoon, depending on water conditions) we board a glass-bottom boat for a pleasant cruise to Little Tobago Island. The island, one of the country's most significant wildlife sanctuaries, offers incredible views of plentiful and rare seabirds, 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 (if sea conditions are right), 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. The Atlantic side of the island has experienced extensive coral bleaching and while still excellent for divers, snorkeling is not what it once was.

We return to the Inn for a delicious lunch, then enjoy the free afternoon. Activities abound—from snorkeling, diving, and kayaking in private Batteaux Bay, to poolside lounging and birding on your own.

Birding Highlights: Brown Noddy (present mid-April-late July); Red-billed Tropicbird; both Red-footed and Brown Boobies; Bridled and Sooty Terns (present mid-April-late July); Bridled Tern; Chivi Vireo; Brown-crested Flycatcher; Pale-vented Pigeon; and Scaly-naped Pigeon.

## **Day 9 Wetland Birding | Return to Port of Spain | Pax Guest House**

After a filling breakfast, bid farewell to Tobago. On your way to the airport, keep your binoculars handy for some wetland birding stops. Walk around well-placed ponds that attract wintering ducks, wading birds, and in one, Spectacled Caiman. We always add a number of species as we explore.



Today you return to Port of Spain in Trinidad and the historic Pax Guest House overlooking the Caroni plains and well loved by visiting birders. Enjoy the views of adjacent forest and across the city to the Gulf. Stick by the verandah feeders for hummingbirds and perching species.

Wetland Birding Highlights: Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Green and Tricolored Herons, Black-crowned Night Heron; White-cheeked Pintail, Least Grebe, Southern Lapwing and Eared Dove.

## Day 10 Full Day Field Trip to Nariva Swamp | Atlantic Coast

This morning we depart for the lowlands of the Aripo Agricultural Station where the open countryside and semi-wild pastures offer new bird species. Once we thoroughly explore the Station, depart for Nariva Swamp. On our way, we stop for a picnic lunch and possible seabird sightings on the beach at Manzanilla. Driving on, “Coconut Alley” leads us through beachside habitats before we enter Nariva Swamp. Here, the Nariva River reaches the sea; freshwater environments of herbaceous swamp and mangrove swamp forest make for spectacular birding.

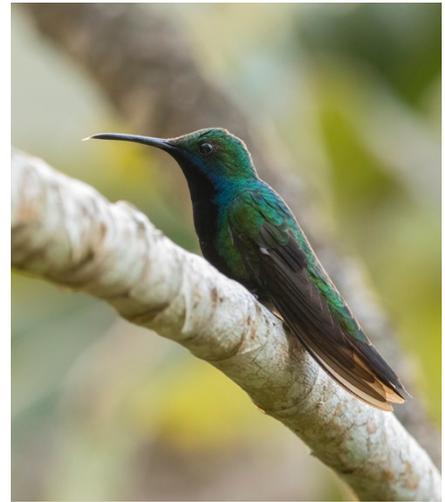
This is a very full day with many stops and the discovery of species found nowhere else on the island. Gazing out to Sea: Magnificent Frigatebird; Brown Pelican; Leach’s Petrel (rare)

Birding Highlights at the Aripo Ag Station: Great Kiskadee; Tropical Kingbird; Carib Grackle; Short-tailed Swift; Cocoli Heron; Savannah Hawk; Gray-headed Kite; Yellow-headed Caracara; Wattled Jacana; Southern Lapwing; Green-rumped Parrotlet; Fork-tailed Palm-Swift; White-winged Swallow; White-headed Marsh Tyrant; Pied Water Tyrant; Yellow-chinned Spinetail; Red-breasted Meadowlark; Grassland Yellow Finch; and Ruddy-breasted Seedeater.

East Towards Nariva: Common Black Hawk; Yellow-headed and Crested Caracaras; Savannah Hawk; Pearl Kite; Gray-lined Hawk; Plumbeous Kite (seasonally); Green and American Pygmy Kingfishers; Black-crested Antshrike; Silvered Antbird; Ruddy-breasted Seedeater; Yellow-crowned Parrot, both Blue and Yellow Macaw; Brown-crested Flycatcher; Pinnated Bittern; Black-bellied Whistling Duck; Purple Gallinule; Yellow-hooded Blackbird; White-tailed Goldenthrout; Long-winged Harrier; Yellow-crowned Parrot; and Red-bellied, Blue and Yellow Macaws. In years past we have found mega-rarities like Double-striped Thick-knee and Jabiru.

## Day 11 Yerettê Hummingbirds | Scarlet Ibis of Caroni National Park

After breakfast, start the day with a special treat—visit the hummingbird retreat called Yerettê, “Home of the Hummingbird.” Located in the Maracas Valley, this private home and lush garden attracts up to fourteen of the



eighteen species of hummingbirds found in Trinidad and Tobago. A photographer's delight, hummingbirds gather at the feeders and native vegetation by the tens to hundreds depending on the time of year.

After lunch back at your hotel, we depart for Caroni Swamp, birding along the way. We arrive at a dock in Caroni National Park where there is a Visitor Center and restrooms, and the mangroves are good to check for new species. From here, we bird by boat (watch for Ruschenberger's Tree Boa and Silky Anteater, too), then moor up at a quiet spot in the mangroves to let the sunset show begin. Hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of Scarlet Ibis cloud the sky as they fly in to roost. Tonight's experience is one you won't soon forget. Return to Pax Guest House for our celebratory final dinner together.

Birds of Yerehtë: Copper-rumped Hummingbird; White-chested Emerald; Blue-chinned Sapphire; White-necked Jacobin; Black-throated Mango; Long-billed Starthroat, Ruby Topaz Hummingbird, Tufted Coquette, Green Hermit, Rufous-breasted Hermit, Little Hermit, Brown Violetear, and Amethyst Woodstar.

Birding Highlights on the Caroni Outing: 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; and Scarlet Ibis.

## Day 12 Departures

Today depart from Trinidad at your convenience. Your departure time will be confirmed the night before with the Front Desk to arrange your return transfer. Late check-out may be available for you for an additional fee, to be arranged with the Front Desk at the time of your visit. Luggage can be stored if you plan activities ahead of later flights.

*\*Some tours may start at the Hyatt Regency and end at Pax Guest house—all tours will have the same number of nights at each of these two hotels.*

### Photo Credits

Blue Waters Inn, courtesy of BWI; Ruby Topaz, Ken Janes; Green Hermit Faraaz Abdool (FA); Green Honeycreeper, Peg Abbott (PA); Palm Tanager, PA; Trinidad Motmot, Doug Greenberg (DG); Channel-billed Toucan, Steve Wolfe (SW); Hyatt Regency Trinidad, courtesy of the hotel; Collared Trogon, DG; Tufted Coquette, DG; Channel-billed Toucan, SW; Orange-winged Parrot, DG; Tropical Screech Owl, PA; Rufous-tailed Jacamar, DG; Collared Plover, Cyril Coomansingh; Leatherback Turtle, Howard Topoff; Smooth-billed Ani, PA; Mt. Plaisir, Janet Metzger; Trinidad Piping Guan, Mike Boyce; White-tailed Sabrewing, Dave Ramlal (DR); Cuffie River, Bud Ferguson; Lineated Woodpecker, DR; Ruby Topaz, DR; White-necked Jacobin, SW; BWI Franks boat, Lynn Tennefoss; Blue-backed Manakin; DG; Brown Pelican, Hugh Simmons (HS); Scarlet Ibis, HS; Black-throated Mango, FA.