

Endemic birds of Hispaniola

The Dominican Republic is located in the Greater Antilles and its territory is around two thirds of Hispaniola with the western side being Haiti. In total 32 endemic bird species occur in the Dominican Republic of which 31 are possible on this tour plus an array of wintering migrants and waders from North America. ■ This tour can be combined with Puerto Rico. The itinerary below is sometimes subject to change.

Day 1: Fly to Santo Domingo the capital of the Dominican Republic. On arrival a transfer to the old colonial district of the city for an overnight stay.

Day 2: Our first morning is spent birding in the excellent botanical gardens which gives us access to the first endemic species including the national bird of the country Palmchat. This species is easily found as it nests in large colonies in palm trees. Other species which also occur within the park include the scarce West Indian Whistling Duck, Limpkin, Yellow-crowned Night Heron and Snowy Egret. An exploration of riverside scrub habitats may reveal the presence of Hispaniolan Lizard Cuckoo, Broad-billed Tody, Hispaniolan Woodpecker, Red-legged Thrush and Black-crowned Tanager. In the gardens open areas attract Zenaida Dove, Antillean Mango and the world's second smallest bird Vervain Hummingbird. The park also has wintering North American warblers with Ovenbird, American Redstart, Black-and-White, Cape May and Prairie all occurring on a regular basis in winter time. A little luck may be needed to locate Hispaniolan Parakeet another endemic. After lunch travel to Sabana de la Mar on the eastern coast which is close to Los Haitises National Park. Later in the day after dinner a search for the endemic Ashy-faced Owl.

Day 3: Los Haitises National Park is home to Ridgway's Hawk which is probably Hispaniola's rarest endemic and no doubt one of the world's rarest raptors. Extensive conservation work has slowly increased its numbers and you have good chances of connecting with this special bird. Within the park it is also possible to observe White-crowned and Plain Pigeons, Ruddy Quail-

Dates

*Friday November 30th - Saturday December 8th 2024

Leaders: Mark Finn and local guides

Group Size: 8

Birds: 110-130

* This tour may depart one day earlier/later due to flight schedules from the UK.

dove, Mangrove Cuckoo, Antillean Mango, Broad-billed Tody, Antillean Piculet, Stolid Flycatcher, Black-whiskered Vireo, White-necked Crow and Antillean Euphonia. Sabana de la Mar sits on the ocean where American Royal and Cabot's Terns can be numerous along with wintering waders. Later in the day transfer back to the old quarter in Santo Domingo for the night.

Day 4: Today we travel west towards the border with Haiti with the first birding stop at Salinas de Bani. Habitats here include salt pans, mudflats and stands of mangroves. American Flamingo is possible a rare visitor to Hispaniola. Other species of interest include an array of North American herons, Snowy and Wilson's Plovers, Clapper Rail, at least three species of sandpipers, Willet, Short-billed Dowitcher, Least, American Royal and Cabot's Terns. Offshore Brown Pelican, Brown Booby, Magnificent Frigatebird and Black-capped Petrel are possible. Later in the day a transfer to Puerto Escondido which is situated on the northern edge of Sierra de Bahoruco. If time permits a walk along one of the trails where the rare White-fronted Quail-Dove resides whilst other species present may include Scaly-naped Pigeon, Key West and Ruddy Quail-Doves,

Hispaniolan Amazons, Olive-throated and Hispaniolan Parakeets. Patches of woodland hold an interesting range of birds and we can expect sightings of Hispaniolan Lizard Cuckoo, Broad-billed and Narrow-billed Todies, Hispaniolan Trogon, Stolid Flycatcher and Antillean Euphonia. As dusk falls a short exploration for the uncommon Least Poorwill.

Day 5: A predawn start in order to be at Zapoten at first light. Our main interest on the way up is a chance to locate the rare Hispaniolan Nightjar and near the summit the equally shy and scarce La Selle Thrush. In this pristine forest habitat a search for Rufous-throated Solitaire, Hispaniolan Emerald, Green-tailed and White-winged Warblers, Greater Antillean Elaenia and the skulking Western Chat-Tanager. We are also on the lookout for Antillean Piculet, Antillean Siskin, Bicknell's Thrush and Greater Antillean Bullfinch. Patches of pine forest are home to Hispaniolan Crossbill and the endemic subspecies of Pine Warbler. On our descent we have a chance of Golden Swallow which is probably now endemic to Hispaniola although historically was found in Jamaica (presumed extinct in Jamaica). Further down in the broad leaved forest a search for the rare Bay-breasted Cuckoo and Fat-billed Vireo. After lunch an exploration of farming lands around our base may produce Smooth-billed Ani, Burrowing Owl, Olive-throated Parakeet and Yellow-faced Grassquit.

Day 6: Our first birding stop is Laguna Rincon where we take a boat trip. In the more open areas we may find Pied-billed Grebe, White-cheeked Pintail, Lesser Scaup, Ruddy Duck, American Wigeon and Blue-winged Teal. On the muddy marsh edges we should find Sora and American Purple Gallinule and possibly Spotted Rail and Yellow-breasted Crake although the latter two species and scarce and poorly known. Later we transfer to Pedernales on the border with Haiti.

Day 7: Today is spent birding the Alcoa Road and Cabo Rojo within a wide range of habitats from lowland forest, farming areas, pine forests and coastal lagoons. Our main

targets are Hispaniolan Crow, Golden Swallow and Hispaniolan Crossbill. In the same area we may find White-crowned Pigeon, Hispaniolan Parakeet, Hispaniolan Amazon, Broad-billed Tody and Green-tailed Warbler. Cabo Rojo is on the coast with various lagoons and scrapes. It is here we hope to find American Flamingo, American White Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Reddish Egret, Tricoloured Heron and Belted Kingfisher. Waders can be numerous and include small numbers of Stilt Sandpipers. Offshore we have a chance of White-tailed Tropicbird and Brown Booby whilst overhead Cave Swallow and Caribbean Martins occur. Later we transfer to Juan Esteban for the night.

Day 8: Today we explore forest and thickets of Sierra de Bahoruco near Cachote. Our main target is Eastern Chat Tanager another skulking and shy species. The area also gives us a chance of seeing other high montane species if we have missed them earlier including Hispaniolan Spindalis. Transfer to Santo Domingo for our last night in Hispaniola.

Day 9: Onward connections to the UK or a short flight to Puerto Rico if you are taking this tour

Prices

Ground Price: £2795

Single room: £250

Deposit: £250

*Air Fare: £1170

*please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, entrance and permit fees, guidance and tips.

Not included: drinks, insurance and items of a personal nature, a visa to enter Ethiopia and any fuel surcharges.