

ITINERARY  
**TRINIDAD & TOBAGO**

*I. February 16-25, 2019*

*II. December 27, 2019-January 5, 2020*



*The islands of Trinidad and Tobago offer birders a chance to become familiar with neo-tropical birds without being completely overwhelmed with new species and families. This Channel-billed Toucan is an example of a widespread South American species that comes close to its northern limits on Trinidad. Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.*

*We include here information for those interested in our 2019 Field Guides Trinidad & Tobago tour:*

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

*Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:*

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reference list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

**T**he islands of Trinidad and Tobago, often considered part of the West Indies, lie only ten miles off the coast of Venezuela at their closest point. Biologically, they are most truly South American. To the birder not yet familiar with the riches of the "Bird Continent," they offer a perfectly balanced introduction. Many of the typical Neotropical bird families are represented here, including such exotic ones as motmots, jacamars, toucans, woodcreepers, ovenbirds, antbirds, cotingas, and manakins. Since the diversity within these families is less on the islands than on the adjacent mainland—often with just a few representatives—each new group can be enjoyed without imparting panic to the observer.

On Trinidad and Tobago, we'll encounter some wonderful Neotropical scenes: the whirring flash of a tiny male White-bearded Manakin, instantly transposed from one perch to another during a courtship dance; the explosive call of a

Bearded Bellbird overhead, its “beard” of string-like throat wattles dangling loosely; the eerie descent to the cave of the Oilbirds, those nocturnal, fruit-eating wonders; and, we hope, an army ant swarm, with its characteristic avian following intent on devouring hapless insects disturbed by the raiding ants.

Trinidad, measuring about forty by fifty-five miles and much closer to the mainland, is the more diverse of the two islands. Here, while based at the Asa Wright Nature Centre, we’ll explore the rainforest of the island’s Northern Range, the drier savanna and scrub habitats near the old Waller Field air base, and the freshwater marsh at the edge of the island’s huge Nariva Swamp. But we won’t have to go very far to enjoy birding during our stay at Asa Wright. The Centre’s grounds are full of birds, with tanagers and honeycreepers crowding the feeding trays at the veranda, hummingbirds buzzing at the garden flowers, and Crested Oropendolas hanging upside down in vocal display from adjacent trees.



After a morning of filling in the checklist with shorebirds and waders on the west coast, we’ll travel to Caroni Swamp, a huge expanse of mangroves. As the day winds to a close, we’ll make our way through the swamp to the fabled evening roost of thousands of Ibis. At dusk the spectacle is unforgettable, as various herons and egrets, and long lines of Scarlet Ibis—luminescent in the waning light—drift in to roost, perching like Christmas ornaments among the mangroves.

Tobago, though only one-sixteenth the size of Trinidad, has some special attractions of its own. From its palm-lined, coral-sand beaches and emerald seas to its massive stands of

creaking giant bamboo, Tobago offers a more “Caribbean” atmosphere and setting. Its avifauna, too, is curiously distinct from that of Trinidad, combining a stronger West Indian element (White-cheeked Pintails, an abundance of Bananaquits) with a number of species characteristic of Venezuela but not occurring on Trinidad (e.g., Rufous-vented Chachalaca, Red-crowned Woodpecker, and the beautiful Blue-backed Manakin). And here, as in oceanic island avifaunas the world over, species that have survived have often flourished, developing somewhat broader ecological niches than their counterparts on Trinidad and the mainland. In the beautiful and lush forests of the mountain interior, we’ll search for the rare and local White-tailed Sabrewing, nearly wiped out in a 1963 hurricane.

One of the highlights of this part of the tour is a visit to Little Tobago Island, just offshore from our hotel. It was made famous, ornithologically speaking, as the site of a failed attempt to introduce Greater Bird-of-Paradise to the region, but it still has much appeal for the birder. We’ll hike to the windward overlook and watch as Brown and Red-footed Boobies, Magnificent Frigatebirds, and Red-billed Tropicbirds demonstrate their superior flight skills, riding updrafts from the cliffs below; some will pass by within yards of where we stand!

Trinidad and Tobago have long been field laboratories for some of the most familiar names in tropical biology, from Chapman, Finsch, and Cherrie to Gilliard, Beebe, Bond, and the Snows. Discover for yourself the allure of the tropics. You’ll see what brings naturalists and birders back again and again.

**About the Physical Requirements & Pace:** Our Asa Wright mornings typically begin with feeder watching (with a cup of tea or coffee) at 6:15 a.m. on the veranda, in the company of scores of birds—tanagers, honeycreepers, and hummingbirds—that are feeder regulars. We’ll have breakfast at the Centre, then head out for much of the day. When we can, we’ll offer short breaks after lunch or before dinner, but there are many birds to see, so the days are reasonably active. Most of our birding will take place along roadsides or well-used trails, though there may be a few places that have roots or involve a bit of rougher ground. In terms of distance, we typically walk between 1 and 3 miles on any given day. The walk to the Oilbird cave is under a half mile in length, but involves some fairly steep sections; we’ll certainly take our time as we go. We’ll also offer an optional night birding outing, but this is not physically strenuous.

The pace on Tobago slows down just a bit, allowing for some time to relax at our seaside hotel, but we will be birding too! As on Trinidad, most of our birding will be along roadsides or on well-marked trails, but this is hill country and there will be some uphill and downhill walking. A few of the trails can be muddy if it has been raining, but are otherwise quite manageable. The hike to the Little Tobago overlook is fairly steep and usually hot, but we take our time with lots of water, and the view and the seabirds always restore the tired hiker. If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match

for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office. If they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with the guide.

## Itinerary for Trinidad & Tobago

**Day 1, 16 Feb or 27 Dec. Flight to Trinidad.** Upon arrival—once you've cleared customs and immigration—make your way to the sidewalk outside the exit, where you'll be met by a representative from the Asa Wright Nature Centre. The driver should be holding a hand-written sign saying "Asa Wright Nature Centre" or be wearing a green baseball cap with the lodge's Bearded Bellbird logo on it. If you can't find him, just ask around outside the door from baggage claim. It is a small operation. The trip from the airport to the Centre takes about 45 minutes, some of it on a narrow, winding road—if you suffer from motion sickness, you will want to take the appropriate precautions! Once at the lodge, we'll go over a few introductory comments; then it's off to bed to get rested up for a great week of birding. Night at the Asa Wright Nature Centre.



*While at the Asa Wright Nature Center, we'll have the chance to visit an Oilbird cave, and observe these fascinating birds at their roost.  
Photograph by guide Eric Hynes.*

**Days 2-6, 17-21 Feb or 28 Dec-1 Jan. Birding on Trinidad.** We'll spend these days exploring the many rich birding habitats of Trinidad, with our coverage divided between two radically different parts of the island—the forested Northern Range and the central lowlands, which, in spite of a high human population, still have some great birding. Some of our activities will depend on current information, tides, the weather forecast, and other variables, but we'll work it out with the Centre staff upon arrival and pass the day-by-day plan on to you then. Our introduction to Trinidad's birds will start right on the very birdy grounds of the Asa Wright Nature Centre, located in the Arima Valley on the south slope of the Northern Range.

Our first morning will be hectic, with dozens of hummingbirds, honeycreepers, and tanagers having a mass breakfast on the Centre's legendary feeders, while toucans, bellbirds, oropendolas, or even an Ornate Hawk-Eagle might perch further out on a matchwood snag. As we traverse the Northern Range

along the Blanchisseuse Road, the quality forest we first encountered at the Centre continues in breathtaking beauty and is home to a host of much-anticipated species, including White Hawk, Blue-headed Parrot, Green-backed Trogon, Black-faced Antthrush, Gray-throated Leaf-tosser, Golden-headed Manakin, Speckled Tanager, and more. Trinidad's lowlands are much altered but still contain some very important habitats. We'll visit the Nariva Swamp on the east coast, searching for highlight species like Pinnated Bittern, Silvered Antbird, Black-crested Antshrike, Ringed and Green kingfishers, and numerous raptors.

The Caroni Swamp on the west coast is quite different in character: it is primarily a mangrove swamp and the site of one of nature's most spectacular shows—the evening roost of the Scarlet Ibis. We'll also make a trip to Waterloo, a coastal area south of Caroni that can be hopping with shorebirds, gulls, terns, and herons. The rest of our lowland birding will be divided between some remnant forest blocks, second growth and scrub around Waller Field, and the Aripo savanna, where we will seek out the dozens of open-land species present. One evening we'll offer an optional nightbird trip in search of Common Potoo, White-tailed Nightjar, Common Pauraque, and Tropical Screech-Owl. Nights at the Asa Wright Nature Centre.

**Day 7, 22 Feb or 2 Jan. Travel to Tobago and birding the western end of the island.** Today, we'll leave our base at Asa Wright and travel to the airport for the short flight to Tobago. Our birding on Tobago will begin right away with a drive through the nearby community of Bon Accord, where we might find waterbirds and our first Caribbean Martin, Black-faced Grassquit, and Eared Dove. A visit to the sewage ponds at Tobago Plantations brings the chance of Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Purple Gallinule, Mangrove Cuckoo, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Scrub Greenlet, and—if we're very lucky—Masked Duck. After lunch, we'll head to our hotel in Speyside (at the east end of the island), arriving by late afternoon. Night at Blue Waters Inn.



*The Blue-backed Manakin has an intriguing distribution; it is found on Tobago, and the mainland, but not on Trinidad.  
Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.*

**Day 8, 23 Feb or 3 Jan. Birding the Central Highlands.** The mountain forests of Tobago have recovered considerably since Hurricane Flora smashed the island in 1963. We'll devote much of our day to birding in the lush forest of the Main Ridge in search of several island specialties, including the rare but recovering White-tailed Sabrewing and the spectacular Blue-backed Manakin. Other possibilities here include Great Black-Hawk, Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Yellow-legged Thrush, Fuscous and Venezuelan flycatchers, Stripe-breasted Spinetail, White-throated Spadebill (rare), and Plain Antvireo. Night at Blue Waters Inn.

**Day 9, 24 Feb or 4 Jan. Little Tobago Island.** Located just offshore from our seaside hotel, Little Tobago is a small but interesting island that is home to several fascinating species of seabirds. The trip across takes 20–30 minutes and can be rough in windy weather; those who are prone to seasickness should take the appropriate measures. Once on Little Tobago, we will climb slowly (up many concrete steps) to the lookout, where we should be able to see both Brown and Red-footed boobies (the latter in two color morphs) at nests. Even more spectacular are the Red-billed Tropicbirds, which glide past only a few yards away or sit on nests tucked under nearby cacti or broadleaf

plants. On our way back to the main island, we might take a bit longer and travel slowly over Angel Reef and the Japanese Garden, giving us an excellent chance to see many spectacular corals and reef fish through the glass bottom of our boat. After lunch at Blue Waters Inn, we'll head to the Tobago airport for the short flight back to Trinidad. Once we arrive, we'll head for our hotel, which is located right near Trinidad's Piarco International Airport. Night at Holiday Inn Express Suites in Trincity.

**Day 10, 25 Feb or 5 Jan. Departure for home.** You may schedule your departure for any time today. *Have a safe trip home!*

## About Your Guides

### Tour I

**Dan Lane** was barely out of diapers when his love for birds manifested itself. He was an active birder in his home state of New Jersey until he graduated from college in 1995 and moved to Louisiana to pursue a Master's Degree studying Neotropical birds at Louisiana State University. By 1999, he'd received his degree and participated in three LSU expeditions to Peru and Ecuador, discovering a new species of bird (Scarlet-banded Barbet) along the way. His increasing experience with the Peruvian avifauna, coupled with having the luck of being "in the right place at the right time," landed Dan coauthorship on the recently published *Birds of Peru*—alongside his childhood heroes Ted Parker and John O'Neill. Meanwhile, his continuing fieldwork has resulted in uncovering additional new species to science (although writing these up, sadly, takes far more time than finding the birds, and Dan's way behind schedule).

Dan's interests in birds also include illustration, bird vocalizations, and bird biogeography and evolution. He's pleased to be working with Field Guides and enjoys the friendship and fun the Field Guides family provides. His favorite areas are largely in tropical Latin America, but on occasion he has led tours to other corners of the globe and of course (somewhat) regularly birds near his home in Louisiana.

*"Dan Lane is not only an exceptional birder, but also a caring leader who made sure each step of the way of our comfort and well-being." R.L., Machu Picchu & Abra Malaga, Peru*

## Tour II

**Tom Johnson** grew up watching birds in central Pennsylvania. Interested in science and the outdoors from a young age, Tom became involved in a variety of field projects throughout his school years, including banding migrant landbirds and conducting point counts for the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas. He was fortunate to pursue undergraduate studies in biology at Cornell University, where he became even more excited to learn about systematics and migration while surrounded by the amazing ornithologists and birders of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Since graduating from college, Tom has spent much of his time studying seabirds off the east coast of North America, conducting line transect surveys from NOAA ships between Nova Scotia and the Bahamas. When he's not otherwise occupied, he loves to devote time to wandering, taking photos, and searching for vagrants and hybrid birds.

Tom has long been interested in sharing his enthusiasm for exploring bird identification, distribution, and migration dynamics; he is a regional editor for *North American Birds* magazine and writes a regular column on identification for *Birding* magazine. Perhaps most of all, he loves sharing his passion for the natural world with others out in the field, and he's excited to have the opportunity to do this while leading for Field Guides.

*"Tom has an amazing knowledge of birds and the natural world. His enthusiasm and professionalism comes through so much. He kept us on schedule -yet allowed for some great diversions that showed up. Field Guides is so fortunate to have him guiding." L.T. Arizona Nightbirds & More*

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/guides> for complete tour schedules for both Dan and Tom; just click on their photos.

## Financial Information

**FEE:** \$4175 from Port-of-Spain

**DEPOSIT:** \$400 per person

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE:** October 19, 2018 (Tour I); August 29, 2019 (Tour II)

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional):** \$800

**LIMIT:** 10

## Other Things You Need to Know

**TOUR MANAGER:** The manager for this tour is Caroline Lewis. Caroline will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** The Asa Wright Nature Centre, the Blue Waters Inn, and the Holiday Inn Express offer fine, modern accommodations. All rooms have private bathrooms, and both Blue Waters Inn and the Holiday Inn Express have air-conditioning; rooms at the Asa Wright Nature Centre have ceiling fans.

**VACCINATIONS:** Yellow Fever is widespread in many parts of Trinidad and we recommend all travelers to Trinidad be vaccinated against the disease. Please check [https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/trinidad-and-tobago?s\\_cid=ncezid-dgmg-travel-single-001](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/trinidad-and-tobago?s_cid=ncezid-dgmg-travel-single-001) for the current CDC information and consult with your physician about whether the vaccine is appropriate for you (there are contraindications for some individuals).

**DOCUMENTS:** A current **passport** valid for six months beyond the date of your return is necessary for US citizens to enter Trinidad and Tobago. If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Trinidadian consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey. Some countries require a blank page for their stamp and as a precaution it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit.

**AIR ARRANGEMENTS:** Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to

purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees. **Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.**

**LUGGAGE:** Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

**TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS:** The tour fee is \$4175 for one person in double occupancy from Port-of-Spain. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 9, all meals from breakfast on Day 2 through dinner on Day 9, round-trip air from Port-of-Spain (Trinidad) to Crown Point (Tobago), all ground transportation, entrance fees, lodge staff, local guides and drivers, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from Port-of-Spain, airport taxes, visa fees, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$800. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$400** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by October 19, 2018 (Tour I) or August 29, 2019 (Tour II). We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

**SMOKING:** Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour fees (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

**TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE:** We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot

offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive from us a brochure regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, 24-hour accident protection, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance when making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights), pre-existing conditions are covered. The CSA brochure includes a contact number; you may also purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.html> and clicking the link to CSA. Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Field Guides Incorporated accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

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