



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO GENERAL INFORMATION



The beautiful near-endemic White-tailed Sabrewing is a major target on this tour (photo Fraser Bell).

GENERAL INFORMATION

On this Trinidad and Tobago birding adventure we explore the twin islands of Trinidad and Tobago, allowing ample time to appreciate their distinct characters, and diverse habitats. Our trip starts on beautiful Tobago, where we will enjoy a tranquil and Caribbean approach to our birding. We explore coastal wetlands of southern Tobago, embark on a glass-bottom boat trip to the Little Tobago Island seabird colony, and target impressive localized species like **White-tailed Sabrewing** on the main forested ridge. On the larger, vibrant Trinidad, we use the famous Asa Wright Nature Centre as our base. From here we delve into coastal wetlands, mangroves, and marshes on both the east and west coasts, the tropical savanna and scrub of central Trinidad, and the lush forests of the northern range. Towards the end of our stay in Trinidad, we travel to the remote northwest, in search of the **Trinidad Piping Guan**, a shy species restricted to these hill forests. The diversity of birds we encounter during this tour will be impressive, and we should have a lot of opportunity for photography and close views of brilliantly colorful species. This trip features unforgettable birding in a true tropical paradise.

WEATHER

Nestled in the southern Caribbean near the equator, Trinidad and Tobago have a constant temperate tropical climate year-round. The islands are influenced by both the warm Caribbean and Northeast Trade Winds, which together prevent extreme heat and temperature fluctuations, giving the twin islands a relatively constant temperature. The climate alternates between wet and dry seasons. The wet season, from June to November, features periods of heavy rainfall, occasional thunderstorms, and high humidity. Hurricanes are most likely between August and October, with Tobago at a higher risk due to its northern location. In contrast, the dry season spans January to April, offering warm days and cool nights with little rainfall. May and December are transition months between these seasons. The coolest months are January and February when the average minimum temperature is around 68°F (20°C), while the warmest months are April and October with a maximum average temperature around 89°F (32°C).

On this trip, we visit during the transition from the wet to the dry season, so we expect moderately high daytime temperatures around 84°F (29°C) and pleasant sea temperatures near 82°F (28°C). Night-time temperatures drop to 71°F (22°C). Intermittent afternoon showers are common, typically these are short, but prolonged heavy rain is expected on a couple of afternoons. Please be prepared for all weather, but expect a combination of heat, followed by the occasional heavy downpour to be the main challenge. To combat the weather, we'll typically start early, and often bird into the early afternoon (dependent on temperature), with a more relaxing schedule planned for the afternoon.

POTENTIAL HAZARDS

Crime

While the people of Trinidad and Tobago are incredibly friendly and welcoming, the risk of crime for travelers has increased in recent years. International visitors have been targeted at popular tourist sites such as waterfalls, beaches, and monuments near urban areas like Port of Spain,

particularly in the evening or at night. However, during the tour, we avoid high-crime areas and primarily stay and bird on private land or in remote locations far from where crime is mostly reported. We will always be accompanied by a local guide when outside accommodation grounds, using trusted transfer services. All evening and nocturnal activities are within the accommodation grounds, which are situated in beautifully remote locations with security on-site. We maintain constant contact with local guides and accommodation providers, who have reported no issues at the sites we visit.

In light of the increased risk of crime in 2024, we have made slight adjustments to the itinerary to further minimize any risk. We will not visit a few wetlands in western Trinidad and no longer have lunches at local restaurants, as these activities would involve visiting towns. Instead, we will spend more time birding in eastern Trinidad and enjoy picnic lunches in safer, well-known locations. While the risk remains low, we urge you to be mindful that crime is a possibility throughout the trip. **Please take extra care of your personal belongings, and ensure no valuables are left visible in the vehicle when unattended.**

Additionally, we advise you:

- Do not visit the capital Port of Spain before or after the tour, the airport is about 30km east of the capital and we do not visit Port of Spain during the tour.
- Be increasingly cautious whilst traveling after dark before and after the tour starts.
- Avoid lone traveling.
- Do not use public transport, book private transfers in advance and do not use local unmarked cars as a taxi.
- Be extra vigilant when visiting ATMs.

Dangerous animals

While Trinidad only has few species of venomous snakes, we will be visiting areas inhabited by these snakes, and as usual, we will be very lucky to see any. We recommend hiking boots, jeans/long trousers, and a good dose of care to minimize the danger of snakebites. We do not take anti-venom on our tours but will try and rush you to a private hospital if you do get bitten (although we will often be in remote places); your own travel insurance (especially medical insurance) is crucial. Scorpions and spiders can cause problems, but there are no large terrestrial mammals on either island to worry about.

Diseases

Malaria is not present in Trinidad and Tobago, however, Dengue fever and other insect-borne diseases, although uncommon, are present and so we recommend taking personal protective measures. These include using mosquito repellent, wearing long pants, and long-sleeved shirts, particularly at night when mosquitos and other biting insects are active.

Please carefully read the CDC traveler advice [here](#) which contains information on required vaccinations to enter Trinidad and Tobago.

ELECTRICITY

Electricity is 115 V with the standard type A and type B electrical sockets (both have two flat parallel pins; type B has a grounding pin, see [here](#) for pictures). Although the electrical sockets are the same as in North America, not all sockets in Trinidad and Tobago will be polarized (i.e. they are commonly type A) so you may still need an international adapter to use your plug, if you intend to recharge electrical devices, video batteries etc. in your room.

SOME THINGS WE RECOMMEND YOU BRING

Clothing specific to this tour

In Trinidad and Tobago, we expect the weather to be warm to hot during the day, so hot weather clothes are recommended. The weather is often mild at night, and during our excursion to higher altitude temperatures may drop, so we recommend bringing long pants and sweaters. Our boat trip into the dense mangrove forest of the Caroni Marsh will likely have biting insects, so long sleeves and long pants are advised. This tour is run at the best time for birds, but the disadvantage is the intermittent afternoon rain which can be heavy, so waterproofs are important. During the tour we visit and stay near several beaches, where comfortable light clothing would be suitable. There will be opportunity to swim during the tour.

Equipment specific to this tour

Good rain gear is essential, with a lightweight waterproof, such as a poncho, being particularly useful as we may encounter heavy downpours while out on the trails. If you're unsteady on your feet, a hiking pole or walking stick could be helpful, especially on uneven and steep sections of trails, such as those at Asa Wright and the Main Ridge in Tobago. Lightweight hiking boots are the best footwear for this tour with much of the birding along roads rather than long hikes through the forest. Sandals (flip-flops) or trainers are useful for walking around the accommodations but are not suitable for birding (consider snake bites, mud, slips, and falls). The boat crossing to Little Tobago Island is typically calm, but weather conditions can sometimes make the waters rougher. If you're prone to motion sickness, you may need to take medication for this trip.

General list for all tours

Please note that space in the vehicle may be limited, but we understand that birders do need lots of equipment! There will be opportunities for laundry.

- Binoculars (the guides cannot lend theirs)
- A spotting scope and tripod (although our leader will have a spotting scope)
- Field guides (see below recommendations)
- Any other birding equipment
- Photographic equipment

- Spare batteries for photographic and other gear
- Flashlight/torch/headlamp with spare batteries
- Toiletries
- Personal medication. We recommend packing important medication (and a change of clothes) in your hand luggage in the unlikely event of lost luggage.
- Some countries might require a valid Yellow Fever Certificate (Trinidad requires this if you are traveling from a region where Yellow Fever is present), and we advise visiting a travel clinic or your family doctor and visiting the Centers for Disease Control website for health advice.
- Rain gear (we expect to have rain on this trip, typically heavy short showers in the afternoons)
- Passport and if required, visas, copies of passport, medical insurance policies, and other important documents, which can be left with the Birding Ecotours office.
- Money for drinks, gifts, tips (although tips at restaurants during the tour are included), items of a personal nature, etc.
- Traveler's checks are often difficult to use, except in the USA, but Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted, including for drawing local currency at ATMs.
- Hiking boots plus another pair of shoes and sandals
- Swimming gear
- Cap/hat and sunglasses
- Sunscreen and lip sun protection
- Mosquito repellent
- Long-sleeved clothes as a precaution against biting insects

BIRDING ECOTOURS EMERGENCY CONTACT DETAILS

Office: Nadia +27-72-211-9863, Chris +44-7808-571-444

E-mail: info@birdingecotours.com (which is checked almost daily)

FIELD GUIDES

Birds

Field Guide of the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago by Martyn Kenefick, Robin Restall and Floyd Hayes (3rd Ed), 2019 – The best available bird guide.

A guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago by Richard Ffrench (3rd Ed), 2003 – A great guide but outdated and less useful in the field compared to Kenefick *et al.*

Mammals

Trinidad and Tobago: Wildlife guide by Rainforest Publications, 2012, – a laminated fold out guide of the most frequently encountered mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates on the islands. Only shows commonly encountered species but does cover most of the mammals we'll likely see.

Reptiles and Amphibians

A field guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Trinidad and Tobago by the Field Naturalist Club, 2018 – Well reviewed.

Butterflies

Trinidad and Tobago Butterflies by Rainforest Publications, 2015. A laminated fold out guide of the most often encountered species on the islands – Not comprehensive.