



and



Presents:

Birding the Dominican Republic

**-Endemics of Hispaniola-
January 23 - 30, 2018 (8 days)**



Palmchat by Adam Riley

Although the Dominican Republic is perhaps best known for its luxurious beaches, outstanding food and vibrant culture, this island has much to offer both the avid birder and general naturalist alike. Because of the amazing biodiversity sustained on the island, Hispaniola ranks highest in the world as a priority for bird protection! This 8-day birding tour provides the perfect opportunity to encounter nearly all of the island's 32 endemic bird species, plus other Greater Antillean specialities. We accomplish this by thoroughly exploring the island's variety of habitats, from the evergreen and Pine forests of the Sierra de Bahoruco to the dry forests of the coast. Furthermore, our accommodation ranges from remote cabins deep in the forest to well-appointed hotels on the beach, each with its own unique local flair. Join us for this delightful tour to the most diverse island in the Caribbean!

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	Arrival in Santo Domingo
Day 2	Santo Domingo Botanical Gardens to Puerto Escondido
Day 3	Northern Sierra de Bahoruco slopes
Day 4	Puerto Escondido to Pedernales
Day 5	Southern Sierra de Bahoruco slopes
Day 6	Birding en route to Sabana de la Mar
Day 7	Sabana de la Mar to Santo Domingo
Day 8	Final departures

TOUR ROUTE MAP...



THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

Day 1: Arrival in Santo Domingo.

After landing in the capital city of Santo Domingo, participants will be met and escorted to a lovely colonial hotel in the historic district of the western hemisphere's oldest European city. A good night's rest is in order, as we begin our island adventure bright and early the following morning!

Day 2: Santo Domingo Botanical Gardens to Puerto Escondido.

The National Botanical Gardens is a great introduction to the birding bounty of the Dominican Republic. Diligently preserved and full of native plants, the gardens provide a habitat for many of the island's most sought-after species. We



Broad-billed Tody by Matthew Matthiessen

can expect to kick off our tour with good views of the scarce West Indian Whistling Duck, retiring Mangrove Cuckoo, ornate Red-legged Thrush and other widespread species such as Zenaida Dove and Limpkin. Near-endemics and endemics are many, including Hispaniolan Woodpecker, Hispaniolan Parakeet, Black-crowned Tanager, Hispaniolan Lizard Cuckoo, Antillean Palm Swift, gorgeous Antillean Mango, minuscule Vervain Hummingbird and the only monotypic family of the Caribbean – Palmchat. This promises to be a great start to an incredible tour!

From Santo Domingo, we spend the remainder of the day driving south-west, into the heart of the Sierra de Bahoruco Mountains. If time permits, some late afternoon birding should yield Plain Pigeon, Hispaniolan Oriole, White-necked Crow and Broad-billed Tody.

Day 3: Northern Sierra de Bahoruco slopes.



Hispaniolan Trogon by Adam Riley

This important mountain range supports populations of nearly all of Hispaniola's island endemics and target birds. By strategically locating ourselves well into the mountain range, we can readily access all elevations of this bird-rich area. An early rise this morning will allow us to reach the high elevation cloud forest before activity dwindles. After many exciting new species, we will then bird our way downhill at our leisure. The long list of birds from today's efforts might include Scaly-naped Pigeon, Key West and White-fronted Quail-Doves, Antillean Piculet, Hispaniolan Lizard Cuckoo, Hispaniolan Trogon, White-necked Crow, Antillean Siskin, Green-tailed



Warbler, Black-crowned Tanager, White-winged Warbler, Western Chat-Tanager, Hispaniolan Crossbill, Bay-breasted Cuckoo, Hispaniolan Emerald, Hispaniolan Amazon, Broad-billed and Narrow-billed Todies, Hispaniolan Woodpecker, Hispaniolan Pewee, Greater Antillean Elaenia, Stolid Flycatcher, Golden Swallow, Rufous-throated Solitaire, Antillean Euphonia, Hispaniolan Spindalis, Greater Antillean Bullfinch, Hispaniolan Oriole and the extremely rare La Selle Thrush. The lush greenery of the mountains is also the wintering ground of many important North American migrant species. Cape May, Prairie and Black-throated Blue Warblers are among the commoner Neotropical migrants but the range-restricted, boreal-breeding Bicknell's Thrush is also present in small numbers.

Night birding here is a must and we will search for the Endemic Least Poorwill, Hispaniolan Nightjar and rather more widespread Northern Potoo.



Ashy-faced Owl by Adam Riley

Day 4: Puerto Escondido to Pedernales. Not at all expecting to see the entire list of birds possible in this area in one day, we will take the morning to 'clean-up' any missing species and make further efforts for some of the trickier individuals. Our exact location will depend on our birding success of the previous day. However, we ultimately need to reach the southern coastal town of Pedernales this evening. En route, we will have stunning views of Hispaniola's southern coastline. Further birding en route could be followed by some late afternoon and early evening birding around Pedernales.

Day 5: Southern Sierra de Bahoruco slopes. There are several well-known birding spots covering the southern Sierra de Bahoruco slopes and coastline. We will likely start birding along the coast at an area known as Cabo Rojo. Shorebirds, terns and herons abound while Neotropical migrant warblers are abundant in the scrub and mangroves. A few special birds at Cabo Rojo that we hope to



La Selle Thrush by Dušan Brinkhuizen

encounter include White-tailed Tropicbird, the Hispaniolan subspecies of Cave Swallow and Antillean Palm Swift. We will then drive up the Alcoa Road. This southern access to the Sierra de Bahoruco was built by the Alcoa bauxite mining company many years ago. These days, the asphalt road allows us easy and quick access to the higher parts of the ridge where our main target species remain. It will also allow us to double our chances of finding many of the previously listed species on Day 3. As with any area, certain birds are more likely to be seen in one locale than the other. Here we hope to find White-crowned Pigeon, Golden Swallow, the endemic sub-species of Loggerhead Kingbird,



Hispaniolan Palm Crow, Pine Warbler, Antillean Siskin and Hispaniolan Crossbill, to name just a few.

We will then return to Cabo Rojo; the beautiful coastline here is also an excellent place for snorkelling, swimming and a fresh seafood lunch. After lunch, we will travel further up the winding and scenic coastal road to the town of Barahona for the evening. Before dinner, we will head out for a few hours of owling. The main focus of this evening's birding will be to search for the endemic Ashy-faced Owl. A known stake-out in the area provides us with an excellent opportunity to encounter this seldom seen species.



Ridgway's Hawk pair by Adam Riley

Day 6: Birding en route to Sabana de la Mar.

This morning we will head into another part of the Sierra de Bahoruco range for a very special treat. With a certain amount of luck and effort, we should be able to get good views of Eastern Chat-Tanager. Many miles outside of its known distribution, this southern slope population is little known and even less often searched for. Besides the Eastern Chat-Tanager, we will also have another chance to find Bicknell's Thrush, Narrow-billed Tody and Hispaniolan Trogon. After a successful morning in the mountains, we will then spend the remainder of the day driving across the island to the north coast.

Day 7: Sabana de la Mar to Santo Domingo. As was the case yesterday, our birding will be directly focused on a handful of species. In particular, we will search for what is hopefully our final endemic target of the tour - Ridgway's Hawk. Critically Endangered, this incredibly rare raptor has had its range reduced to only a small part of northern Dominican Republic, long since extinct in Haiti. On



Hispaniolan Parakeet by Adam Riley

the upside, due to intensive and prolonged efforts by the Peregrine Fund, this species is making a small recovery. Our tour is timed to fall at the beginning of the breeding season, where we are often able to get excellent views of the adults at their nesting site. We will then head back to Santo Domingo to enjoy a farewell dinner!

Day 8: Final departure. All good things come to an end and, after breakfast, some of us will catch our international departures home while others will join our next Caribbean adventure.



FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our [website](#). Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from Dinner on day 1 to Breakfast on day 8;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees;
- Extra activities as mentioned in the itinerary; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).

The tour fee does not include:

- Visa fees;
- **ANY flights;**
- Any drinks;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.
- Cultural Tour of Santo Domingo

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.

c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.

d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tipping:

As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader. If, therefore, you feel that he has given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip him.

Special Notes:

- Much of our time is spent in vehicles, as we do have to cover long distances in order to get to the best birding areas. The more luggage you pack the less room there is in the vehicle, so it is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lb) for hand luggage.
- We spend many hours in the vehicles while driving across the country, it is therefore advisable to bring along reading material or other forms of entertainment should you find this desirable.
- This tour does not require a high level of fitness; however, much of the forest birding will be on foot and may require a fair amount of walking (always at a slow pace).



- Crime is problematic in certain areas of the Dominican Republic. Exercise caution as you would for any big city where crime exists. Do not unnecessarily flaunt cash and valuables and do not leave valuables exposed in the vehicle.
- Prostitution is a legal enterprise in the Dominican Republic and tourists are regularly propositioned even during the day, especially around Santo Domingo.
- There are a number of illegal Haitian immigrants living in the Dominican Republic. You may be approached by young children eager to shine your shoes or beg for money. While the children do not seem to present any theft risks, please exercise caution and consult your Tour Leader if you wish to hand over any food/donations/gifts etc.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include ANY airfares. The tour will start with a welcome dinner in Santo Domingo in the evening of Day 1. Please make sure that you have arrived in Santo Domingo no later than 17:30. The tour will conclude after breakfast in Santo Domingo on day 8.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

Las Americas International Airport, Santo Domingo (IATA: SDQ) is the main port of entry for international flights into the Dominican Republic and is best serviced by Air France, Copa, Delta Airlines and Jet Blue Airways. We have the capacity to advise you on the best route according to your preferences, but your local travel agent will best be able to book these flights for you. **However, please DO NOT book your international flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

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