

Puerto Rico Itinerary

[Link: Puerto Rico](#)

Tour Overview

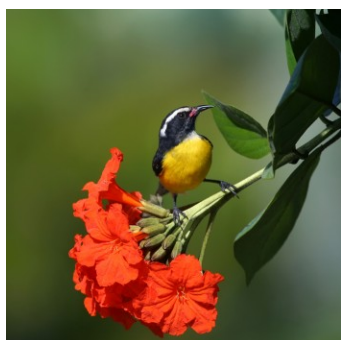
Puerto Rico, a truly delightful island, has a marvelous array of different habitats, from sandy beaches and mangroves to dry arid scrub forest and surprisingly lush and verdant tropical montane forests.

Puerto Rico has its fair share of endemics, ranging from the delightful and exquisite Puerto Rican Tody to the highly endangered and very local Puerto Rican Parrot. Some endemics such as Puerto Rican Bullfinch and Puerto Rican Woodpecker are widespread, while others are decidedly local, such as Elfin Woods Warbler, first discovered in 1971, Puerto Rican Nightjar, thought to be extinct before its rediscovery in 1961, and the endangered Yellow-shouldered Blackbird.

We also visit the José Luis Vivaldi Lugo Aviary, located in the Rio Abajo Forest Preserve, for a chance to see the critically endangered Puerto Rican Parrot in the wild.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Puerto Rico



Our Puerto Rico birding tour starts at our hotel in San Juan for a meet-and-greet before supper. Night in San Juan.

Day 2: Sierra de Luquillo



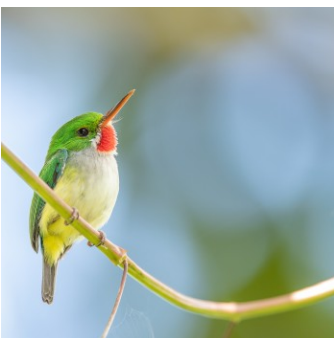
We leave the bustling city of San Juan and head to the town of Luquillo, situated at the northeastern end of the island. We spend most of these two days exploring the Caribbean National Forest in the Luquillo Mountains. The Caribbean National Forest covers about 25,000 acres (10,000 hectares) and receives high amounts of rainfall which result in dense rainforest on the lower slopes of El Yunque, a peak which rises to 3494ft (1065m). Higher altitudes have palm forests with dwarf forest on the highest peaks. There are plenty of endemic goodies here - the attractive Puerto Rican Woodpecker, the drab Puerto Rican Tanager, Puerto Rican Emerald, the superb Puerto Rican Tody, Puerto Rican Spindalis and Puerto Rican Bullfinch. Scaly-naped Pigeon, Loggerhead Kingbird and Red-legged Thrush occur here, and Green Mangos are found near fast running water. In the evening we may try for the virtual endemic Puerto Rican Screech-Owl, an atypical screech-owl as it lacks ear tufts! Night near Luquillo.

Day 3: Humacao



We leave the Luquillo Mountains and head to the Humacao Nature Reserve where we look for Antillean Crested Hummingbird, Green-throated Carib, White-cheeked Pintail, Caribbean Coot, and several herons including Least Bittern, egrets and other wetland birds. We then drive west across the island to the town of Arecibo about 50 miles (90 km) west of San Juan. Night in Arecibo.

Day 4: Rio Abajo State Forest



We leave very early this morning and head to the Rio Abajo State Forest reserve, located south of the town of Arecibo. Our target species is the critically endangered Puerto Rican Parrot, one of the rarest birds in the West Indies. A breeding and reintroduction program is underway at the José Luis Vivaldi Lugo Aviary, located in the forest preserve; released birds have been breeding successfully in the wild for several years now, and we have a chance for seeing one of the wild individuals around the aviary. Here we will also have further opportunities to see Puerto Rico's endemic avifauna - species such as Puerto Rican Vireo, Puerto Rican Tody and Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo - as well as opportunities for Ruddy and Key West Quail-Doves. We will then carry on heading south across the island to the town of Guanica. Night near Ponce.

Day 5: Maricao National Forest



In the morning, we leave early and drive north to Maricao National Forest, at the western end of the Cordillera Central. At this higher altitude, lush forest covers the montane slopes, and a wide variety of the island's endemics can be found. Our main target bird here is the Elfin-woods Warbler, a secretive and fast-moving warbler discovered as recently as 1971, and we spend quite a bit of time searching for this species. Whilst doing so, we should relocate Green Mango, Puerto Rican Emerald, and Puerto Rican Tody, and find Puerto Rican Pewee and Antillean Euphonia. In the afternoon, we head back to our hotel for a break so that we are well rested for an evening excursion to search for the endangered Puerto Rican Nightjar. Night near Ponce.

Day 6: Guanica National Forest



Today we visit the Guanica National Forest spending time searching for species not yet found in the montane forests. In the dry scrub forest of Guanica we look for Pearly-eyed Thrasher, Puerto Rican Vireo, Black-whiskered Vireo, Puerto Rican Bullfinch, Adelaide's Warbler, as well as the amazing Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo. We also visit the coastal mangroves and sand spits along the coast, looking for shorebirds, Mangrove Cuckoo, Caribbean Eleania, and perhaps Troupial. Later, we drive along the coastal highway to the southwest part of the island where we should see the endangered Yellow-shouldered Blackbird. Population numbers of the blackbird appear to be on the increase, owing in part to a control program aimed at cowbirds. Night near Ponce.

Day 7: Return to San Juan

We spend the morning looking for species we might have missed up to now, perhaps visiting Laguna Cartagena National Wildlife Refuge for an opportunity to see scarce waterfowl such as Masked Duck and West Indian Whistling-Duck, as well as further chances for Adelaide's Warbler, and introduced species like waxbills and munias. We then drive back to San Juan where we spend the night.

Day 8: Departure

Our Puerto Rico birding tour ends today and you can transfer to the airport anytime today for the flights home.

What to Expect

Puerto Rico provides some surprisingly exciting birding. Most of the endemics are fairly easy to find, and we make determined efforts to find those that can prove elusive, such as Elfin Woods Warbler. We have some early morning starts and pre-breakfast journeys to maximize our time in the field. Roads are generally very good throughout our Puerto Rico birding tour. On some days, we make

evening excursions to search for nocturnal species. Usually, hiking will be easy to moderate. On most days we have a picnic lunch at a site or call in at a local restaurant.

The weather should be warm and sunny, and rain is possible. A light, waterproof jacket is, therefore, advised, as are stout walking shoes or boots. Generally, we stay in good hotels. In the evenings, we eat at our hotel or a nearby restaurant, where we spend a relaxing evening to review the day's bird list and discuss the itinerary for the next day.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes

- All meals
- All accommodations (simple to modern)
- Ground transportation
- Guides - one EET guide with 4 - 8 participants, two EET guides with 9 - 12 participants
- Park, conservation and entry fees

Tour Price Does Not Include

- Flights to and from start/end location
 - Items of a personal nature
 - Travel Insurance
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