



Itinerary for Ornithological Study in Cuba 8 Days and 7 Nights

Day 1: Arrivals into Havana

All participants should arrive in Havana by 4:00 PM today.

At 6:00 PM, we will meet our guide in the lobby of our hotel for supper and for an orientation to our ornithological study.

We spend the first night of our tour in Havana.

Day 2: AM Surveys in Las Terrazas and La Guira on Drive to Viñales; PM Surveys in Viñales

Plan to be at breakfast by 7:00 AM. At 7:30 AM, we will depart for Viñales, west of Havana, two to three hours away. Along the way, we will stop to conduct the first surveys of our tour in Las Terrazas, a planned community dating from 1968, and in La Guira National Park. There, we hope to collect observations about Black-whiskered Vireo, Cuban Tody, La Sagra's Flycatcher, Cuban Pewee, Loggerhead Kingbird, Cuban Emerald, Western Spindalis, and Red-legged Honeycreeper.

We plan to arrive in Viñales around lunchtime. Viñales is a delightful small town situated in a lush area of the Sierra de los Oreganos. This beautiful valley has a long tradition of small-scale farming, and it's not unusual to see someone plowing with oxen between the colorful and distinctive limestone land features locally called "mogotes." Fresh organic produce is easy to find here, and farmers are proud of their heritage.



After lunch, we will begin to survey the Viñales area. About 130 species have been reported here, and we are particularly interested in collecting information about the habits of Cuban Grassquit, Cuban Solitaire, Olive-capped Warbler, and a few other Cuban and Caribbean endemics frequently encountered here.

Each evening, our guide will review the day's bird counts and habitat data with us and confirm the next day's plans, including our wake-up time, survey route, and other logistics.

After an exciting first day in the field, we spend the night in Viñales.

Day 3: AM Surveys in Viñales; Drive to Zapata; Late PM Surveys in Zapata

We will start our day with an early morning survey in the Viñales area in hope of observing species and behaviors we may have overlooked yesterday afternoon. We will have breakfast at 6:30 AM, and we hope to leave the hotel by 7:00 AM.

From Viñales, we will depart for the Zapata Peninsula. The drive takes most of the morning, but we will break it up with some brief stops to collect data at small ponds and forested areas that we will visit as part of our study. Lunch is at a restaurant en route.

By late afternoon, we will reach the Zapata Peninsula, one of the most important conservation areas in Cuba and, indeed, in all of the Caribbean. Over 260 bird species have been reported from here, including all but three of Cuba's 23 avian endemics. Notably, the peninsula is a stronghold of the world's smallest bird, the Bee Hummingbird, and our work helps to monitor its status. The area also provides important habitat for migratory birds: many Nearctic species spend their winters here or pass through on their way to Central and South America, and several spring and summer

residents (which breed in Cuba but return south in fall) occur here as well.

Because the Zapata peninsula's conservation value is so great, we will spend the remainder of our tour conducting surveys here. This afternoon, we will focus our efforts on studying the rare Zapata Wren, the very local Zapata Sparrow, the resident Red-shouldered Blackbird, and a notable migrant, the Yellow-throated Warbler.

After we finish the day's surveys, we will review our bird counts and confirm our plans for tomorrow with our guide.

We stay in one of the nicest guest houses in Zapata tonight and the following three nights.



Day 4: Great Start for Zapata: Full Day of Bird Surveys in Bermeja

Plan for another early breakfast, at 6:30 AM, and plan to leave our Zapata area hostel at 7:00 AM. We first head for the village of Bermeja on the east side of the Zapata region for some of the most interesting morning bird survey sites on our trip.

Bermeja is a fauna refuge with national significance a short drive north of Playa Girón on the Bay of Pigs. It is an open area with numerous Royal Palms and abundant fruiting and flowering shrubs. This is the best place to observe Fernandina's Flicker, a species of concern in Cuba. The palms provide good nesting sites for woodpeckers, as well as

for Cuba's two endemic owls. It is also a good place to study quail-doves; all four of Cuba's species occur in the park, and the two rarest are frequently encountered here. Bee Hummingbird, Cuban Parakeet, Cuban Trogon, Cuban Tody and Cuban Nightjar can be found here as well, as can a variety of New World warblers that overwinter in Cuba. Our survey will help to illuminate how all of those species use the park's habitats.



After a productive morning, we will return to our guest house to eat lunch and rest. Afterward, we will continue to survey the Bermeja area through the afternoon.

In the evening, we will return to our guest house for supper, review our data and go over the plan for tomorrow with our guide. Afterward, we may complete nighttime bird surveys in the area as necessary.

Once again, we spend the night in Zapata.

Day 5: Further Work in Zapata: AM Surveys in Marsh Habitat at La Turba; PM Investigate Sites Around the Greater Zapata Area

Today, we leave early, at 5:30 AM, and we will bring a packed breakfast along to eat later in the morning. We need an early start today in order to support a full morning of

bird surveys. We will start the day in the marsh habitat at La Turba, where we hope to collect further observations about Zapata Wren, Zapata Sparrow, and Red-shouldered Blackbird.

Lunch today will depend on our success in the morning; it may be a picnic, or we may return to the guest house if we decide to move on to another area.



After lunch, we will focus on finishing our work in the marsh. Late in the afternoon, after it cools down, we will collect data at other sites around the greater Zapata area. We will likely return to the guest house later than usual today in order to support our late afternoon bird surveys.

In the evening, we will return to our guest house for supper, review our data, and then head to bed.

We spend a third night in Zapata.

Day 6: Further Surveys in Zapata: AM Surveys at La Salina; PM Return to Bermeja

Once again, we will eat an early breakfast. Then, we will travel to La Salina to conduct morning bird surveys there.

La Salina has ideal feeding conditions for many water birds (flamingos, egrets, ducks, shorebirds), which come to feast on fish, crustaceans, and other invertebrates. Here, we aim to collect observations about Cuban Black Hawk, Mangrove Warbler, 'Northern' Crested Caracara, Cuban Martin, Cuban Bullfinch, American Flamingo, and maybe Clapper Rail.

We will have lunch back at our guest house during the heat of the day.

After lunch, we will travel back to Bermeja in hope of collecting additional observations about the Cuban endemics found there, especially any that we may have previously overlooked.

At the end of the day, we will review our bird counts and habitat data and discuss tomorrow's plans.

We spend a fourth and final night in Zapata.



Day 7: AM Final Surveys in Zapata; PM Return to Havana

After another early breakfast, we will spend a final morning conducting surveys in the Zapata area. Our plan for the morning is flexible based on the need for us to study any of several notable sites here.

We may choose to conduct surveys along the Hatiguanico River, but will remain flexible in case there is a need for us to visit other sites instead.

As usual, we will have lunch back at our guest house during the heat of the day. After lunch, we will bid farewell to the Zapata peninsula and make the 4-hour drive back to Havana, in preparation for our flights home tomorrow.

We expect to arrive back in Havana late in the afternoon.

After completing a final review of the bird and habitat data we collected, we will share a celebratory supper. Our guide will also lead us in reviewing our departure plans for tomorrow.

We spend the final night of our tour in Havana.

Day 8: Departures from Havana

Clients will fly home this morning. PIB arranges airport transfers for all clients in order to ensure that they will reach the airport in plenty of time to catch their flights home, no matter what time they plan to depart Cuba. Transfers will be scheduled to ensure that clients arrive at the airport three hours before their international flights are scheduled to depart.

