



## **Birding in Cuba 11 Days and 10 Nights**

Our Cuban tour provides you with a great opportunity to see all possible Cuban endemic birds and in addition other terrific bird, including a good number of Caribbean endemic species. Cuban endemics includes Gundlach's Hawk, Bee Hummingbird (smallest hummingbird in the world), Cuban Trogon, Cuban Tody, Cuban Parakeet and Zapata Wren. In addition, there are over twenty West Indian endemics possible, including West Indian Whistling-Duck, Key West Quail-Dove, Great Lizard-Cuckoo, Loggerhead Kingbird and Western Spindalis.

You will visit some of the most important birding sites in Cuba, including the wetlands of the Zapata Peninsula (a Biosphere Reserve), Viñales and Cayo Coco. Caya Coco is one of the most important migratory stops in all of the Caribbean. A good mix of habitats will be covered, including forests, marshes, mangroves, coastal shrubs, patches of grass, and lagoons.

Everyone will also enjoy seeing Cuba from Havana, Trinidad and most of the western two-thirds of the country. You will see Havana (the capital city of Havana), the country side, and a good mix of small town life to other cultural opportunities, such as Camaquey (a UNESCO world heritage site). Cuba's rich cultural, music and historic traditions will be accessible, as you travel throughout the country.

### **Day 1: Arrival into Havana**

Trip participants can arrive at any time today. Upon arrival, you will be taken to a nice bed and breakfast type lodging in Havana.

This is really an arrival day, and we anticipate most clients will get in during the afternoon (better) or evening.

We will try to get to bed early for an early start the next morning.

Lodging tonight will be in a nice house in Havana about 20 minutes from the old and historical Havana area.

## **Day 2: AM Birding at Las Terrazas and La Guira on Way to Viñales; PM Birding Viñales**

After breakfast, we depart early for Viñales, about 2 to 3 hours away. We will have several birding stops along the way, including Las Terrazas and La Guira. This morning we will hope to find Black-whiskered Vireo, Cuban Tody, La Sagra's Flycatcher, Cuban Pewee, Loggerhead Kingbird, Cuban Emerald, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Cape May Warbler, Western Spindalis and Red-legged Honeycreeper. We will have lunch in Viñales.

By mid-day, we should reach Viñales. Viñales is a delightful small town situated in Sierra de los Oreganos in a beautiful valley with distinctive landscapes. Everyone loves the steep-sided limestone mogotes.



Later in the afternoon, we can start birding in the Viñales area. About 130 species have been reported from the area, and we will focus on Cuban Grassquit, Cuban Solitaire, Olive-capped Warbler and a few other Cuban and Caribbean endemics, which are found here.

We will overnight in Viñales in one of the local hotels of the region



### **Day 3: AM Birding Viñales; Departure for Zapata; and Late PM Birding in Zapata**

We should have some time for some early morning birding in the Viñales area, if we have missed any of the key species the day before.

After breakfast, we depart to the Zapata Peninsula. The drive will take up most of the rest of the morning, but we will break up the drive with several brief birding stops. We will also stop for lunch on the way.

By late afternoon, we should reach the Zapata Peninsula, and we will soon start birding here. We will spend the next four full days in this area, with an opportunity to find nearly all of Cuba's endemic bird species. Today we will try for Zapata Wren, Zapata Sparrow, Red-shouldered Blackbird and Yellow-throated Warbler.

The Zapata Peninsula is, undoubtedly, the best bird watching area in Cuba, and possibly the entire Caribbean region. It supports all but three of Cuba's 23 avian endemics. The area has had over 260 bird species reported. Besides the endemics, this is a great place to find many other native species, both winter residents and transients, along with several summer and spring visitors (which breed in Cuba but return south in fall).

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

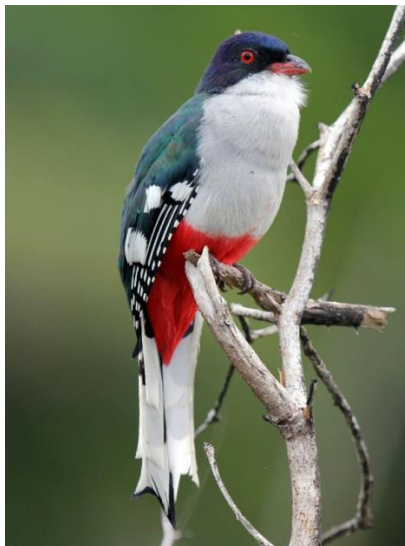
#### **Day 4: Great Start for Birding Bermeja**

We will have breakfast for Bermeja for some of our so far for the trip.

Bermeja is a fauna refuge significance. It is an open Palms, bushes and short drive north of Playa place to look for Cuba's two endemic owls, Hummingbird, Cuban Parakeet, Cuban Trogon and Cuban Tody. You can find all four quail-dove species here and the two rarer species are frequently encountered here. This is also a good place to find many Nearctic warblers.

After a great morning of birding, we will have lunch back at our guest house. In the afternoon, we will continue to bird the Bermeja area.

By supper time, we will return to our guest house and again finish the bird checklist for the day.



#### **Zapata: Full Day**

early, and then depart best morning birding

with national area with Royal shrubbery. It is a Girón. This is the best Fernandina's Flicker, Cuban Nightjar, Bee



**Day 5: Full Day Birding in Zapata: AM Marsh Habitat at La Turba; In Afternoon Continue Birding in the Area**

We will again have an early breakfast to support a full morning of birding. We will focus birding this morning on marsh habitat at La Turba. We will be looking for Zapata Wren, Zapata Sparrow and Red-shouldered Blackbird.

Lunch today depends upon our birding plans.

After lunch we will focus on any species we may have missed in the marshy area, or we will begin to focus on new species in the greater Zapata area in the later afternoon (after it cools down).

We will likely get back to the guest house a bit later today to support our late afternoon birding.

We will again have supper at our nice guest house and complete the bird checklist and then head for bed.







### **Day 6: Zapata Birding Continues at La Salina in AM; Likely Late Afternoon Back at Bermeja**

We will again have breakfast early, and then travel to nearby La Salina for morning birding.

La Salina has ideal feeding conditions for many waterbirds (flamingos, egrets, ducks, shorebirds), which come to feast on the fishes, crustaceans, and other invertebrates. We hope to find Cuban Black Hawk, Mangrove Warbler, Northern Crested Caracara, Cuban Martin, Cuban Bullfinch, American Flamingo, and maybe a Clapper Rail.

We will again have lunch back at our guesthouse during the heat of the day.

After lunch, we will travel back to Bermeja, and focus our bird-finding on any species we may have missed. We will be primarily focused on finding any endemic species we are missing, and everyone will enjoy getting better views of some of the birds we have seen so far.

### **Day 7: Mostly Travel Day with a Few Birding Stops to Camagüey**

We can have a later breakfast today, but we will want to be on the road by 8:00 AM. We will stop a few times throughout the day for birding and brief rest stops.

We will reach Camagüey city by around 5:00 PM.

We will check into our local lodging (likely another guest house), and have supper there.



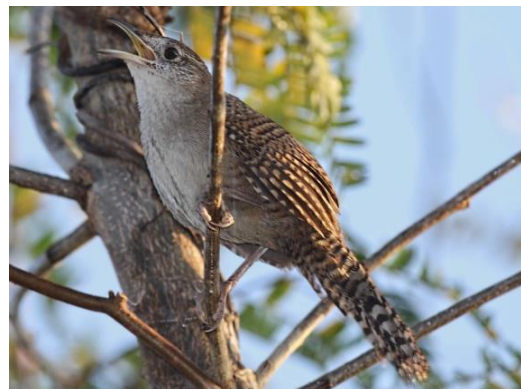
### **Day 8: AM Birding Najasa; PM Birding Cayo Coco**

Another early breakfast will be in order to support birding at Najasa, just over one hour away.

Everyone will enjoy a good morning of birding at Najasa. This is a protected area of open country, with many palm groves and a mixture of semi-deciduous woods in the foothills at lower elevations. About 120 species of birds have been reported here, and we will focus on finding Plain Pigeon, Cuban Parakeet, Rose-throated Parrot, Bare-legged Owl, Cuban Pygmy-Owl, Cuban Palm Crow, three species of woodpeckers (Cuban Green Woodpecker, West Indian Woodpecker and Fernandina's Flicker) and Giant Kingbird.

Once it warms up and becomes nearly too hot for birding, we will continue our travels on to Cayo Coco. We will have lunch along the way here.

Most of the afternoon will be spent birding Cayo Coco. Cayo Coco is the second-largest key in Cuba (recently connected to the mainland by a rock-fill road). It is located a long hour's drive northwest of Morón. The area is mostly covered by semideciduous forests and also has a good mix of other habitats to support



birding. Besides the forest area, we will be birding mangroves, coastal shrubs, patches of grass, and lagoons. A total of over 200 species has been reported, including many Cuban rarities. We will add several new birds to the trip list, including Cuban Gnatcatcher, a race of Zapata Sparrow and Oriente Warbler. We should also find Western Spindalis and Cuban Bullfinch. There are many waders here. All birders will enjoy the large group of American Flamingo. In fall Merlin and Peregrine Falcon are reliable, and Piping Plover is a winter resident on these keys.



### **Day 9: AM Birding Cayo Paredón Grande; PM Birding Cayo Guillermo**

We will have a later breakfast than usual, but we will have a full morning of birding at Paredón Grande.

Cayo Paredón Grande will become recognizable in the distance shortly after we start our morning drive, as you will see its black-and-yellow painted lighthouse. The main habitat here is sandy coast vegetation and mangroves. Well over 100 species have been reported in the area including Thick-billed Vireo (of the recently described endemic subspecies *cubensis*) and Bahama Mockingbird (a difficult to find bird in Cuba). If you are birding here during fall migration, the lighthouse is an excellent spot for finding North American warblers. It is also an excellent area to find Mangrove Cuckoo, Cuban Gnatcatcher and Oriente Warbler.

In the hot part of the day, we will have lunch back at the hotel, and then depart for Cayo Guillermo for late afternoon birding.

Cayo Guillermo is situated less than an hour northwest of Cayo Coco. This is a sandy key with xerophitic vegetation and lots of palms. This will be our best opportunity to find Bahama Mockingbird, and a nice place to wrap up our birding in the area.





### **Day 10: AM Birding Cayo Coco or Other Coastal; Most Day Driving with Few Birding Stops to Havana**

Today, we will focus on any species we may have missed. Though we will spend most of the day driving to Havana, we will have a final morning to bird any sites in the Cayo Coco area. We will also have a chance for some coastal birding stops on the way to Havana, especially in the morning and the late afternoon. We can also count on the expertise of our premier local guides to slip in any additional birding, which may yield a look (or better look) at any species we may have missed thus far.

Tonight will be spent at the splendid Hotel Nacional in Havana.

After completing the bird checklist, your local guide will spend some time to clarify plans for the next day. Our goal will be to enrich your final day in Cuba with the fantastic cultural offerings of the island (and if you so desire a bit more target birding if there is much birding left).

### **Day 11: Flights Home Today**

No matter your plans, we will arrange a transfer to the airport.

As you travel home today, you can reflect on the beauty of Cuban birds and the wonderful opportunity to see Cuba.