



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC ENDEMIC JEWELS OF HISPANIOLA

December 3-10, 2024

**Guide: Steve Huggins
& Local Guide**

Price: \$3450
Based upon double occupancy
Single room supplement: \$650

This trip can be combined with [Jamaica](#). Sign up for both tours for \$300 off your invoice and a chance to see 60 island endemics!

Making up the eastern half of Hispaniola, the Caribbean's second largest and most endemic-rich island, the Dominican Republic boasts a diverse landscape that encompasses famous beaches, rainforests, and stunning mountains. Beyond its picturesque scenery, the Dominican Republic showcases a rich cultural heritage shaped by the fusion of indigenous Taino, Spanish, and African influences. And of course, the birding is top-notch. With over 30 endemics possible, the Dominican Republic is a must-stop for birders visiting the West Indies.

Island avifauna is often unique, and the Dominican Republic is no exception, with a monotypic family in the Palmchat and a few species, like Flat-billed Vireo and Antillean Piculet, that show how widespread families evolve on islands. There are also some incredible tropical jewels to seek out including two species of tody, members of a family of birds only found in the Caribbean, the gaudy Hispaniolan Woodpecker, and many others.

ITINERARY

Day 1, Tuesday, December 3. Arrival to Santo Domingo. Night in Santo Domingo.

Today will be a devoted travel day. We will pick you up from the airport and transfer over to a nearby hotel for our first night in the Dominican Republic. If we have time, we will search for some birds nearby.

Day 2, Wednesday, December 4. Santo Domingo and north slope of Sierra de Bahoruco. Night at Villa Barrancolí.

Our tour will begin with a stop at the National Botanic Garden in Santo Domingo for an introduction to the common endemics and to look for West Indian Whistling-Duck. If time allows, we'll make a quick birding stop along the coast for some new species. We will then continue driving west until reaching the town of Puerto Escondido, sitting 430 meters above sea level. Kate Wallace's (famous Caribbean birder and author) Villa Barrancolí will be our base for the first two nights of the trip.

In the afternoon, we will bird along the Rabo de Gato trail. The trail starts along a good stretch of riparian habitat in the northern foothills of Sierra de Bahoruco. This place holds a wonderful mixture of highland and lowland species including both Broad-billed and Narrow-billed Tody, Hispaniolan Pewee, Black-crowned Palm-Tanager, and Greater Antillean Bullfinch. We will also keep our eyes open for White-fronted Quail-Dove, Hispaniolan Parakeet and a host of neotropical migrants both migrating through and overwintering in the region. After an early dinner at our lodging, we will head out in search of Northern Potoo, Least Pauraque and Hispaniolan Nightjar.

Day 3, Thursday, December 5. Birding cloud forests and transitional forests. Night at Villa Barrancolí.

Today we have an "oh dark hundred" start to be able to reach the cloud forest above Zapotén at the break of dawn – we will have breakfast in the field. Today will be packed with endemics and we will spend the morning looking for high-elevation specialties around 1,200 meters. Targets include Western Chat-Tanager, La Selle Thrush, White-winged Warbler, Green-tailed Warbler, Hispaniolan Trogon, Hispaniolan Euphonia and Golden Swallow among many others. Working towards the pine forest, we will search for Hispaniolan Crossbill—showing just how far crossbills can wander--and the endemic subspecies of Pine Warbler.

After a midday lunch in the field, we will start descending until reaching suitable habitat for Hispaniolan Kingbird, Flat-billed Vireo, and the elusive Bay-breasted Cuckoo. We will also be searching for Key West Quail-Dove, Hispaniolan Parrot and Stolid Flycatcher. After dinner, we can again try for nightbirds like Ashy-faced Owl, and Hispaniolan Nightjar.

Day 4, Friday, December 6. Puerto Escondido and transfer to Barahona. Night in Barahona.

After an early breakfast, we will head out towards Loma Charco Azul. This dry transitional forest is home to the Bay-breasted Cuckoo and is our best place to look for it in Sierra de Bahoruco. We will also hike Rabo de Gato again to try for any species we might have missed. After lunch at Villa Barrancolí, we will pack our bags and drive to the coastal town of Barahona. If we have time before dinner, we can scope the coast from the cliffs, and with some luck, spot Black-capped Petrels cruising nearshore. If we still need it, we can try for the Ashy-faced Owl again.

Day 5, Saturday, December 7. Southern slope of Sierra de Bahoruco. Night in Barahona.

Another early departure will have us visiting the Alcoa Road above Pedernales, where we will have a field breakfast. We will bird along this paved road in transitional forest at dawn where we will search for Scaly-naped Pigeon, Antillean Piculet, Hispaniolan Emerald, Hispaniolan Parrot, Hispaniolan Siskin and others. If we still need Western Chat-Tanager, this is a good location. Next, we will head up to pine forests of Aceitillar at ~1,100 meters. Here, we will search for Hispaniolan Crossbill, Golden Swallow and Hispaniolan Palm-Crow. We will again have lunch in the field.

On the way back down, we will visit the Cabo Rojo seasonal wetlands, which can be very productive for shorebirds and waders. Targets here include American Flamingo, Roseate Spoonbill, Reddish Egret, Clapper Rail, Gull-billed Tern and many migrant shorebirds. There is always the possibility of a rare migrant, too! After our share of afternoon birding, we will return to Barahona for the night.

Day 6, Sunday December 8. Eastern Bahoruco cloud forests. Night in Santo Domingo

With an early start, will climb up to 1,100 meters and bird the Cachote cloud forest. Our main target will be the highly localized endemic Eastern Chat-Tanager. We will begin to head down around 9:30 am to enjoy brunch at our hotel in Barahona before packing and heading to Santo Domingo for the evening. If time allows, we can stop in La Salinas to check for more shorebirds and waders.

Day 7, Monday, December 9. Sabana de la Mar. Night in Sabana de la Mar

Today, we make our way to the famed forests of Sabana de la Mar on the north coast. Our main target will be the critically endangered Ridgway's Hawk. On our way, we might stop along the coast to look for White-tailed Tropicbirds and Cave Swallow. At another location, we can also try for Double-striped Thick-Knee and the local subspecies of Grasshopper Sparrow.

Once in Sabana de la Mar and after checking in, we can bird the forest proper. This will be our first try at finding the Ridgway's Hawk. The forest could also afford better views of Antillean Piculet, White-necked Crow and Hispaniolan Oriole. Other species we will be looking for include Hispaniolan Lizard-Cuckoo, Black-whiskered Vireo, Pearly-eyed Thrasher and Jamaican Mango. After dinner, we can search for any nightbirds we still might be missing.

Day 8, Tuesday, December 10. Sabana de la Mar and transfer to Santo Domingo. End of tour

After breakfast we will give it a second try to find Ridgway's Hawk if yesterday afternoon was unsuccessful. We could also search for Spotted Rail nearby if the field are flooded, and enjoy some general birding. After checkout and lunch, we will depart Sabana del Mar and return to Santo Domingo for afternoon and evening flights home or to continue to Jamaica for our second Caribbean tour. Safe travels!

IMPORTANT NOTES

Contact and registration information

To sign up, each participant should complete the [booking form](#). Once we receive the form, we will send you information about paying the trip deposit. If you have any questions before registering, please contact us at info@redhillbirding.com

Timing and logistics

The trip will begin in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic on the **evening of December 3, 2024**. The international airport is Las Américas International Airport (IATA: SDQ). We will pick you up at the airport and transfer you to our hotel in the city. This is a dedicated arrival day, but if you would like to arrive earlier and would like accommodation in the group's hotel, please reach out to us. Our tour will begin with a welcome dinner where we will review the plans for our week of birding.

The trip will end in at the same location **in the afternoon of December 10, 2024**. We plan to be at the airport by 2:30 pm, so please plan your afternoon flights accordingly. If you would like an extra night at a hotel before departure, we can help with recommendations.

If you are joining the Jamaica tour that starts on December 11, we will book the inter-island flight and the hotel on the night of December 10 and add the price to your final invoice. Due to unknown flight schedules, we need to allow one night between the tours. The night may be in Kingston, Jamaica, or it may be in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, depending on the flight schedule.

Currently, there are no entry requirements for the Dominican Republic outside of a passport valid for at least 6 months prior to departure, and there are no COVID-19 entry or exit requirements for travel to and from the United States. Please check the state department for the most updated visa and passport information before traveling.

Physical difficulty

This trip is **physically moderate**. We will be on our feet and walking quite a bit, generally several miles in a day, but we will be walking at a "birding pace." Although most places the

walking will be easy, some areas are hilly and we will be walking on trails that are not flat or evenly graded and can be muddy if it has been raining.

Pace

The **pace** of the trip is **moderate**. A typical day will have us up early or very early to take advantage of early-morning bird activity and to ensure we get to our primary birding locations for the best morning activity. This will sometimes involve 4x4 truck drives on rough roads. Some days, we will have a siesta after lunch back before heading back out for more birding in the late afternoon as activity begins to pick back up. We will often have the opportunity for nighttime excursions to search for owls, nightjars and other nocturnal creatures.

Price

The price of the trip is **\$3450** per person and is based upon double occupancy. The single room supplement is **\$650**. The price includes all meals (excluding alcoholic beverages) from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8; all transportation and accommodation during that period; a Red Hill Birding guide and fantastic local guide; any park entrance fees; and a bound checklist to keep track of sightings during the trip. It does not include alcoholic beverages, travel insurance, optional activities, snacks, laundry, tips (apart from local guide, driver and meals), or other items of a personal nature. ***There is a \$300 discount for participants joining us on both the Dominican Republic and Jamaica tours! There is one night between tours to allow for flight schedules between the islands; we will book the flight and the hotel and add those prices to the final invoice.***

A deposit of \$800 per person and the submission of the booking form will secure your place on the trip. Upon receiving your booking form, we will send you deposit details. Final payment is due by September 10, 2024. We accept payment by Zelle, check, and bank transfer/electronic check. We also accept payment by credit card with an additional 3.3% processing fee.

For those continuing with us to Jamaica, Red Hill Birding will be handling the inter-island flight to Jamaica scheduled for the evening of December 10. The internal flight is not included in the tour cost and will be billed separately closer to the tour.

Hotels & Food

Accommodations in the Dominican Republic are generally good. While our lodgings are not luxurious, they are surrounded by excellent birds and birding opportunities. Lodging will range from basic to standard. All accommodations will have en suite bathrooms.

Internet is available in every place we are staying but take that with a grain of salt. It often does not function as well as you would hope. Power outlets in the Dominican Republic are Type A and Type B, the same plug configuration as the United States and Canada. They are 120V supply voltage and 60Hz.

Food in the Dominican Republic is generally delicious and of excellent quality. We will have ample opportunities to sample traditional cuisines. Vegetarian options are usually good. Please let us know of any food allergies or preferences in advance.

Weather

The Dominican Republic is a tropical country, and the weather will generally be warm and humid. It will be slightly cooler in the Bahoruco Mountains. Even though we are traveling in the dry season, rain can still be possible and having appropriate rain gear will be essential. We will get plenty of sunshine, so plan accordingly with hat, sunscreen, and other sun protection. Bugs, including mosquitos will be around, but not a terrible nuisance. Bug spray will be helpful.

Packing considerations

You will generally want to wear comfortable, light-weight clothing. Long sleeves and long pants are recommended for sun and insect protection. Sturdy hiking boots will be beneficial on some trails and a light sweater or jacket is useful for cool mornings in the mountains. Even though we are visiting during the dry season, it is essential to pack a rain jacket or an umbrella for the trip.

In terms of gear, you will want to bring the usual binoculars, field guide and a hat. A reusable water bottle and, for coffee drinkers, a travel coffee mug, are useful to have along in the car during the day. You will want to bring sunscreen and insect repellent as well. Your guide will have a scope and speaker with calls/songs of the region handy.

Resources

The best field guide for Jamaica is the recently released *Birds of the West Indies Second Edition* by Herbert A. Raffaele and James Wiley. It covers all of the species on our tour and is thorough.

Another excellent tool is the Merlin Bird ID App by Cornell University. In it, you can download "bird packs" for regions all over the world. Included is a nice pack for the Caribbean that includes all the species we will target on this tour. This app is free and includes photos and audio, which is very helpful.

eBird

Your Red Hill Birding guide and/or local guides will be eBirding the entire tour. If you have an eBird account, they will collect your username/email address to share those lists and will share them out when it is convenient. You are welcome to edit your lists to add/remove species, edit text, or change numbers as much as you would like, since any edits you make to your lists do not change others' lists. And we love it when participants add photos and sound recordings to the checklists!

Your leader will also provide an eBird Trip Report after the tour and will add participants who have an eBird account to the report; this way, you can see your own personal trip details and those of the whole group. These trip reports are accessible to anyone who has the link, so

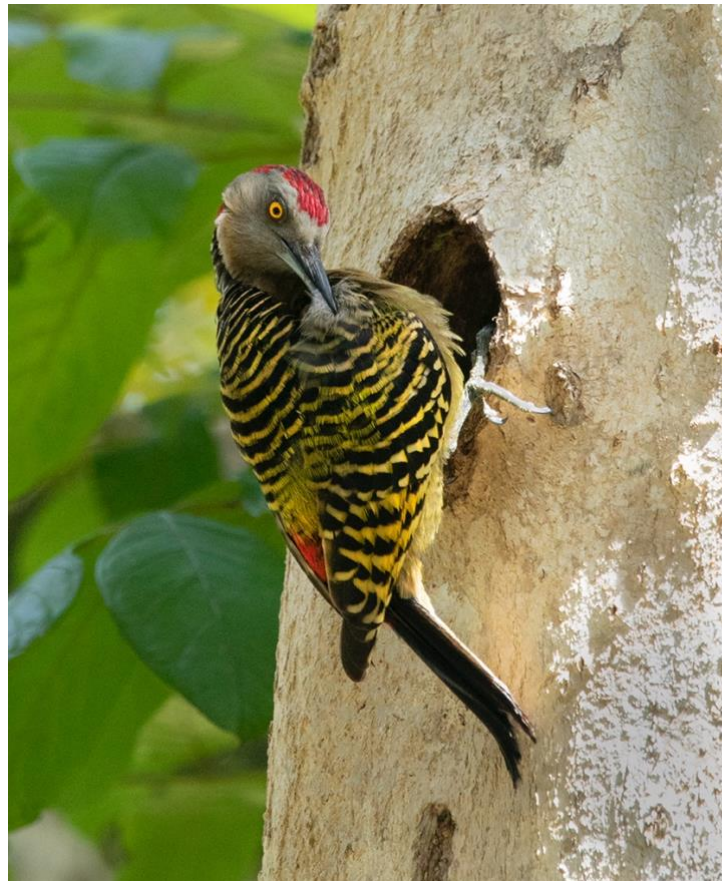
participants who do not have eBird accounts can still view the report to see the trip list, photos, and any added text.

Travel insurance

We do not require travel insurance for international travel. However, we recommend purchasing it to help protect you against the unexpected. For your convenience, we offer travel protection through Travelex Insurance Services. For more information on the available plans or to enroll, go to www.travelexinsurance.com or contact Travelex Insurance Services at 800-228-9792 and reference location number 13-0441.

Travelex Insurance Services, Inc CA Agency License #0D10209. Travel Insurance is underwritten by, Berkshire Hathaway Specialty Insurance Company, NAIC #22276. 55Y

Note that to be eligible for some benefits, travel insurance must be purchased within 1-2 weeks of paying the trip deposit.



The Hispaniolan Woodpecker is just one of many endemics we will seek out on this tour!