Full Detailed Itinerary - Jamaica: The Caribbean Introtour

Day 1: Arrival in Kingston

After arrival in Kingston, you will be transferred to a local Kingston hotel for the night. The tour starts with an evening welcome dinner with the guide.

Day 2: Hellshire Hills & Hope Gardens to the Blue Mountains

Our Jamaican tour with a pre-dawn start to ensure we make it the short distance to Hellshire Hills a short time after dawn, before the intense Caribbean heat makes the place unpleasant to bird. We should need only a short time here to find the key species, Bahama Mockingbird, which has just two small populations on the island, and Jamaican Mango. Then we'll move to the tranquil enclave of Hope Gardens (located near the rainbow-colored Bob Marley Museum), where parrots will be on the agenda; this site provides the best chance on the tour for the endemic, and handsome Yellow-billed Parrot. While there we may also find "Jamaican" Parakeet (an endemic subspecies that may be split off from the widespread Olive-throated Parakeet). After lunch in Kingston, we shall head north into the pleasantly cool Blue Mountains, an area famed for production of some of the most revered coffee in the World, and also one of the ultimate sites for endemic birds on Jamaica. In the afternoon, we will check in to the serene surroundings of our mountain chalet, which comes equipped with busy bird feeders, and endemic birds right in their well-manicured garden. We will spend two nights at a comfortable chalet in the Blue Mountains.

Day 3: The Blue Mountains

A full day will be spent birding in one of the most idyllic locations in Jamaica, the Blue Mountains. Here the habitat is montane forest at an elevation of some 4000ft/1225m, which provides not only streams of endemic species (all but a few of the endemic birds can be found there), but also a pleasing climate, in sharp contrast to the heat and humidity of Kingston and other lowland coastal sites. Our target here will be to amass more than 20 of the endemic species, including some of the scarcer ones, for which this represents arguably the best site on the island, like Jamaican Blackbird (a strange, bromeliad-loving forest icterid), Crested Quail-Dove, and the well-named Blue Mountain Vireo. Some of the more common endemic birds include the hulking Ring-tailed Pigeon that regularly pass overhead; Jamaican Pewee, which regular flit from their regular perches; White-chinned Thrush that often hops on and off the dirt roads that cuts through the mountain, and the super Jamaican Tody, which, by voice, appears to be around every corner! Our mountain chalet comes with a small set of sugar feeders, which attract one of Jamaica's most famous birds. Known locally as the "Doctor Bird", the Red-billed Streamertail, is Jamaica's national bird, proudly adorning roads signs, and tourist paraphernalia, this is the most regular visitor to the chalet's feeders, located on a balcony overlooking their well-managed garden. Other birds that may drop in for the "sugar harvest", include Jamaican Oriole, the endemic Orangequit, and perhaps too a wintering American warbler or two. Among the other endemic targets will be Jamaican Becard, Sad Flycatcher, the stunning Jamaican Spindalis, and Arrow-headed Warbler. At night we can take the chance to search for a Jamaican Owl or Northern Potoo too.

Day 4: The Blue Mountains to Port Antonio

We will have a final morning in the Blue Mountains to search for any “missing” endemics we might still need like the subdued Jamaican Elaenia, the chocolate-headed White-eyed Thrush, or striking Yellow-shouldered Grassquit (not your average grassquit for sure with its saffron back, burnt red vent, and coal black underside), before we move up to the north coast, some two-hours’ drive away. During our northward we will also move into the range of Black-tailed Streamertail.

Day 5: Happy Cove and Ecclesdown Road

Early in the morning, we will visit a beautiful cove in the northeast of Jamaica, where White-tailed Tropicbirds nest on the scenic cliffs. After that, the morning and afternoon will focus on the lowland forests and woods at the base of the John Crow Mountains, alongside the famous Ecclesdown Road. This is one of the most famous birding destinations in Jamaica and can lay claim to hosting every single one of Jamaica’s endemic birds. Therefore, it provides an excellent backup site for any that may have been missed in the Blue Mountains (which is still a necessary site for some of these, providing the optimum chances for species like Blue Mountain Vireo, Crested Quail-Dove, and Jamaican Blackbird); it is also the only good site on the tour for the Black-billed Parrot, the local Black-billed Streamertail (that is confined to the northeast of Jamaica), and Jamaican Crow, (which is strangely absent from southern Jamaica). The final night of the tour will be spent in Port Antonio.

Day 6: Port Antonio to Kingston for departures

This is merely a travel day, as we drive from Port Antonio to Kingston airport, arriving at 11am in time for several afternoon departures.

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