Full Detailed Itinerary - Guyana: Birding the Land of Many Waters

Day 1: Arrival in Georgetown

The tour begins today; airport transfers will be provided to our hotel in the city, where we spend the first two nights. No birding is planned for today.

Day 2: Birding near Georgetown

We'll depart early today with a packed breakfast, and drive east of Georgetown to the Mahaica River. A morning boat ride will offer easy birding where comical Hoatzins are easy to see as they hiss and clamber in the riverside vegetation. We'll see many other birds as well which may include Blood-colored Woodpecker, White-bellied Piculet, Long-winged Harrier, Spotted Tody-Flycatcher, Green-tailed Jacamar, Black-crested Antshrike, Silvered Antbird, Little Cuckoo, and Pied Water-Tyrant. We'll then head to some mangroves where we should find Rufous Crab Hawk and various other species before returning to Georgetown. In the late afternoon, we'll bird at the nearby Botanical Gardens, where we have another chance to see Blood-colored Woodpecker along with numerous other species including Festive Parrot, Black-necked Aracari, Toco Toucan, Black-collared Hawk, Cinereous Becard, and many more.

Day 3: Kaieteur Falls

If time allows, we'll return to the Botanical Gardens for more birding, and then transfer to the airport for a flight to Kaieteur Falls. Kaieteur Falls is one of the most impressive single-drop falls in the world at 741 ft. (226 m.). Weather permitting, we will see the falls from the plane as well as from several different viewpoints on the ground, but we won't ignore the birds either. There is a great Guianan Cock-of-the-rock lek here that will give us our first chance to see this amazing beast. We'll see other birds as well, but it is very hard to predict which ones due to the short amount of time we have on the ground; they could include such species as Red-shouldered Tanager, Roraiman Antbird, Tufted Coquette, and various swifts. Please be aware that, in the event of inclement weather, it may not be possible to land at Kaieteur Falls, in which case we will go directly to Iwokrama. We'll then board the plane again for a short flight to Iwokrama River Lodge, where we spend two nights; despite the name, it is located on the banks of the Essequibo River, Guyana's longest. The lodge offers spacious cabins with balconies, and the open-air restaurant/bar area makes a great viewing platform – often Red-capped Cardinals, Silver-beaked Tanagers, and other bold birds join us for meals! We'll have the afternoon for some birding near the lodge, which can be excellent for parrots such as Red-fan Parrot, Red-and-green Macaw and Blue-and-yellow Macaws, Painted Parakeet, and others. Late in the afternoon we may take a short walk along the trails for our first chance at the weird Capuchinbird – males are partly bald and give a bizarre mooing call while displaying! We may also see other rainforest species like Ringed and Chestnut Woodpeckers, Variable Chachalaca, Green-backed Trogon, Cinereous Antshrike, and others.

Day 4: Iwokrama River Lodge and Turtle Mountain

After an early breakfast, we'll head up the Essequibo river, stopping at some rapids to see Black-collared Swallow and Capped Heron. We'll spend the whole morning birding our way up to the top of Turtle

Mountain. It’s about 2 miles each way and a 1000 ft. (300 m) elevation gain, with some steep sections, but anyone not wishing to go all the way up have the option to only go part of the way, and then stay on the lower part with one of the local bird guides. The trail passes through beautiful rainforest and the list of possible birds is very long, but some of them include Yellow-billed Jacamar, Red-and-black and Yellow-green Grosbeaks, Spix’s Guan, Amazonian Antshrike, Brown-bellied Antwren, Guianan Warbling-Antbird, White-plumed Antbird, Common Scale-backed Antbird, Ferruginous-backed Antbird, Long-tailed Hermit, Black Nunbird, and Chestnut-rumped Woodcreeper. We’ll have a packed lunch back down at the base camp (which is also a great place to spend time birding), and then head back to the lodge. After a break, we'll walk a short distance into the forest to look for the bizarre Capuchinbird, and may also take an evening boat ride to look for Ladder-tailed Nightjar and other species.

Day 5: Iwokrama River Lodge to Atta Lodge

After breakfast, we’ll drive south to our next lodge, making various stops along the way. Stream crossings sometimes have the impressive Crimson Topaz, and there are areas with sandy soil and stunted forest that harbor some localized birds such as Rufous-crowned Elaenia, Black Manakin, Black-necked Red Cotinga, and Olivaceous Schiffornis. We’ll arrive at Atta Rainforest Lodge for lunch. This lodge (where we spend two nights) is located in small clearing surrounded by forest which can be full of birds any time of the day. Black Curassows have become habituated here and frequently wander through the lodge clearing. Atta is best known for its canopy walkway, which offers nearly eye-level views of canopy species that can be hard to see from the forest floor. We’ll spend the afternoon on the walkway, where Guianan Puffbird, Guianan Toucanet, Todd’s and Spot-tailed Antwrens, Waved Woodpecker, Crimson Fruitcrow, Dusky Purpletuft, Guianan Trogon, Green Aracari, and Purple-breasted Cotinga are just some of the possibilities.

Day 6: Atta Lodge

We’ll start the day the canopy walkway once again looking for anything we missed yesterday, then spend the rest of the morning birding the forest trails. Red-and-black Grosbeak and Black-throated Antshrike will be near the top of our “want list”, and local guides sometimes have good stakeouts for Spotted Antpitta. Other possibilities include Ferruginous-backed Antbird, Red-billed Woodcreeper, Rufous-bellied Antwren, just to mention a few. After lunch and a siesta, we’ll spend the late afternoon birding the road where we should find Guianan Streaked-Antwren, and will have more chances at various canopy species like Marail Guan, Blue-cheeked and Dusky Parrots, and Black-spotted Barbet. At dusk, we will try for White-winged Potoo at a known stakeout.

Day 7: Atta Lodge to Surama

We’ll spend the morning targeting any birds we still need, then drive to Surama Eco-Lodge, where we stay two nights. This lodge is run by Surama Village, a small Makushi Amerindian village. We’ll spend the afternoon birding the forest edge near the lodge where we may find our first Finch’s Euphonias and Wedge-tailed Grass-Finches along with parrots, toucans, and others.

Day 8: Surama

The plan for today will depend on whether there are any active Harpy Eagle nests during our stay. If there is, we will embark on a two+ hour journey by 4×4 and boat to see the nest, Otherwise, we will spend more time birding closer to Surama.

Day 9: To Caiman House

We'll spend the morning looking for anything else we still need in the area, then will transfer to Caiman House for a two-night stay, a journey of several hours. This lodge is located a few hundred yards from the Rupununi River,

Day 10: Caiman House

We'll take advantage of the cooler early-morning hours to bird the savanna areas and wetlands north of the lodge. We'll look for the rare and local Crested Doradito, Bearded Tachuri, the elegant Maguari Stork, the hyperactive White-tailed Goldenthroat, among many other more common species; we also have a good chance to see a Giant Anteater. We'll spend the afternoon birding by boat. The banks of the river and some of the smaller creeks that feed into it are a great place to look for the very shy Crestless Curassow, especially if water levels are low. Kingfishers are also common here, and we could see up to five species including Green-and-rufous Kingfisher. With luck, we could also see an Agami Heron or even a family of Giant Otters.

Day 11: Sun Parakeets

We leave quite early this morning with a packed breakfast as we drive two hours through the savanna to the village of Karasabai. This is one of the last strongholds of the endangered Sun Parakeet, a truly stunning bird restricted to Guyana and adjacent areas of northern Brazil. We stand an excellent chance of seeing it, along with a few other birds such a different subspecies of White-bellied Piculet (a possible future split), and an odd, local form of Yellow-hooded Blackbird. We'll then drive south to Manari Ranch near Lethem, where we spend the next two nights. We'll have a relaxing afternoon so as to be ready for the early start the next day, but want to be out at dusk to look for nighthawks flying over including Lesser and Least Nighthawks.

Day 12: Red Siskins

A very early start is necessary this morning (we'll depart at around 3:30am with a packed breakfast and lunch, and coffee will be available at 3:00am). We drive about three hours south of Manari to the village of Sand Creek, where a local guide will accompany us to the best locations to see the endangered Red Siskin. This species formerly ranged in much of Colombia and Venezuela, but has been nearly wiped out due poaching and other factors. It was discovered in Guyana in 2000, far from any known previous site, and this area is now probably the best place in the world to see it. The siskins are usually best seen near springs at the base of the mountains, and we will stake out one or more of them, waiting for the birds to come in; they are seen by most visitors, but are occasionally missed. Other birds we could see in the area include White-barred Piculet, Aplomado and Bat Falcons, Blue-tailed Emerald, Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant, Finch's Euphonia, and Cayenne Jay. On our way back to Manari, we'll spend more time birding the savanna, where we'll have another chance at species such as Bearded Tachuri and Double-striped Thick-knee.

Day 13: Ireng River and return to Georgetown

We don't have to leave quite so early this morning, as we drive north of Manari to the Ireng River on the Brazilian border. Along the way, we'll check grasslands and wetlands

for Nacunda Nighthawk, Pinnated Bittern, and any other last species we haven't seen yet. Rio Branco Antbird and Hoary-throated Spinetail are two very local species that are considered critically endangered due to the predicted future deforestation of most of their range. They are usually easy to hear, but can be shy and hard to see in the dense thickets they prefer. However, we know some great spots where we stand a good chance of getting some looks. Other birds in this area include Pale-legged Hornero, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Pale-tipped Tyrannulet, Spot-breasted Woodpecker, Crested Bobwhite, and Red-bellied Macaw. We'll return to Manari for lunch, then pack up and head to the airport for a short flight back to Georgetown, where we spend one final night.

Day 14: Departure

The tour ends this morning with transfers to the airport.

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