



PUERTO RICO

February 20 - 26, 2027



Puerto Rican Tody © Raymond Van Buskirk

Puerto Rico, once a Spanish colony and now a U.S. territory and popular holiday destination, provides an easy week-long getaway for the visiting birder. With excellent roads providing convenient access to its many forest reserves, Puerto Rico offers some of the most enjoyable birdwatching in the Caribbean.

The focus of our trip will be on the western half of the island, where many of the special birds occur. We'll seek all eighteen island endemics and more than two dozen other Caribbean specialty birds, visiting every habitat from the windswept elfin-woods of the Maricao highlands to the bird-rich thorn scrub of the Guanica Dry Forest region. Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo, Puerto Rican Amazon, Puerto Rican Owl, Puerto Rican Tody, Puerto Rican Spindalis and Elfin-woods Warbler are some of the many tantalizing avian prizes that await!

February 20, Day 1: Travel to Puerto Rico

Participants should plan to arrive today at Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport (airport code SJU) in San Juan. Private car service will provide transportation to El Convento Boutique Hotel, where a room has been reserved in your name. Please refer to the tour departure memo for specific arrival and transportation information.

Located in the heart of San Juan Viejo (Old San Juan), El Convento is one of Puerto Rico's most distinctive places to stay. Dating to 1646, the building served as a convent for more than 250 years before being transformed into a hotel. Unlike the nondescript beach hotels common in the area, El Convento exudes character, charm, and a peaceful atmosphere. The hotel features interior courtyards, thick stone walls, wooden-beam ceilings, antique furnishings, tile floors and balconies overlooking the historic streets below. The guest rooms, decorated in Spanish Colonial Style, contain ample space, comfortable beds, and air conditioning.

El Convento occupies a prime location in the city, sitting in easy walking distance to a number of San Juan Viejo's most important attractions and historical sites including the Cathedral of San Juan Bautista, El Morro fortress, San Cristóbal fortress, many shops, galleries, cafes, restaurants, and, of course, the waterfront. Those interested in experiencing this historic old colonial city should consider arriving early by a day or more.

We will meet in the hotel lobby at 6:00 p.m. for a welcome orientation, followed by dinner.

NIGHT: El Convento Boutique Hotel, San Juan

February 21, Day 2: Rio Abajo State Forest and on to La Parguera

After an early breakfast at the hotel, we'll depart for Rio Abajo State Forest, located in the west-central part of the island about a little more than an hour to the west of San Juan, where we'll spend the morning birding the mature woodlands for a host of island endemic birds. In the afternoon we'll head to La Parguera on the southwest coast.

Rio Abajo State Forest is one of Puerto Rico's most important birding and conservation areas. Part of the island's Northern Karst region, it is famous for its limestone hills, sinkholes, caves, and general biodiversity. The premier bird of the area is the Puerto Rican Amazon, an endemic parrot brought back from the brink of extinction.

After centuries of habitat loss, hunting, capture, and hurricanes, the once plentiful Puerto Rican Amazon was down to only 13 individuals by 1975. The reality of impending extinction spurred a massive conservation effort involving the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, U.S. Forest Service, and numerous universities and conservation organizations. The conservation program was multi-fronted, with key actions including captive breeding, nest management, and releases into the wild. The effort spanned decades, but today Puerto Rico is proudly home to several hundred birds, many in the captive breeding program, but, critically, many truly wild and free-flying birds.



Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo © Raymond VanBuskirk

While seeing the parrot is an objective, it is a fact that the subtropical moist and wet limestone forest in this preserve offers some of the best birding the island has to offer, with a great chance for many of the island endemics in addition to Puerto Rican Amazon. The parking area often bustles with birds, including Puerto Rican Oriole and Puerto Rican Euphonia among many

others, and we stand a good chance of seeing the endemic subspecies of Broad-winged Hawk on late morning thermals.

We'll enjoy a picnic lunch in the park's picnic ground where we're likely to find Puerto Rican Bullfinch, whose calls are very similar to Northern Cardinal. Here too we should find the exquisite Puerto Rican Tody and the entertaining Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo. We'll also look for Puerto Rican Vireo, Puerto Rican Spindalis, and the sprightly Adelaide's Warbler.

After lunch, we begin our drive west and south. We'll stop at a few roadside wetlands that typically hold an assortment of waders and waterfowl, then pause at a cliffside overlook where we'll hope to observe White-tailed Tropicbirds conducting courtship flights in the bay below. This is also one of the only remaining locations to reliably find the Puerto Rican Harlequin Butterfly, a species of checkerspot.

In the late afternoon, we'll arrive at the comfortable Turtle Bay Inn in La Parguera.

NIGHT: Turtle Bay Inn, La Parguera

February 22, Day 3: Maricao highlands

We'll rise early this morning and drive to the Maricao highlands where we will spend most of the day in the lush montane landscapes of Maricao State Forest. Two endemic hummingbirds occur here: Puerto Rican Emerald and the impressive Green Mango. In addition, Puerto Rican Woodpecker, Loggerhead Kingbird (a distinctive, endemic subspecies), and Puerto Rican Tanager are likely. The star attraction, however, is the Elfin-woods Warbler, only reported to Western science in 1971. It can be hard to see well as it is very active and a bit reclusive, but if we're patient, it generally reveals itself. Along the way we are likely to encounter a host of island and Caribbean specialty birds including Scaly-naped Pigeon, Red-legged Thrush and Pearly-eyed Thrasher among the many possibilities.

NIGHT: Turtle Bay Inn, La Parguera



Elfin Woods Warbler © Raymond Van Buskirk

February 23, Day 4: Morning at Sabana Grande; afternoon at La Parguera

We'll rise early again this morning for a 30-minute drive to the town of Sabana Grande, where we'll enjoy breakfast at a *panaderia* (bakery) followed by a short drive to Susua State Forest for a morning of birding. Here, amid the dry forest of the 3,240-acre preserve, we'll make a special effort to observe Key West Quail-Dove, Puerto Rican Pewee, and other dry forest species.



Key West Quail-Dove © Raymond Van Buskirk

In the afternoon, we'll return to La Parguera to look for waterbirds and make our first attempt to find the endangered Yellow-shouldered Blackbird. In the evening, we'll visit Laguna Cartagena National Wildlife Refuge where we'll scrutinize several wetland areas for rare species such as West Indian Whistling-Duck, Masked Duck, and Yellow-breasted Crake. After dinner, we'll search for Puerto Rican Nightjar.

NIGHT: Turtle Bay Inn, La Parguera



Yellow-shouldered Blackbird
© Raymond Van Buskirk

February 24, Day 5: Southwestern lowlands and Cabo Rojo

We'll spend the whole day birding in the lowlands of the southwest corner of the island. A visit to the Cabo Rojo area will yield scenic ocean views and opportunities to observe birds of the sea, wetlands and mangroves. A fun sampling of birds we may see here includes Brown Booby, Magnificent Frigatebird, Clapper Rail, Smooth-billed Ani, Puerto Rican Flycatcher, Caribbean Elaenia, Greater Antillean Grackle, and Prairie and Adelaide's warblers.

Another stop at Laguna Cartagena could produce such highly sought species as West Indian Whistling-Duck, White-crowned Pigeon, White-cheeked Pintail, Mangrove Cuckoo, Puerto Rican Mango, and Black-faced and Yellow-faced grassquits.



West Indian Whistling-Duck © Raymond VanBuskirk

Puerto Rico is also home to a variety of introduced non-native passerines, species either released intentionally into the wild or escaped caged birds. A trip to Rice Tech (west end of Laguna Cartagena) should yield some of these exotic species. Among the strange menagerie of birds that occur here are White-winged Parakeet, Northern Red Bishop, Pin-tailed Whydah, and Orange-cheeked Waxbill. Here too are native grassland birds and wintering shorebirds.

In the evening, we'll look for the "Caribbean" Short-eared Owl at a secret spot!

NIGHT: Turtle Bay Inn, La Parguera

February 25, Day 6: Morning birding and return to San Juan

We'll return to San Juan today, stopping along the way to look for the globally scarce Plain Pigeon and Antillean Crested Hummingbird. At our final stop in San Juan, we'll search a local community garden and plant nursery for Green-throated Carib, a hummingbird of the Lesser Antillean Archipelago that reaches its northern limit in central Puerto Rico.

We'll arrive back in San Juan by mid-afternoon. Our hotel for the night is the San Juan Airport Hotel, selected for its immediate proximity to the airport.

This evening we'll gather for a final checklist session and farewell dinner.

NIGHT: San Juan Airport Hotel, San Juan

February 26, Day 7: Departure for home

Participants are free to depart San Juan at any time this morning. The hotel is connected to the departure terminal. You'll merely walk down a short hallway and arrive at the check-in area.

ESSENTIAL TOUR INFORMATION

TOUR SIZE: This tour is limited to 7 tour participants. However, VENT reserves the right to increase the tour limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space is available

TOUR LEADER(s): This tour is led by **Raymond L. VanBuskirk**.



Raymond L. VanBuskirk is an expert birder who has been guiding tours for over a decade. Raymond has led tours throughout the Western Hemisphere from Alaska to Chile and most parts in between. He has guided in almost every country in Central America, across the Caribbean, and down both sides of the Andes in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Chile. Raymond's experience is not limited to the New World—he has traveled widely across the globe, has spent a great deal of time in the Pacific studying pelagics, and has led tours in Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Raymond has had a longtime commitment to ornithology. In addition to guiding, he has conducted research with USFWS in the Arctic Ocean, North Pacific, and New Mexico. He has held leadership roles in the Central New Mexico Bird Alliance and Western Field Ornithologists. Raymond also helped guide the next generation of birders by being a regular instructor at the ABA's youth birding camps and at the Hog Island Audubon camps in Hog Island, Maine.

Raymond is also committed to including everyone in birding, and organizes and leads annual conferences for QBNA, an informal club for LGBTQIA+ birders. When not leading tours or conducting research, Raymond can be found at his home in St. Louis, Missouri with his partner, Marissa; stepdaughter Savannah; and their dog and two large snakes.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: \$4,350 per person based on double occupancy or \$5,090 for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 7, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, all ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does **not** include airfare to nor from the starting/ending city; however, flights within the tour (if any) are included. The fee also excludes laundry, personal expenses, and other items of a personal nature. For information about gratuities, please see the “TIPPING” sub-section below. If the minimum group size is not met, each participant will be charged a small-group supplement—shared equally and communicated in advance—to allow the tour to proceed.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: You may register for this tour through the VENT [website](#) or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The initial deposit for this tour is \$1,000 per person. At 180 days VENT will collect a second deposit that brings the total deposit amount to 40% of the tour price. We accept MasterCard and Visa for both deposits.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days (October 23, 2026) prior to the tour departure date.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: Tour prices are based on the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If rates change drastically, it may be necessary to impose a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges have been passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

FUEL SURCHARGES: Our prices are based on fuel prices at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TIPPING: An important part of the value of a VENT tour is knowing that tips for local service providers at our destinations—restaurant staff, hotel staff, drivers, local guides, and various other support staff—are included in your tour fee. If you would like to offer any of your local guides an additional tip, \$5 to \$10 a day is a common amount.

Tips for your VENT tour leader(s) are **not** included, but it is customary to tip one or both if you feel that you have received exceptional service. To assist in your planning, we recommend tipping your VENT tour leader(s) \$15 to \$20 per day, or the equivalent of approximately 2–4% of the tour fee.

If you plan to give tips by cash, they should be given directly to your tour leader at the end of the tour and **not** sent to the VENT office. Some of our tour leaders use mobile payment applications such as Venmo, PayPal, and Wise. If you would like to use this method, please ask your tour leaders directly whether they can accept tips through such an application.

We emphasize that tipping is optional and that these amounts are only recommendations. The amount you decide to tip is based entirely on your experience and at your discretion.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS

CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT:

- **More than 120 days prior to the tour start date:** A refund of all monies paid will be issued, less 50% of the deposit (including initial and second deposit)

- **120 days or fewer prior to the tour start date:** No refund will be provided.
- **Optional add-ons:** Some tours offer optional add-ons that are designated as non-refundable. Any such add-ons are clearly identified as non-refundable at the time of booking. By selecting and purchasing an optional add-on, the participant acknowledges and accepts its non-refundable status. Fees paid for non-refundable add-ons are not refundable under any circumstances, regardless of when the tour is cancelled.

This cancellation policy applies to all participants and all tours (Pre-Tours and Extensions are considered self-contained tours separate from the main tour). Because unexpected events can occur, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance.

CANCELLATION BY VENT:

If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement. A ***“Force Majeure”*** event means any act beyond VENT’s control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

SUGGESTED OPTIONS: To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with **Redpoint Travel Protection** as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend its comprehensive Ripcord plan, which includes a medical evacuation benefit. With this in mind, it is important to note that medical evacuation is not offered by Redpoint as a stand-alone policy or benefit. For travelers not interested in comprehensive travel insurance, VENT recommends **Medjet** and its **MedjetAssist®** plan. Medjet is not an insurance company, and Medjet Assist is not an insurance product; rather, Medjet is a membership-based air-medical transport company specializing in moving hospitalized travelers from an admitting hospital to a medical facility of choice. Medjet does not provide medical evacuation service from the point of injury or illness; yet, the MedjetAssist plan offers robust enough travel protection to satisfy the medical evacuation insurance requirement in place for many VENT tours.

About Redpoint Travel's Ripcord Plan

Ripcord is a completely integrated travel insurance program with single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims. Critical benefits include comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice; medical expense coverage, death of pet, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items

such as evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or political or security reasons, waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.*

For a price quote or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: [Ripcord Travel Insurance](#); or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help > Preparation and Insurance > Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, second deposit, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip costs in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy. Redpoint maintains a [Coronavirus FAQ page](#) on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

About Medjet’s MedjetAssist Plan

MedjetAssist is a membership program that functions like AAA for motorists. The company’s primary service is air medical transport. Critical benefits of MedjetAssist include a staff on

call and ready to provide assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; all-expenses-paid air medical transport in the United States and internationally to medical facility of choice, regardless of medical necessity; repatriation of remains; and no exclusions for pre-existing conditions.

For travelers under 75, MedjetAssist may be purchased as Short-Term Memberships of 8, 15, 21, and 30 days, or Regular Annual Memberships from 1 to 5 years. For travelers 75–84, Medjet offers a Diamond Membership that is the same program but with a few additional conditions.

For a price quote or to purchase MedjetAssist, please visit: [Medjet.com/VentBird](https://www.Medjet.com/VentBird) or call 1-800-527-7478. Pricing is based on type and term of membership.

GETTING THERE & REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

AIR TRAVEL: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international.* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. **Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be held responsible for any air ticket penalties.**

*An air ticket will be purchased by Victor Emanuel Travel on behalf of the traveler with the traveler's consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveler (i.e. voluntary change of plans), the

same fee rates apply for the reissue process, in addition to any fees that may be charged by the airline.

BAGGAGE: Please limit baggage to one piece of luggage and one carry-on. The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. Please consult your pre-departure materials and/or airline to find out specific weight restrictions.

As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security, we recommend that you check the website of the [Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\)](#) for information pertaining to permissible carry-on items.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

PASSPORTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure is not required for U.S. citizens.

VISAS: Visas are not required for U.S. citizens traveling to this destination. If you hold a passport from another country, please check with your consulate or embassy for the most accurate guidance.

IMPORTANT: The visa details above are current for U.S. citizens as of July 27, 2026. Because entry requirements can change without notice, we kindly remind all participants to double-check the latest information before traveling. Travelers using non-U.S. passports are responsible for confirming any entry requirements that apply to their home country.

CLOTHING:

- **Long Sleeved Shirts:** Recommended for sun & insect protection.
- **Pants:** Lightweight for warm weather
- **Hat**

- **Light Coat or Jacket**
- **Swimwear**

FOOTWEAR: A good trail walking shoe or light hiking boot.

EQUIPMENT: Having the right equipment makes the travel experience more enjoyable. Below is a list of items that will ensure you are well-prepared:

- **Backpack**
- **Sunglasses**
- **Umbrella**
- **Water Bottle**
- **Small flashlight or Headlamp**

Binoculars: We strongly recommend you bring a pair of good binoculars of 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 magnification. Please do not bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. You will find that 8x32 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Spotting Scopes: Your tour leaders will have scopes available for group use throughout the trip, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

DESTINATION INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS

CLIMATE & WEATHER: Late February and early March are among the most pleasant times of year to visit Puerto Rico. The island enjoys a warm tropical climate year-round, but this period falls during the drier season, bringing comfortable temperatures, relatively low humidity, and abundant sunshine. While rain showers are always possible in the tropics, they are typically brief and localized, allowing birding to continue with only minor interruptions. Thanks to Puerto Rico's steady trade winds and the diversity of habitats we will visit, conditions are generally comfortable, though the tropical sun can be intense in

exposed coastal areas. Throughout the tour, you can expect daytime temperatures to generally range from 75–86°F. Our visit to the higher elevations of Maricao State Forest may bring noticeably cooler conditions, with early morning temperatures dipping into the mid-60s°F.

CONDITIONS: This tour is designed to be enjoyable and accessible for most participants with a reasonable level of mobility. While our days are full, the pace is relaxed, allowing plenty of time to appreciate Puerto Rico's exceptional birds, landscapes, and unique habitats. We typically depart early each morning to take advantage of peak bird activity and return to the hotel in the late afternoon, leaving approximately an hour to relax, shower, and unwind before our evening dinners.

Most birding is done from quiet roads, scenic overlooks, and well-maintained trails, with frequent stops to observe birds. The majority of our walks are short—generally less than a mile at a time—and taken at a leisurely pace. Our longest walk during the tour is approximately 2 miles round trip on an established trail with some uneven footing and gentle elevation changes. While a few trails may be rocky, muddy, or damp following rain, none are especially strenuous.

Overall, this is considered an easy birding tour with only modest physical demands. Participants should be comfortable standing for periods while observing birds and walking short distances over natural surfaces. With comfortable footwear, a moderate level of fitness, and a spirit of adventure, most active travelers will find the tour both rewarding and physically manageable.

FOOD & WATER: Food and drinking water are generally safe for consumption in most of Puerto Rico, including the areas visited on this tour. Tap water is treated to U.S. drinking water standards because Puerto Rico uses U.S. environmental and public health regulations. Hotels, resorts, and most lodges connected to municipal water systems typically provide safe tap water for drinking, brushing your teeth, and making coffee or tea. Similarly, for food safety, hotels and reputable restaurants generally follow food safety practices similar to those in the mainland United States.

CURRENCY & SPENDING: As Puerto Rico is a part of the United States, the U.S. Dollar is the standard currency. Major credit cards are accepted at hotels and lodges and most gift shops. Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

ELECTRICITY: Puerto Rico uses the same electrical system as the mainland United States: 120 volts; 60 Hz frequency. Electrical outlets are of the typical A and B types.

INTERNET ACCESS: All accommodations used on this tour offer complimentary Wi-Fi throughout the respective properties.

LANGUAGE: Puerto Rico has two official languages, Spanish and English. Spanish is the common language spoken in daily life among most Puerto Ricans. English is spoken widely but is most frequently used in the tourism sector, including at airports, hotels, and transportation. English is not as frequently encountered in street life or in towns and villages.

TIME: Puerto Rico exists in the Atlantic Time Zone (AST) year-round and does not observe Daylight Saving Time. In the winter months it is one hour ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST).

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is available at Turtle Bay Inn. Due to the relatively short length of this program, we recommend bringing enough clothing to get you comfortably through the trip without needing hotel laundry service.

HEALTH & SAFETY

HEALTH: VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which includes vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases. Among these so-called Routine Vaccinations are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers), and Varicella (Chickenpox). You should also be up-to-date with Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations.

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

COVID-19: We continually emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. Although VENT no longer maintains any of its COVID-era prevention protocols, we strongly recommend best practices for protecting yourself and your fellow travelers against COVID-19 illness. These measures include receiving the primary series vaccinations for those eligible, staying “Up to Date” with COVID-19 booster shots, wearing high filtration N-95 or KN-95 masks when in airports and on airplanes, and avoiding risky social settings in the lead-up to your tour. These recommendations are firmly rooted in CDC guidance for avoiding COVID-19.

SUN EXPOSURE: The sun’s ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes), even in winter and early spring. Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. A severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors and be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

BITING INSECTS: Biting insects are scarce on this tour, with no major concerns. Mosquitoes are occasionally encountered in the wetland areas of the Southwest but are typically manageable simply by wearing long sleeves and pants. Ticks and chiggers are not an issue.

INSECT REPELLENTS: There are insect repellents for the skin and an insect repellent used to treat clothing that should not be applied to the skin.

Insect repellents for the skin are commonly available in three forms:

- **DEET:** (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide): A chemical compound that is marketed under various brand names (OFF!®, Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered in a variety of

formulations including sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The formulations will state a percentage of the active ingredient DEET on the packaging. DEET may be applied to exposed skin directly and/or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.

- **Picaridin:** A synthetic formulation that is derived from piperine, a substance found in plants that produce black pepper.
- **Herbal insect repellents:** Various mixtures of organic ingredients such as oils from eucalyptus, citronella, cedar, and other herbs. The herbal repellents are more difficult to categorize because of the difference in ingredients from one brand to another. There is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

Insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

- **Permanone® (Permethrin):** is an odorless spray-on repellent that may be used for pre-treatment of clothing, gear, and tents. It should not be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pre-treatment process requires a number of hours to complete and must be done outdoors, so it is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment must be repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.
- **Insect Shield® apparel:** Clothing pre-treated with Permanone is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

The US EPA offers a search tool to help choose a repellent that is best for a particular situation. For example, some repellents work for mosquitoes, but not for ticks.

<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/which-insect-repellent-right-you>

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta Georgia. The CDC

operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636), or you can check their website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION

A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

FIELD GUIDES:

Birds

Herbert A. Raffaele, Clive Petrovic, Sergio A. Colón López, Lisa D. Yntema, and José A. Salguero Faria. *Birds of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands*. Third Edition August 2021. Princeton University Press Short. This is the go-to field guide covering all of the birds of Puerto Rico, with updated text, maps, and covering 347 species of birds.

CLO Apps

eBird. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Among the largest and most successful citizen science projects in existence, eBird is an essential tool in promoting bird study and conservation. Among a range of benefits, eBird allows users to keep a variety of lists in a single application. When taxonomic splits are incorporated, lists are automatically updated. Additionally, trip leaders can share daily lists, so one only need accept a shared list and it will upload to your files. Highly recommended.

Merlin Bird ID. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Merlin is an app designed as a birding coach for beginning and intermediate birdwatchers. Excellent for use in the field, Merlin asks the observer a series of questions about his or her bird sighting, including date and location, and color, size,

and behavior of a bird. Merlin then processes the viewer's responses to present a shortlist of possible identifications, from which the user can choose the likely bird. Species profiles include a brief physical description, photographs, and sound samples. The Photo ID feature allows anyone with a camera to snap a photo and obtain a list of suggestions. Merlin's Sound ID feature allows identification of birds through audible recognition. To use Merlin, download the app and the appropriate regional "pack." Highly recommended.

TERMS, CONDITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, "*VENT*") act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on July 27, 2026 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant's Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant's risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the "*Airline*") is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline's aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

View the complete [Terms and Conditions](#) on our website.

PRC:20270220

07/27/26 SE/DE

Publish Date: 7/27/26