



TOUR INFORMATION FOR THE LESSER ANTILLES

These notes are designed to help you prepare for your tour. Please read them carefully.

ENTERING LESSER ANTILLES: This tour visits several islands in the Lesser Antilles region of the Caribbean: Barbados, Dominica, Antigua & Barbuda, Montserrat, St Vincent, St Lucia, Martinique, Guadeloupe and Grenada. Visas are not required on any of these islands for citizens of the U.S., U.K., E.U. and Commonwealth nations. Most just require a passport with more than six validity. Other nationalities should consult their embassy website for each country.

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get a replacement if your original is lost or stolen. Obviously you should keep the photocopy in a separate bag to the originals.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE: The tour begins in the early afternoon at the VC Bird International Airport on Antigua before being transferred to our hotel. The exact time will be specified at tour confirmation. If you can't arrive before midday, you may want to consider arriving a day early; we would be happy to make extra hotel arrangements for you.

The tour ends with transfers to the Grantley Adams International Airport on Barbados.

*Note that the order of islands visited sometimes changes from year-to-year due to ferry and flight schedules.

CURRENCY: The local currency in all the Lesser Antillean islands except Barbados, Martinique and Guadeloupe, is Eastern Caribbean Dollars (ECD). The currency in Barbados is Barbados dollars (BDS). The currency in Martinique and Guadeloupe is Euros.

While it is often possible to change both English pounds or US Dollars into local currency, it is recommended that should you wish to bring cash you bring US Dollars, as this is widely accepted throughout all the islands. It is possible to change currency at the airport or at most hotels. Credit cards are accepted at the hotels.

LANGUAGE: English is widely spoken.

CLIMATE: The days are generally quite warm 25-32 Celsius (in the 80's F) and summer clothes are suitable year-round. Please be prepared for the possibility of cool, damp (or rainy) weather in the mountains. Light rain is always a possibility (although rare during the months of this tour). The sun can feel intense, so please ensure that you bring sunscreen (preferably with a high SPF). Humidity can be high when in certain habitats.

ALTITUDE: The highest elevation we visit is just over 3,000 feet above sea level.

PACE OF THE TOUR AND DAILY ROUTINE: Generally we'll have daily starts at around 06.00 (sometimes earlier). Many meals during daylight hours will be taken in the field, with our returning to the hotel before dinner.

Trails are relatively smooth and straightforward. Much of the birding is along roadsides using well-designated paths and are generally not at all challenging. Two forest walks require us to make short ascents up paths with moderate inclines.

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HEALTH: It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the regions you are visiting. Please contact your doctor well in advance of your tour's departure as some medication must be initiated weeks before the period of possible exposure.

It is recommended that you are up-to-date on routine vaccinations. It is further recommended that travellers have protection against Hepatitis A and Typhoid.

Malaria and Chikungunya: Malaria and other tropical parasites are not common on these islands, but mosquitos (more prevalent in the wet season) have been known to transmit Dengue Fever and (as of 2016) Chikungunya and Zika. As we will be traveling to the Caribbean during the dry season we typically encounter few mosquitoes during the tour. However we cannot guarantee that there will be absolutely no mosquitos. As an added precaution we therefore recommend that you take with you an insect repellent which has a high concentration of DEET.

Miscellaneous: We'll typically encounter few biting insects. We recommend using insect repellents with a high concentration of DEET. Like most islands in the Caribbean, there may be chiggers present.

It may be difficult to obtain any special medication during the tour, so bring all you are likely to need.

For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website www.masta-travel-health.com

ACCOMMODATION: We'll stay at comfortable hotels or their equivalent.

LAUNDRY: Laundry facilities are available at select hotels.

ELECTRICITY: 110/120V AC 60Hz. Some of the islands such as Martinique, Guadeloupe and St. Lucia use European and / or British sockets. An international travel plug is useful and can be bought in most airport departure lounges. You may find the following website helpful: <http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com>.

FOOD: This will be of a very good standard with a variety of delicious local dishes. On some mornings we'll have breakfast at our hotels and on others we'll have a picnic breakfast out in the field. Lunches will either be at local establishments in order to get a more accurate feel for true Caribbean cuisine and experience the friendly nature of Caribbean islanders, or packed picnic lunches. Evening meals at our hotels offer tasty fusion dishes as well as traditional authentic Creole cuisine, and mostly include fish, chicken, and vegetarian options.

Our tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Many restaurants offer set menus and are unable to accommodate all special requests within a group. Thus, participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs can, regretfully, not be accommodated. Our tours are carefully scheduled to ensure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time, sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to take supplemental food with them.

DRINKS: Bottled water, a soft drink, juice or (if stated in the itinerary beer/ rum punch) are provided at meals, as is coffee or tea. In addition, we keep a supply of bottled water on the tour vehicles. Bottled or filtered water may also be provided in some rooms where we stay.

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INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE ACCESS: Free Wi-Fi is available at all the hotels. You should be able to have mobile phone signal on most of the islands (although roaming charges will apply).

CLOTHING: The generally warm temperatures will dictate lightweight clothing for use in the field and elsewhere.

Broad-rimmed sun hat	Long-sleeved shirts
Comfortable footwear	Lightweight cotton trousers (zip off legs are useful)
Sandals	Lightweight raincoat
Short-sleeved shirts	Shorts
Light sweater or jacket	

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS: Please bring the following:

Notebook & pencil	Alarm clock
Rucksack/small day pack	Torch with spare batteries
Sun glasses and sun screen	Small water canister or water bottle
Shampoo	Insect repellent
Personal medication	Folding umbrella

Optional: Telescope & tripod (recommended if you have them), spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage), field guide, swimwear.

Note: We spend some time on about three-quarters of the days visiting coastlines, large wetlands and saltflats where telescopes can be useful. However at these locations birds tend to remain in view for some time, so generally the leader's 'scope will provide sufficient views for everyone.

LEADER'S EQUIPMENT: The leader will provide the following:

Telescope	Reference books and maps
First aid kit	Icebox
Night-vision monocular	

LUGGAGE: Our Final Information document, which will be sent to you approximately three weeks before departure, will give details about baggage weight and size restrictions imposed by the airline used for this tour.

If possible, please bring your luggage in soft-sided bags or cases (rather than large hard 'Samsonite'-type suitcases) as these pack more easily into our vehicles during the tour. Please note that on many tours there are no porters to carry your luggage so please ensure that **no bag is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself**. As a general rule, in addition to using your luggage labels, it is a good idea to fix identification to the *inside* of each piece of luggage.

PHOTOGRAPHY: A camera is highly recommended. This tour offers some beautiful scenery and memory shots will be plentiful and simple to obtain. Bring all the memory cards you are likely to need with you. Camera equipment should be packed in moisture- and dust-proof bags as a precaution. Digiscoping is perfectly compatible with the tour, though it is recommended you bring your own telescope as the leader's telescope will not be available for this activity.

There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals and scenery and the leaders will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

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TRANSPORT: We will be travelling by minibuses or people-carriers. The leader will arrange a seating rotation and participants should be able to ride in any seat in tour vehicles. We will be on boats and dinghies at various times. We use scheduled flights and ferries between the islands.

SMOKING: Smoking and vaping is not allowed in the vehicles or when the group is gathered for meals, checklists etc. If you are sharing a room with a non-smoker, please do not smoke in the room. If you smoke in the field, we ask that you do so well away and downwind from the group if possible.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel insurance is essential and we insist that you take out suitable cover as soon as your tour is booked. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are also adequately insured on your home contents policy, as most travel insurance policies do not cover very expensive individual items. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage.

Please also ensure that your policy covers you in the event of a medical emergency, cancellation of a trip or severe delays. Medical costs abroad can often be extremely expensive.

Please note that Sunbird is not liable for any medical or repatriation costs resulting from injury or illness during a tour or for covering any costs resulting from a flight delay such as extra hotel accommodation.

If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Helen Fisher, Bullerwell Independent Insurance Brokers, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234-866964. Please contact Helen for a quote and she will send the schedule directly to you.

TIPPING: All tour-based tips are included in the tour price. These include tips to local guides, drivers, hotel porters, and waiters and waitresses when we have group meals together in restaurants. You only need to pay tips for personal services such as room service or drinks from the bar.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Field Guides:

Kirwan Guy et al. 2019. *Birds of the West Indies*.

Dunn Jon L., Alderfer Jonathan. 2017. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, 7th Edition. Published by National Geographic.

History:

Williams, Eric. 1970. *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean 1492-1969*. A comprehensive history of the region. Well written, but not exactly light reading.

FINAL INFORMATION: Final information with instructions for meeting the group, hotel addresses etc., and your international air tickets will be sent out about three weeks before the start of the tour. If you have any questions, please contact us.