

# TRINIDAD: FEATURING ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE

FEBRUARY 20-27, 2020

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*This tour promises a wonderful introduction to the natural history of the American tropics and its varied bird life. Featuring a marvelous diversity of birds, newcomers and experienced birders and naturalists alike can get acquainted with most of the New World tropical families of birds and sharpen their skills on an avifauna with a distinctly South American flavor.*

*We will enjoy a seven-night stay at the world famous Asa Wright Nature Centre, an old plantation-style great house turned research center that has hosted a veritable Who's Who of scientists, such as William Beebe and David Snow. Some of their pioneering studies of fruit-eating birds and of the relationships between frugivorous birds and their host plants are considered classic studies that have laid the foundation for later work by others.*

*During our time at Asa Wright, we should see representative birds of many New World tropical families such as parrots, trogons, woodcreepers, antbirds, manakins, and motmots, and also come to appreciate the fascinating evolutionary expansion that several familiar groups, such as flycatchers and finches, have undergone. Many mornings will begin with a vigil on the famous veranda, from which we can study at close range the suite of spectacular and colorful birds (especially hummingbirds and tanagers) that roam the surrounding gardens. The Centre grounds are also home to one of the most accessible Oilbird roosting, nesting caves, and we will walk down to Dunston Cave for a look at these avian wonders. There is also the strong possibility of viewing lekking manakins (two species) near the Centre, a natural history spectacle that must be seen to be believed. Beyond birds, walks on the grounds will allow us to delve into the natural history of some of the fascinating plants and animals that we'll observe.*



*Among the many possibilities on this tour are such spectacular tropical species as White Hawk; Trinidad Motmot (endemic); Rufous-tailed Jacamar; Guianan, Green-backed and Collared trogons; Channel-billed Toucan; Chestnut (scarce) and Golden-olive woodpeckers; Bearded Bellbird; Golden-headed and White-bearded manakins, Purple, Red-legged and Green honeycreepers, and a variety of tanagers, flycatchers; and euphonias. On one day we will travel the 20 kilometer road to Blanchisseuse on the island's north coast for a chance to see higher*



White-bearded Manakin, © Barry Zimmer

*elevation birds, especially tanagers, while on another day we will explore the savanna lowlands around Aripo and Waller Field. Other highlights include a day trip to Nariva Swamp for more open-country species, and, for a special treat, a visit to a private residence above the community of Yerette for an opportunity to see up to a dozen of Trinidad's spectacular hummingbirds at close range, including gems such as Ruby Topaz and Tufted Coquette. Finally, we will visit the lowlands south of Port of Spain, visiting a large bay and the famed Caroni Swamp where brilliant Scarlet Ibis roost by the thousands.*

**February 20, Day 1: Flight to Trinidad; Transfer to Asa Wright Nature Centre.** Participants should plan to arrive on the island of Trinidad today. Upon arrival in Port of Spain's Piarco International Airport (airport code POS), and after clearing immigration and customs, you will be met by a representative of our local operator, and then make the 50-minute transfer to the Asa Wright Nature Centre. We will meet for the first time as a group on the veranda at 6:30 PM for a quick orientation session before dinner.

NIGHT: Asa Wright Nature Centre, Trinidad

**February 21-26, Days 2-7: Asa Wright Nature Centre and Outlying Areas.** We'll have six full days to explore Asa Wright and several other top birding locations that are sure to be fondly remembered. In the mornings we'll bird early from the famed Asa Wright veranda (**gathering the first morning at 6:00 AM**), where the nectar feeders and fruit trays swarm with Purple and Green honeycreepers, not to mention legions of Bananaquits, two species of thrushes (Cocoa and Spectacled), numerous White-lined Tanagers and gem-like Violaceous Euphonias, and perhaps a Crested Oropendola. Silver-beaked Tanagers wow onlookers with maroon velvet-like plumage and a bill that glints like polished silver. Brilliant Turquoise and Bay-headed tanagers often visit the nearby trees, and Channel-billed Toucans call from a treetop perch. Hummingbirds swarm the feeders (up to ten species possible) and challenge one another: flashy White-necked Jacobins, miniature Tufted Coquettes, glittering Blue-chinned Sapphires, White-chested Emeralds, Copper-rumped and Black-throated Mango Hummingbirds. Flocks of flashy Orange-winged Parrots sail by, while huge Lineated Woodpeckers scale nearby trees. It can be very hard to tear oneself away from the veranda and its whirlwind of bird activity.

Walks down the trails should offer many new sights: snapping White-bearded Manakins, “moonwalking” Golden-headed Manakins, a brilliant Trinidad Motmot (endemic) skulking in a bamboo thicket, a Guianan Trogon overhead, or a tassel-tailed Green Hermit visiting ginger flowers. A bit of searching—and following its very loud “bok!” calls—will help us find a Bearded Bellbird male, sometimes for frame-filling scope views. Although it will be toward the end of the breeding season, we should be able to locate a male singing. On one morning, we’ll offer an optional walk to the Oilbird Cave (more of a crevice than a cave) where we should gain superb views of this bizarre and unique nocturnal frugivorous species.



**Tufted Coquette, © Barry Zimmer**

On our second night, we’ll visit an outlying savannah for a nightbird prowl, with chances for White-tailed Nightjar, Common Parakeet, Common Pootoo, Tropical Screech Owl, and Barn Owl, as well as the possibility of seeing Red-bellied Macaws coming in to roost.

After an initial exploration of Asa Wright, the following days open new birding vistas. We’ll bird our way north and at higher elevation along the Blanchisseuse Road. The forests here could yield many possibilities including

White Hawk, Golden-olive and Chestnut (scarce) woodpeckers, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Collared Trogon, Blue-headed Parrot, Channel-billed Toucan, Speckled Tanager, Yellow-winged Cacique and more.



**American Pygmy Kingfisher, © Barry Zimmer**

We’ll also venture southeast on the island to the Nariva Swamp, a wetland ecosystem that may host the likes of American Pygmy Kingfisher, Green Kingfisher, Red-bellied Macaw, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, Black-crested Antshrike, Pied Water-Tyrant, Yellow-hooded Blackbird and more. Even rarities such as Pinnated Bittern, Rufous Crab Hawk and Blue-and-yellow Macaw are at least remotely possible in this region.

On another day we’ll receive exposure to other forest types and savannas, and associated birds, then are found at Asa Wright. In the Aripo Savanna possibilities include Pearl Kite, Savanna Hawk, Southern Lapwing, Wattled Jacana, Striped Cuckoo, Green-rumped Parrotlet, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, Pied Water-Tyrant, White-headed Marsh-Tyrant, and Trinidad Euphonia. We’ll then travel to Waller Field, where scarce moriche palms attract Turquoise Tanagers, Sulphury Flycatchers, Fork-tailed Palm-Swifts, and even the uncommon Epaulet (Moriche) Oriole among others.

One day will feature a visit to a private home to witness an unforgettable hummingbird spectacle, followed by an afternoon boat trip at the Caroni Marsh. We'll depart Asa Wright around mid-day, with lunch in the field, before arriving at a location known as Yerréte. The chief attraction here is a private home where a gallery of hummingbird feeders hosts up to 13 of the island's 16 species. Among the selection of avian jewels that attend the feeders are White-necked Jacobin, Brown Violet-ear (scarce), White-chested Emerald, Copper-rumped Hummingbird, Blue-chinned Sapphire, Ruby Topaz, Green Hermit, and others.

We will bird our way from Yerréte to the Caroni Marsh for a boat trip among the mangroves. Mangrove specialists such as Green-throated Mango, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, and Bicolored Conebill will all be sought in this area. Nearing sunset, flock after flock of stunning, impossibly red Scarlet Ibises fly in and perch in the mangroves on the island, joined by hundreds of Snowy Egrets and Tricolored Herons. We'll raise our rum punches to the red glow of thousands of Scarlet Ibises, an ideal culmination of our days of great birding on Trinidad. \*

**\*Please note that the places we visit may vary in order of sequence than what appears in this itinerary.**

NIGHTS: Asa Wright Nature Centre

**February 27, Day 8: Departure for home.** The tour ends after breakfast, with transfers from Asa Wright to Port of Spain for flights departing at anytime today.

**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.

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour is limited to 14 participants.

**TOUR LEADERS:** Rafael Galvez & TBA



**Rafael Galvez** has been birding and illustrating birds since childhood, a dual passion that developed when his family moved from Peru to South Florida. Always with a sketchpad in hand, he has traveled throughout the U.S., Latin America, and Eurasia in pursuit of birds. He served several years as a board member of the BirdLife International affiliate in the Republic of Georgia, developing educational and conservation programs. He gained knowledge of the Caucasus region while directing a series of records and documentary shorts on the ancient chants of the Georgian nation. During that period, he also produced retrospective books and catalogs on the works of Russian realist painters. He has combined his love of art, education, and birds while collaborating in several publications, including a field guide to *Raptors and Owls of Georgia (Caucasus)*, which he illustrated and coauthored. After

working with raptor research along the Black Sea, he returned to South Florida to spearhead a new phase for the Florida Keys Hawkwatch migration monitoring project, where he has participated as director. As chair of citizen science and IBA monitoring at Tropical Audubon Society in Miami, he has reached out to underserved communities by providing opportunities for the greater appreciation of birds and Florida habitats. Currently, he lives in Homestead, spends much time in the Everglades, serves on the Florida Ornithological Society's Records Committee, and is on the Leica Sport Optics Pro Staff. He loves sharing his passion for birds with audiences of all ages, and has been a guide and teacher for over 15 years. You can find some of his latest sketches and articles about painting in the field at his blog, GalvezBirds.com.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for this tour is **\$3995** per person in double occupancy from Port of Spain, Trinidad. This includes accommodations as stated in the itinerary, all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8, ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders and local guides. It does not include airfare from your home to Port of Spain, Trinidad and return, airport departure taxes (if applicable),

travel insurance, alcoholic beverages, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature (postage, telephone calls, emails), and passport fees. Rates are based upon group tariffs. If the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$390**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you. Single accommodations are often limited at Asa Wright Nature Centre and singles may be asked to share. If so, you will be credited accordingly.

**REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT:** To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. If you would like to pay your deposit using a credit card, the deposit must be made with MasterCard, Visa, or American Express at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at [www.ventbird.com](http://www.ventbird.com)) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

**PAYMENTS:** All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard, Visa, American Express), 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 150 days (September 23, 2019) prior to the tour departure date.

**FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES:** In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

**EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES:** In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement 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 are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

**CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:** Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 180 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$500** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 179 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre- and post-tour extensions. **For your protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
180 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$500*
179 to 151 days before departure date	No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance will be refunded
150 days or less before departure date	No refund available

\*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

Upon cancellation of the transportation or travel services, where you, the customer, are not at fault and have not cancelled in violation of the terms and conditions of any of the contract for transportation or travel services, all sums paid to VENT for services not received by you will be promptly refunded by VENT to you unless you otherwise advise VENT in writing.

**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:** 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 Resolutions as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™**. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most highly regarded travel insurance programs available.

Critical benefits of **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance** include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation and rescue services** from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice; comprehensive travel insurance for **trip cancellation/interruption**, primary medical expense coverage, and much more. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available but must be purchased within 14 days of tour deposit.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as security evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or other security events, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause (must be purchased within 14 days of tour deposit). Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.

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

**AIR INFORMATION:** 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. 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 responsible for any air ticket penalties.***

**CONDITIONS:** Several of the outings on Trinidad, including the walk to the Oilbird cave at Asa Wright Nature Centre, are moderately strenuous, as they follow paths up and down hillside slopes. **Also, most of the accommodations at Asa Wright require walking up and down one or more flights of stairs.** Travel will be aboard a variety of vehicles depending on group size, but ten passenger vans are most likely. At the Caroni Marsh we will ride aboard small boats to tour the preserve.

The lodge at Asa Wright Nature Centre offers comfortable accommodations in cottages located near the Main House. Most cottages have twin beds, private bathrooms, screened verandas and are cooled by ceiling fans. The Eckelberry cottage is the exception with four rooms all in the same building - each having its own dedicated bathroom, though not located within the bedroom itself. There are two rooms located in the Main House and are mobility impaired accessible, with king-sized beds and cooled by ceiling fans. As previously noted, the facility is built into a hillside and therefore walking up and down stairs is required to reach virtually any of the rooms outside of the main house. Distances from the cottages to the Main House vary from one room to another. The lodge has a small bar on site with somewhat limited alcoholic choices.

**Bathrooms: On many of the outings away from Asa Wright Nature Centre, bathrooms are not readily available. We will make an effort to find facilities when possible, but on some days, “bush breaks” will be our only option.**

Wi-Fi availability: Complimentary Wi-Fi is available in the Main House and on the Veranda at Asa Wright Nature Centre.

**BAGGAGE:** 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.

**CLOTHING:** As this trip is entirely birding oriented, your daily attire should consist primarily of “field” clothing. Generally the weather will be warm and sunny, but it can be cool in the morning hours. Dress will be casual at all times.

- **Pants and Shorts:** A couple pairs of pants and shorts each are recommended. Many people prefer lightweight pants made of cotton or other material, but denim, though not as comfortable, is certainly acceptable. Some may find shorts desirable for warmer times of day, although we do not usually recommend shorts for tropical birding.
- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Cabela’s and REI carry field clothing that many birders find appealing. Pants and shirts made of lightweight, yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular and more reasonably priced than in the past. Please avoid white clothing or other bright colors.
- **Sweaters and Coats:** Warm weather will be the rule on this trip, but a sweater or light coat or jacket may come in handy some mornings and evenings.
- **Shirts:** Several t-shirts, (long and short-sleeved), in addition to other comfortable styles suitable for warm weather.
- **Hat:** A hat, particularly a broad-brimmed one, is essential for protection from the sun.
- **Rain Poncho:** A rain jacket or poncho will be very useful if we are caught in a sudden shower or rain-laden cold front.

**FOOTWEAR:** We strongly recommend comfortable, water resistant hiking boots or trail shoes throughout the trip. Please make sure that your footwear is equipped with good traction as the trails at Asa Wright Nature Centre can be a bit slippery and/or muddy. Rubber boots or overshoes such as NEOS may be useful (in potentially wet grass, if we enter Dunston Cave to view the Oilbirds and on potentially muddy trails, and as protection against chiggers), these are often not essential in the dry season (December – May), but our 2018 tour experienced an extended rainy season when boots were needed on some of the trails.

**LAUNDRY SERVICE:** Laundry service is available at Asa Wright Nature Centre for a fee.

**EQUIPMENT:** One of the most important aspects of having an enjoyable travel experience is being prepared with proper equipment. The following items will come in handy during your tour:

- **Backpack or belt pack** – Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment
- **Notebooks and pens**
- **Travel alarm clock**
- **Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection**
- **Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions**
- **Personal toiletries**
- **Water bottle**
- **Umbrella** – A small collapsible umbrella is good to have if we are caught in a sudden shower
- **Flashlight or Headlamp**
- **Cameras, lenses, memory cards, and extra batteries**
- **Collapsible walking stick or walking pole** – Highly recommended for those who have trouble walking, in addition to the fact that there is a fair amount of up-and-down at Asa Wright.
- **Tissue packs**
- **Spotting Scopes** – Your tour leader will have a scope available for group use throughout the trip (however, you may bring your own if you prefer).

- **Binoculars** – We strongly recommend you bring a pair of good binoculars of at least 7x35, 8x42, 10x40, or 10x42 magnification. We recommend that you 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. Trying to find a bird in your binoculars using minis is like trying to read a book through a keyhole. You will be very frustrated, and even if you do manage to get the bird in your binoculars before it flies, you will have a poor view. You will find that 7x35 or 8x42 binoculars are compact and light enough.
- **Spotting Scopes** – Your tour leader will have a scope available for group use throughout the trip (however, you may bring your own if you prefer).

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Asa Wright is an excellent place for bird photography, owing to the feeding stations on the veranda that attract many birds. However, space on the veranda is limited and does not accommodate tripods well. Please refrain from using flash photography until we are sure that everyone has seen the bird in question. Additionally, we ask that you do not try to digiscope on the leader's scopes. If a bird sits long enough for digiscoping (after everyone has seen the bird), one of the leaders will be happy to digiscope for you if desired.

**CLIMATE & WEATHER:** The temperature on Trinidad averages about 72-95° F. The mornings at Asa Wright can be wet and cool (although it is generally pleasant & mild). In the lowlands, the weather is usually warm and depending on the location, varies from dry to very humid. February is the middle of the dry season, but you might be prepared for the possibility of some short showers every day, usually in the afternoons. Such rainfall is usually refreshing and birds become very active afterward.

**DOCUMENTS:** A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Trinidad is required, with at least one blank page for entry stamp. A visa is not required for entry by United States citizens for stays under 90 days. Non U.S. citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

**CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS:** Your trip to Trinidad includes most necessary expenses. You will want to bring enough cash to cover personal expenses not included in the program, such as taxi rides, gifts, laundry, gratuities, meals on your own, and personal items. It is best to carry small denominations of cash as many places we visit may be unable to provide change for large bills. While U.S. dollars may be accepted in more populous areas, it is always convenient to have a supply of local currency for such items. It is best to acquire local currency before leaving home. There are also exchange houses located in the Piarco airport once one has cleared immigration. The Asa Wright Nature Centre may also convert small amounts and will accept U.S. dollars or credit cards for purchases of items in their store.

The official currency of Trinidad and Tobago is the Trinidadian Dollar (TTD). You can check the latest currency conversion rate by visiting “XE-The World’s Favorite Currency Site” at: <http://www.xe.com/>.

**TIME:** At the time of this tour, Trinidad is one hour ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST).

**ELECTRICITY:** Power in Trinidad is 115V, with use of outlet types “A” and “B.” The “A” type outlet accommodates a flat two-bladed plug while the “B” type outlet, also known as the American 3-pin outlet, accommodates a plug with two flat blades and a round grounding pin. To ensure that use of American standard 110V equipment with the flat-pronged plugs will work in all locations, you should bring an all purpose transformer to convert the current for 110V use, in addition to proper plug adapters.

**LANGUAGE:** English is the official language of Trinidad; however, of a local dialect known as Trinidad English. Trinidad Creole is also commonly spoken among the locals, which has Indian, African, European (including Spanish), and French influences.

**HEALTH:** At the time of publication, no major shots or inoculations are required for entry into Trinidad; however, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination or prophylaxis against a variety of preventable diseases, including:

- 1) **Routine Vaccinations** (if you are not up-to-date), which are **measles/mumps/rubella (MMR)** vaccine; **diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT)** vaccine; and **poliovirus vaccine** (boosters for adult travelers who have received a primary series with either inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) or oral polio vaccine (OPV); they should receive another dose of IPV before departure). You should also be up-to-date with your **Hepatitis A**, or Immune Globulin (IG), **Hepatitis B** and **Typhoid** vaccinations. Note that a combined hepatitis A/B vaccination is now available.
- 2) **Yellow Fever** is a viral disease transmitted between humans by a mosquito. It is a very rare cause of illness in travelers, in part because of the precautions taken by affected countries. In Trinidad, the incidence of Yellow Fever is low; however, vaccination is recommended for all travelers visiting areas away from the capital city of Port of Spain, and is required of travelers arriving from any country where Yellow Fever is endemic. The yellow fever vaccine is a live virus vaccine which has been in use for several decades. A single dose confers immunity for ten years or more if you are not continually exposed. Adults and children over nine months can take this vaccine. The vaccine is not recommended for certain types of travelers, including pregnant women, persons hypersensitive to eggs, or persons suffering from a condition related to HIV/AIDS. Your doctor can help you make the best decision about the vaccine.

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 on procedures for packing medication.

**Water –Purified** water will be provided at all times throughout the trip. At the Asa Wright Nature Centre, pitchers of purified water are provided and there is a large container of purified water on the veranda at all times if you run out (this is ideal for filling empty water bottles).

**Sun Exposure** – The sun’s ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes). Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. 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** – Mosquitoes occur on Trinidad, although they are not particularly numerous in the dry season. To protect from being bitten, we recommend wearing long-sleeved shirts and pants when in the field, particularly during the cooler hours of the morning and late afternoon. In certain areas we also recommend the use of insect repellent containing DEET. Repellent can be applied to exposed skin and/or clothing. Clothing sprayed with Permethrin is another option (pre-treated or you can treat yourself). Although there is no threat of Malaria on this tour route, another mosquito-borne disease, Dengue, is present throughout the Caribbean. The disease is transmitted by the mosquito *Aedes aegypti*, which occurs most commonly around populated urban and residential centers. In most cases, signs of Dengue may include severe flu-like symptoms accompanied by rash, headache, muscle pain, and joint pain. We consider the risk of exposure very low on this trip, but do recommend that participants follow the suggestions for prevention of mosquito bites.

**Zika Virus** – This tour visits an area or areas where Zika virus is known to occur or could occur; however, we believe the risk to VENT travelers is extremely low. The Zika virus is a mosquito-borne infection transmitted by mosquitos of the genus *Aedes*, and is related to other tropical diseases: Dengue, Yellow Fever, and West Nile virus. This type of mosquito bites during the day and typically is found in areas of dense human habitation where sanitation and drainage of standing water is poor. Zika virus presents the greatest threat to women of childbearing age. For others who become infected, the effects are usually nonexistent to mild, although some people exhibit symptoms such as mild fever, rashes, joint and muscle pain, and red eyes. If infected, the best treatment is plenty of rest, nourishment, and other supportive care. There is no vaccine to prevent or cure the disease; however, Zika virus is not contagious and, therefore, cannot be transmitted through air, food, or water.

Your safety is our highest priority, and we want to emphasize that the best way to avoid Zika virus (and other mosquito-borne diseases), is to take appropriate precautions to avoid mosquito bites:

- Stay informed about the Zika virus
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants, socks and shoes, and a hat\*
- Use effective insect repellents (those containing DEET) and reapply regularly

**\*We strongly recommend the use of Insect Shield® clothing.** Insect Shield is a process by which clothing is treated with an EPA-approved formula of the insect repellent permethrin. Such clothing is highly repellent to insects and provides durable and long-lasting protection, even after dozens of washings. Outdoor wear with Insect Shield protection includes name brands such as Ex Officio and Tilley, and can be purchased at outdoor recreation stores such as REI and from a variety of online retailers. In lieu of Insect Shield clothing, you should consider treating your clothes with permethrin, which has the same effect, and that can be purchased at outdoor recreation stores and from a variety of online retailers.

For the latest information and news about Zika virus, please visit the website of the CDC:

<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/>

**A Note About Chiggers:** This tour visits areas where chiggers are known to occur. Chiggers are tiny parasitic mites found in most warm weather areas of the southern United States and the world's tropics. They are especially numerous in grassy areas, where, in the immature stage, they attach themselves to other animals or humans who make contact with the grass as they pass by. Chiggers do not suck blood and the majority of the world's species do not carry disease. They do feed on bodily fluids, however, through a process in which a digestive enzyme is produced by the chigger which essentially liquefies the skin around the area where the chigger is attached. The chigger is not usually attached to the skin for more than a few hours before it either falls off or is knocked off. Our bodies respond by producing a hardened area as a defense against the chigger's digestive enzyme. Though the chigger may be long gone, it is the presence of the hardened area, and the body's natural process of reabsorbing it that typically causes intense itching, often lasting for a week or more. Chiggers like to attach themselves to areas of thin skin, like around the ankles, beltline, undergarment lines, knees, and elbows.

Chiggers can be avoided by following these procedures:

- Avoid walking, or standing in particular, in areas dominated by grass. These areas are where one is most likely to encounter chiggers.
- Tuck your pants into your socks to avoid direct skin-to-grass contact. Chiggers can find their way through clothing, but this is a standard and effective prevention technique commonly employed by many.
- Apply a cream-style insect repellent, such as "Cutter" to your body from the waist down BEFORE putting on your clothing.
- Spray your pants and socks with a spray repellent such as "Cutter" or "Off!" Repellents with high concentrations of DEET (70-100%) are most effective. You do not need to apply these to your skin, only to clothing. (Be careful as DEET will damage plastics and lens coatings). Repel Permanone is an odorless aerosol insecticide that offers perhaps the best defense against chiggers. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online. It should only be applied to clothes and allowed to dry before you dress. Never apply Permanone directly to the skin. Permethrin is known to be a highly toxic chemical to insects. It is the active ingredient in Permanone, but is present in a small amount (0.5%).
- Powdered sulfur applied to waist, bottoms of pants, sock and boots is also effective at repelling chiggers. However, be warned that clothes will retain the sulfur odor for several washings.
- Shower at the end of each day in the field. Use a washcloth to vigorously rub your legs, feet, and ankles.

By following these methods, you should be able to avoid all chigger bites, as well as tick bites. If, however, you are bitten by chiggers anyway, you can reduce or eliminate the symptoms by applying benzocaine or hydrocortisone creams, calamine lotion, After Bite, or any number of anti-itch products.

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. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 800-CDC-INFO (232-4636) or you can check their website at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://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](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html) (click on travel health).

**SUGGESTED READING:** 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](http://www.amazon.com) which has a wide selection; [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com) and [www.nhbs.com](http://www.nhbs.com) which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

**The most important field guide for this tour is:**

M. Kenefick, R. Restall & F. Hayes. *Birds of Trinidad & Tobago*. Second edition. Yale University Press. 2011. 107 improved color plates with species accounts. A must for birders visiting Trinidad.

**Other Birding Resources:**

Ffrench, Richard, John P. O'Neil, John Anderton, Dale Dyer, Don Schmitt, and Carol J. James. *A Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago*. Sacramento, California: Comstock Publishing Associates, 2012 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Excellent field guide/handbook, especially with this revision. As good as the previous one (the artwork is actually better), but it is larger and harder to carry around in the field.

Hilty, Steven. *Birds of Tropical America: A Watcher's Introduction to Behavior, Breeding, and Diversity*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2005. An excellent companion to a field guide. As the subtitle suggests, the book delves into the lives of tropical birds, providing the observer with far more information than is available in field identification guides. A very excellent and highly readable book.

**General Ecology:**

Forsyth, Adrian and Ken Miyata. *Tropical Nature*. New York: Scribners, 1984. A good layman's introduction to tropical biology. Highly recommended.

Kricher, John C. *A Neotropical Companion: An Introduction to the Animals, Plants and Ecosystems of the New World Tropics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989. Another good introduction to Neotropical biology.

Snow, David W. *The Web of Adaptation: Tropical Bird Studies*. Collins, 1976. Excellent introduction to the ecology of fruit-eating birds. Written in popular, readable style and based mostly on studies conducted in Trinidad. Good list of references. Recommended!

**Reptiles:**

Murphy, John C. *Amphibians and Reptiles of Trinidad and Tobago*. Malabar, Florida: Kreiger Publishing Company, 1997. Excellent thorough coverage of the islands' herps.

**Trees/Plants:**

Duncan, E. Julian. *A Guide to the Wild Flowers of Trinidad and Tobago*. Asa Wright Centre, 1993.

Hargreaves, Dorothy and Bob. *Tropical Trees Found in the Caribbean, South America, Central America, Mexico*. Kailua, Hawaii: Hargreaves Publishing Company, 1965. Available at Asa Wright Nature Centre.

Hargreaves, Dorothy and Bob. *Tropical Blossoms of the Caribbean*. Kailua, Hawaii: Hargreaves Publishing Company, 1960. Available at Asa Wright Nature Centre.

Seddon, S.A. and G.W. Lennox. *Trees of the Caribbean*. London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1980. Available at Asa Wright Nature Centre.

**Cultural Background:**

De-Light, Dominique and Polly Thomas. *The Rough Guide to Trinidad & Tobago*. London: The Rough Guides, 2001. Current, thorough tourist guide with lots of background essays.

Naipaul, V.S. *A House for Mr. Biswas*. New York: Vintage Internationals, 1961, 1989. The Nobel Prize winning author's most acclaimed novel about life in postcolonial Trinidad.

**TIPPING:** Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that tips are not expected and are entirely optional. Tips should be given directly to your tour leader; they should not be sent to the VENT office.

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