



Cuban Blackbird (*Dives atrovirens*) by Ekaterina Chernetsova

# CUBA

## BIRDING CUBA'S HOTSPOTS

December 3 – 11, 2022

*Get to know the birds of Cuba during this exploration of the country's western regions with Jayne Johnston. Make your way through a selection of ecosystems, including mangroves, forests, coastal lagoons, and limestone caves. Together with your ornithologist guide, you'll have the opportunity to seek out and identify highlights like the Cuban Trogon—Cuba's national bird, known locally as the Toco-ro-ro—and the world's smallest bird, the Bee Hummingbird. Not only will you visit prime birding hotspots, you'll also encounter the lively spirit of the Cuban people as you interact with local residents.*

### PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Discover La Güira National Park, 54,000 acres of mountain wilderness, picturesque valleys, and hidden caves, and home to species such as Cuban Solitaire, Cuban Tody, and Cuban Pewee.
- Watch for target species like the Cuban Grassquit and Olive-capped Warbler and meet with residents at Las Terrazas, a community and reserve that is a model of sustainability and ecotourism.
- Visit several sites in Zapata Swamp, a Biosphere Reserve and Ramsar wetland, and meet with area conservationists.
- Venture into the limestone cave that was Che Guevara's headquarters during the Cuban Missile Crisis and an excellent place to spot Cuban Solitaire and Scaly-naped Pigeon.

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## ITINERARY

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

### DECEMBER 3 - HAVANA

Individual arrivals in Havana today. Hotel check-in is 3 pm. *Overnight at Brigadinas.*

### DECEMBER 4 - HAVANA

After breakfast, meet your guide, driver, and Cuban ornithologist, who will accompany you throughout the entire program and help facilitate meaningful interactions with the local community at each location. This morning, visit Quinta de los Molinos, an urban park on the outskirts of Havana. A natural sanctuary amidst the city bustle, Quinta de los Molinos is a haven for 40 bird species as well as 170 plant species, and the colorful endemic *polymitas* snails for which Cuba is famous. Learn how this site has evolved from the Spanish colonial period until today, and how the urban park is used to connect residents with nature. Walk along the cobblestone streets of Old Havana and admire the unique and historical architecture, followed by dinner at a local paladar. A paladar is a small, family-run restaurant; many paladares appear and operate much like any other restaurant but in some cases are a converted part of the owner's home. *Overnight at Brigadinas. (BLD)*

### DECEMBER 5 - VIÑALES

Depart for Viñales. Along the way, stop for birding at Las Terrazas, a UNESCO-designated Biosphere Reserve, where you'll be guided by Fidel Hernández from the Ecological Station of Las Terrazas. Not only a nature reserve, Las Terrazas is also a self-sustained ecological community that began as a reforestation project in 1967. Target species are Cuban Grassquit and Olive-capped Warbler. Meet with community residents who helped save this site, which is now a model of sustainability and ecotourism. This afternoon, arrive at La Güira National Park. Its 54,000 acres of mountain wilderness, picturesque valleys, and hidden caves are home to species such as Cuban Solitaire, Cuban Tody, Cuban Bullfinch, and Cuban Pewee. Later continue on to Viñales for overnight. *Overnight at casa particular. (BLD)*

### DECEMBER 6 - VIÑALES

Early breakfast followed by morning birding and explore the Viñales area, which is famous for its massive limestone formations called mogotes. Here you'll tour a local family tobacco farm and learn about Cuba's innovation in agricultural sustainability. Then, visit the home of Nils Navarro, world-renowned nature artist and author. *Overnight at casa particular. (BLD)*

### DECEMBER 7 - ZAPATA PENINSULA

Depart early for the long drive to the Zapata Swamp, Cuba's largest wetland and Ramsar-designated Wetland of International Importance. The Zapata area, sprawling nearly 1,700 square miles, consists of scrub, mangrove swamp, and coastline. Over 200 species have been recorded here, including the endemic Zapata Wren and Zapata Sparrow. Also look for species such as Cuban, Cuban Green Woodpecker, Greater Antillean Oriole, and Cuban Emerald. Late afternoon birding if time permits. *Overnight at Casa Enrique or similar. (BLD)*

### DECEMBER 8 - ZAPATA PENINSULA

Depart after an early breakfast for the Santo Tomás area, where you may find Zapata Wren and Zapata Sparrow. After lunch, enjoy birding at Las Salinas, an area frequented by many species of waterbirds that live in mangrove swamps, coastal lagoons, and woods. Over 165 indigenous and migratory birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates are found here. Expect to see flamingos, Roseate Spoonbill, Glossy and White Ibis, herons,

pelicans, Peregrine Falcon, Cuban Black Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, and others. Enjoy dinner out at a local restaurant. *Overnight at Casa Enrique or similar. (BLD)*

### DECEMBER 9 - ZAPATA PENINSULA

After breakfast leave for the Bermejas site. Target species include the Cuban Parakeet, Cuban Pygmy-Owl, Bee Hummingbird, Cuban Green Woodpecker, Fernandina's Flicker, Cuban Trogon, and Cuban Tody. A mosaic of dry forest, swamp, mangrove and mudflats, the Zapata Peninsula is one of the best preserved ecosystems on the island. Other species you might encounter are Bare-legged Owl, Blue-headed Quail-Dove, and Gray-fronted Quail-Dove. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant with Zapata-area conservationists, who will provide updates on projects underway to preserve Cuba's largest wetlands. Visit the town of Palpite, where a special visit with artists of the Korimacao Project has been arranged. The Korimacao Community Project consists of residents from Cuban communities who are given the opportunity to develop and improve their performing skills such as singing, dancing, and playing instruments. Learn about the program's development and interact with the talented artists. Dine at a paladar and meet the owners, who will provide insight about their entrepreneurial activities. *Overnight at Casa Enrique or similar. (BLD)*

### DECEMBER 10 - HAVANA

Today enjoy another hike and lunch before returning to Havana. Farewell dinner at a paladar this evening. *Overnight at Brigadinas. (BLD)*

### DECEMBER 11 - DEPART

Early departure for the airport in Havana for flight back to U.S. (B)

## LAND PRICING

**\$2,975** (based on 10 participants)

Cost includes meals, accommodations, and activities as indicated in the itinerary, Cuban visa, in-country transportation, full-time guide for duration of the program, carbon offset, and bottled water on the bus.

Does not include international airfare, tips/gratuities, or items of a personal nature.

## TRAVEL PROTECTION

Holbrook Travel purchases Travel Protection on behalf of all participants. These plans help provide coverage once the trip has departed and offer benefits for Baggage/Personal Effects, Accident & Sickness Medical Expenses, Emergency Evacuation and more.

Optional additional coverage is available in the form of the Group Deluxe Plan, which offers benefits for Trip Cancellation/Interruption, in addition to many other insurance benefits and non-insurance assistance services. If interested in this optional plan, we can provide you with rates and plan details.

## THE FINE PRINT

Cost is based on double occupancy; for a single room throughout the trip, add \$385 per person. A \$500 per person deposit and enrollment form are required to reserve your space on the trip. This deposit is refundable minus a \$300 cancellation fee until August 30, 2022, at which time non-refundable final payment is due.

Please note: Itineraries may be subject to change due to protocols and adjustments related to the COVID-19 pandemic. For the latest information regarding our COVID-19 policies, please visit [holbrooktravel.com/covid19](https://holbrooktravel.com/covid19)

## FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ENROLL

Visit [holbrook.travel/johnston-cu22](https://holbrook.travel/johnston-cu22) or contact Sandy Schmidt at [schmidt@holbrooktravel.com](mailto:schmidt@holbrooktravel.com) or 877-907-5360.