TRINIDAD
ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTER
Post-Trip to the Lesser Antilles Cruise
FEBRUARY 24 – MARCH 1, 2014
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This post-cruise extension to the island of Trinidad promises a wonderful entrée to the natural history of the American tropics and its varied bird life. Featuring a marvelous diversity of birds, newcomers and experienced birders or naturalists alike can get acquainted with almost all of the New World families of birds and sharpen their skills on an avifauna that is much larger than what we will encounter in the islands to the north.

After a morning of birding on Barbados, we will continue with a flight to Trinidad where we will spend five nights at the famous Asa Wright Nature Centre, a research centre 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 classics studies that have laid the foundation for later work by others.

During our stay at Asa Wright Nature Centre, we should see representative birds of many New World tropical families such as parrots, trogons, woodcreepers, antbirds, manakins, and motmots, as well as come to appreciate the fascinating expansion that several familiar groups, such as flycatchers and finches, have undergone. The Centre grounds are also home to one of the most accessible Oilbird roosting/nesting caves, and we will walk down to Dunstan Cave for a look at these avian wonders.

During our field trips away from the lodge, we should encounter a number of particularly spectacular tropical birds, including White Hawk, Trinidad Motmot, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Channel-billed Toucan, Bearded Bellbird, Golden-headed and White-bearded manakins, and a variety of tanagers, flycatchers, and finches. Early morning walks on the grounds of the centre will ensure an opportunity for repeated and often close observation of birds, as well as time to delve into the natural history of some of the fascinating birds, plants, and animals that we’ll observe.

On one day we will travel the 20 kilometer road to Blanchisseuse on the island’s north coast for a chance to see higher elevation birds, especially tanagers, while on another day we will explore the savannah lowlands around Aripo and Waller Field. For a grand finale, we will visit the famed Caroni Swamp where Scarlet Ibis abound.

**February 24, Day 1. Disembark Sea Cloud; flight to Trinidad; transfer to Asa Wright.** We will disembark *Sea Cloud* around 8:00 a.m. in Bridgetown, Barbados. Our flight to Trinidad departs in the mid-afternoon, which allows for a couple of hours for birding before we transfer to the airport for the international flight to Trinidad. Upon arrival in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, we will be met by a representative of our local operator, and then make the 50-minute transfer to the Asa Wright Nature Centre.

NIGHT: Asa Wright Nature Centre, Trinidad
February 25-28, Days 2-5: Asa Wright Nature Centre and outlying areas. We’ll have four 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, where the nectar feeders and fruit trays swarm with Purple and Green honeycreepers, not to mention legions of Bananans, and larger visitors like Chestnut Woodpeckers and Trinidad Motmots. 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 and challenge one another: flashy White-necked Jacobins, miniature Tufted Coquettes, glittering Blue-chinned Sapphires, White-chested Emeralds and Copper-rumped Hummingbirds. Massive Crested Oropendolas clatter in, and huge Lineated Woodpeckers may scale nearby trees.

Walks down the trails should offer many new sights: snapping White-bearded Manakins, a perched Common Potoo, a Violaceous Trogon overhead, 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 the end of the breeding season, we will do our best 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’ll gain superb views of this bizarre and unique nocturnal frugivorous species. On our second night, we’ll visit an outlying savannah for a nightbird prowl, with chances for White-tailed Nightjar, Red-bellied Macaw, Common Paraque, Common Potoo, Tropical Screech Owl and Barn Owl.

After an initial exploration of Asa Wright, the following days open new birding vistas. On the third day we’ll bird our way north and at higher elevation along the Blanchisseuse Road where we’ll look for flocks of brilliant tanagers: Bay-headed, Blue-capped, and Speckled tanagers, mixed with a host of other birds including Channel-billed Toucans, trogons, manakins, cuckoos, Rufous-tailed Jacamars and vivid Blue Dacnis among many others.

On the fourth day we’ll be away on an all-day field trip that provides exposure to other forest types and savannahs, and associated birds, than are found at Asa Wright. The start of the day will find us at the Aripo station, a government owned farm where Grassland Yellow-Finch is usually seen. We will drive across the farm’s internal road and might come across Cocii Heron and Great Egret, as well as Pearl Kite, Savanna Hawk, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, Pied Water-Tyrant, White-headed Marsh-Tyrant and Black-crested Antshrike. We’ll then travel to Waller Field, where scarce moriche palms attract Turquoise Tanagers, Sulphury Flycatchers, and Fork-tailed Palm-Swifts among others.

After lunch we’ll spend the afternoon at the Arena forest, which is actually a regenerating old plantation. We’ll dedicate much of the remainder of the afternoon to exploring this diverse area, where birds are often plentiful and easily seen. White-bellied Antbirds often heard singing inside the forest understory while the canopy contains Collared, White-tailed, and Violaceous trongs, a host of woodpeckers, woodcreepers, Rufous-tailed Jacamars, and tanagers.

Our final day culminates with 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 Yerrète. The chief attraction here is a private home where a gallery of hummingbird feeders hosts up to 13 of the island’s 17 species. Among the selection of avian jewels that attend the feeders are White-necked Jacobin, Brown Violet-ear, White-chested Emerald, Copper-rumped Hummingbird, Blue-chinned Sapphire, and others.

We will bird our way from Yerrète to the Caroni Marsh for a grand finale boat trip among the mangroves. Nearing sunset, flock after flock of stunning, impossibly red Scarlet Ibis 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 Ibis, an ideal ending to our days of great birding on Trinidad.

NIGHTS: Asa Wright Nature Centre
**March 1, Day 6: Departure for home.** The tour ends this morning with a transfer from Asa Wright to the Port-of-Spain Piarco International Airport, Trinidad (airport code POS) for flights departing at anytime today.

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

**TOUR LEADERS:** Victor Emanuel and Barry Lyon

*Victor Emanuel* started birding in Texas 64 years ago at the age of eight. His travels have taken him to all the continents, with his areas of concentration being Texas, Arizona, Mexico, Panama, and Peru. He is the founder and compiler for 50 years of the record-breaking Freeport Christmas Bird Count, and served a term as president of the Texas Ornithological Society. Birds and natural history have been a major focus throughout his life. He derives great pleasure from seeing and hearing birds, and sharing with others these avian sights and sounds, both the common ones and the more unusual ones. He initiated the first birding camps for young people, and considers that one of his greatest achievements. Victor holds a B.A. in zoology and botany from the University of Texas and an M.A. in government from Harvard. In 1993, he was the recipient of the Roger Tory Peterson Excellence in Birding Award, given by the Houston Audubon Society in recognition of a lifetime of dedication to careful observation, education, and addition to the body of avian knowledge. In 2004, he received the Roger Tory Peterson Award from the American Birding Association, and the Arthur A. Allen Award from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Victor is on the board of directors for the American Bird Conservancy.

*Barry Lyon*’s passion for the outdoors and birding has its roots in his childhood where he grew up in southern California. He attended several VENT/ABA youth birding camps in his teenage years, which ultimately paved the way for his future involvement with Victor Emanuel Nature Tours. He holds a B.A. from the University of Arizona at Tucson where he studied history and political science, with an emphasis on environment and development politics. Barry joined the VENT team as a tour leader in 1995, and embarked on a travel-based career that has taken him to an array of worldwide destinations. He has lived in Austin, Texas since 2004 when he joined our office staff as an assistant to company president Victor Emanuel. His responsibilities are now geared more toward the company’s business side, although he still leads a limited number of tours. Barry’s years of experience and his knowledge of natural history have provided him with a strong interest in conservation. He currently sits on the boards of directors of two Austin-based organizations: the Malcolm C. Danuth Foundation, which embraces land acquisition as its principal conservation strategy; and Travis Audubon Society, which emphasizes conservation through birding and youth outdoor education for urban children.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for this tour is $2495 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 6, ground transportation during the tour, internal flight (economy class) from Barbados to Trinidad, and guide services provided by the tour leader and local guides. It does not include international airfare to Antigua with return from Trinidad, hotel nights after day 5, meals after breakfast on day 6, airport departure taxes (if applicable), travel insurance, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature (postage, telephone calls, emails), or 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 is $395. 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 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 initial deposit for this tour is $500 per person. If you would like to pay your initial 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. If you prefer to pay the initial deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at [www.ventbird.com](http://www.ventbird.com)) should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.
PAYMENTS: Initial tour deposits may be made by MasterCard, Visa, check, money order, or bank transfer. All other tour payments, including second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc., must be made by check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

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.

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.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Cancellation penalties and refunds are based on the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of $250 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 fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions. **We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.**

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*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.

TRIP INSURANCE: A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness.** VENT recommends Travel Insured International as our preferred insurance provider. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. Contact Travel Insured International prior to registration for details. Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than Travel Insured International, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

Medical insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation/repatriation during the trip is also **recommended for this tour.** This coverage is included in the Worldwide Trip Protector plan offered by Travel Insured International. A good website for information and acquisition of emergency evacuation/repatriation insurance is: www.insuremytrip.com.

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.
AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of VENT. Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to assist you in making air arrangements. Airline tickets carry restrictions due to the airfare used. You may find that your ticket cannot be reissued or exchanged for another air carrier or routing. Cancellation penalties and change fees may be assessed for any changes to the ticket. These charges are solely your responsibility. First and business class travel may be available on some flights. All requests for travel assistance (air tickets, additional hotels, etc.) must be received no later than 60 days prior to departure date. Within 60 days, arrangements cannot be guaranteed.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Some of our Trinidad programs include a visit to the nearby island of Tobago, however this one does not. Tobago hosts a small range of birds not found on Tobago, as well as a Red-billed Tropicbird colony on nearby Little Tobago. Moreover, Tobago is a well-known destination for snorkeling. Should you wish to make arrangements to extend your stay in Trinidad or visit Tobago, 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.

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. At the Caroni Marsh we will ride aboard small boats to tour the preserve.

The cuisine in Trinidad is rich in spices and curry. It is influenced by the Amerindian, African, Indian, Chinese and Lebanese gastronomy. Therefore, if you can’t take any kind of spicy food, please let us know so we can be sure you are given meals with less seasoning.

The ASA Wright Lodge offers comfortable accommodations, in cottages located near the Main House. All cottages have twin beds, private bathrooms, screened verandas and are cooled by ceiling fans. There are two rooms located in the Main House are handicapped accessible, with king-sized beds and cooled by ceiling fans. Complimentary Wi-Fi is available in the Main House and on the Verandah.

BAGGAGE: 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 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: http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm.

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. Shorts will be desirable for warmer times of day.
- **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 select clothing in muted 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 or Parka:** A rain poncho or parka 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 are also useful because of potentially wet grass and muddy trails, and as protection against chiggers, but are not essential.

**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** – Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment during all land excursions. A backpack or small handbag will come in handy for the overnight trip to Montserrat
- **Notebooks and pens**
- **Travel alarm clock**
- **Travel umbrella**
- **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, film, 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**
- **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** – Given the ship-based nature of the program to follow, it is not necessary for you to bring a spotting scope. 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.

**CLIMATE & WEATHER:** The temperature on Trinidad averages about 72-95° F. The mornings at Asa Wright can be wet and cool. In the lowlands, the weather is usually warm and depending on the location, varies from dry to very humid. Do expect some short showers every day, but usually in the afternoons. Such rainfall is usually refreshing and birds become very active afterward.

**TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:**

**PASSPORTS** - A valid passport is required for entry into Barbados and Trinidad. Please check the expiration date on your passport. **If it is not valid for at least six months after your trip return date, you will need to get it renewed.** You will also want to make sure that you have ample blank pages in your passport for each country we visit on this trip. If you need a passport, you should get it well in advance of your trip departure date. For additional fees, a passport can be issued on an expedited basis. In the United States this can be done at the
nearest passport office, most post offices, or the county clerk’s office. Another source for information on how to get or renew a passport is www.state.gov/travel/.

As a safety measure, photocopy the first two pages of your passport. Keep the photocopies in a safe place, so if your passport is lost you will have proof of identification. Your passport should be signed and easily available at all times. You will need it for check-in at the airport on your first day of departure, so do not pack it in your checked luggage. On board ship, it is customary for the purser to hold all passports for clearance with port authorities. Your passport will be collected upon embarkation, and returned upon disembarkation.

**VISAS** - Citizens of the United States and Canada do not need tourist visas to enter Barbados or Trinidad. Rules and regulations pertaining to non-U.S. and Canadian citizens may vary; please check with the immigration offices, consulates, or embassies of the countries we will visit for information on entry requirements. Visa requirements can change without notice, and you should check the latest entry requirements as far in advance as possible in order to allow time to obtain a visa in your home country should that be necessary.

**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 any 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. 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).

As of May 24, 2013 the conversion rate is:
1 US Dollar = 6.42 TTD; 1 TTD = 0.1558 USD

You can check the latest currency conversion rate by visiting “XE-The World’s Favorite Currency Site” at: http://www.xe.com/.

Should you extend your vacation in Trinidad or the Caribbean beyond what is offered in the program, you’ll want to consider obtaining local currency. Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

**DEPARTURE TAX**: At present, the international departure tax, known in Trinidad as a “Passenger Service Tax,” is about $30 USD ($200 Trinidad Dollars). For travelers who purchased their air tickets from major U.S. carriers, the tax should be included in the cost of the ticket. We recommend that you keep some extra cash handy when checking in for your flight just in case the tax was not included.

**TIME**: At the time of this tour, Barbados and Trinidad are 1 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: As of this writing (May 2013), no major shots or inoculations are required for entry into Barbados or Trinidad; however, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination or prophylaxis against a variety of preventable diseases, including:

1) Routine Vaccinations
2) Yellow Fever
   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 for procedures for packing medication.

Water – Bottled or 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.

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. To protect you 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). There is no threat of Malaria on this tour route. Another mosquito-born 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.

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 “Cutters” to your body from the waist down BEFORE putting on your clothing.
• Spray your pants and socks with a spray repellent such as “Cutters” or “Off.” Repellants 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. 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:** Our website, www.ventbird.com offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from this store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You may also visit such other online stores such as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print or hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com or www.buteobooks.com which specializes in ornithology books.

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

**Other Birding Resources:**
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:**

**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:**

**Cultural Background:**

**TIPPING:** Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides or staff have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

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responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.