



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Lesser Antilles Pearls of the Caribbean *27th April to 9th May 2022 (13 days)*



St. Vincent Amazon's by Keith Clarkson

An epic adventure covering 6 countries and 10 islands, taking in all the single island and Lesser Antillean Endemics. Made up of the southerly Windward and northerly Leeward Islands, the Lesser Antilles are the last frontier of Caribbean birding. These volcanic islands on the edge of the Caribbean Plate are the gateway between the harsh Atlantic Ocean and the warm, tranquil Caribbean Sea. Originally settled by the Taino of South America, the islands have played host to multiple colonisers from the Caribs to the more modern European giants of Britain, France and the Netherlands. Through multiple wars, slavery, epidemics, natural and man-made destruction, the island's wildlife has managed to escape mostly intact, but equally lives a precarious existence that can be wiped out by a single event.

Starting from Barbados, the most easterly of the islands we embark on numerous short hops to Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, Martinique, Dominica, Guadeloupe, Montserrat, Barbuda and ultimately Antigua. Hosting 18 single island endemics, 10 Lesser Antillean Endemics, 9 Caribbean Endemics and upwards of 43 endemics sub-species (with many liable to be full splits), this travel intensive, but birding relaxed tour appeals to the birder, twitcher and photographer alike. Gaudy birds, picture postcard beaches, turquoise seas, rugged landscapes and friendly locals make this tour one of our birding highlights.

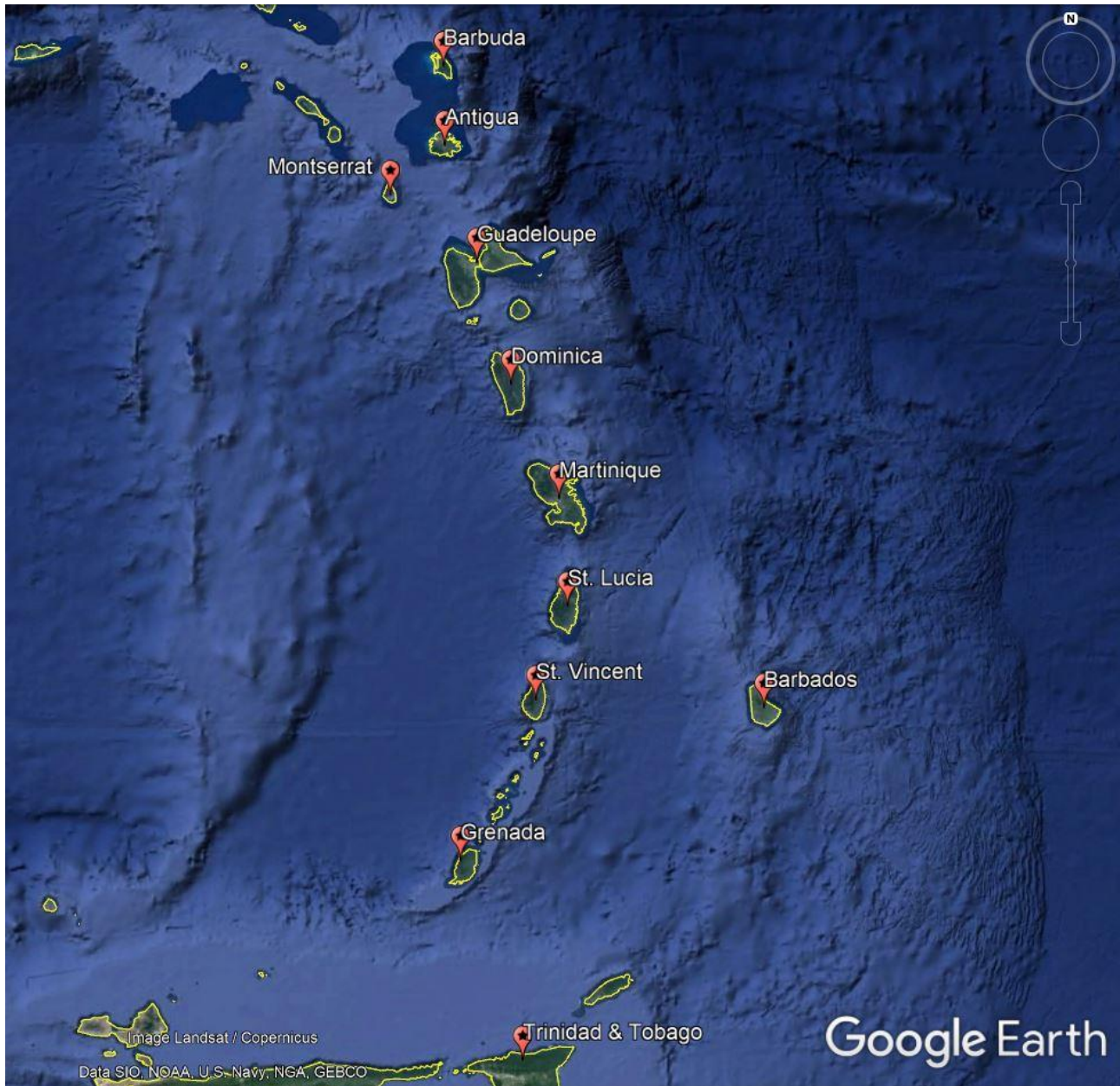
THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

LESSER ANTILLES ITINERARY

Day 1	Arrival in Barbados
Day 2	Barbados to St. Lucia
Day 3	St. Lucia
Day 4	St. Lucia to Martinique
Day 5	Martinique to Dominica
Day 6	Dominica
Day 7	Dominica to Guadeloupe
Day 8	Guadeloupe to Antigua via Montserrat
Day 9	Barbuda
Day 10	Antigua to St. Vincent
Day 11	St. Vincent
Day 12	St. Vincent to Grenada
Day 13	Final departure



TOUR MAP...



THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

Day 1: Arrival in Barbados. After arriving at Grantley Adams International Airport, you will be met and transferred to our beachfront hotel, located on the scenic southern coast of the island. The prime location of this hotel ensures that we will have time to get out this afternoon and make some initial birding forays.

We make the short 10 minute van-ride to the exclusive Graeme Hall Nature Reserve, typically closed to the public. This is the perfect introduction to Lesser Antillean birding. A RAMSAR designated Wetland of International Importance, we can expect a hive of birding activity and as we stroll along the immaculately maintained boardwalk, flitting amongst the dark green leaves of the Red Mangroves are a host of indigenous regional species, including Caribbean Elaenia, Antillean Crested Hummingbird, Carib Grackle, Bananaquit, the local race of Mangrove Warbler and of course the endemic Barbados Bullfinch. We will take advantage of prime locations on viewing platforms and of our ideal positions behind observation hides to enjoy unparalleled views of Scaly-naped Pigeon, Masked Duck, secretive Sora and both Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned Night Herons. Three species of egret also inhabit the mangroves. Owing to the absence of daily visitors for the last seven years, the colony has gradually expanded towards the boardwalk, from whence one can now get excellent views of nesting Little, Snowy, and Western Cattle Egrets.



Antillean Crested Hummingbird by Keith Clarkson

Following our highly productive, yet relaxing visit to the reserve, we take the van back to our hotel to freshen up, before heading to the popular and bustling nearby fishing village of Oistins for a freshly caught evening meal. With such local delicacies as pickled seacat (octopus), breadfruit coucou and flying fish awaiting our palates, the tone is set for what promises to be as equally delectable a journey for our taste buds as the myriad colourful bird species will be for our eyes. Please note: a wide range of other meats such as chicken, beef, pork, as well as vegetarian options are also available at Oistins.



St Lucia Oriole by Keith Clarkson

Day 2: Barbados to St. Lucia. This morning we make a short 40 minute flight to St. Lucia. On arrival we embark on our journey through the wilds of the island to an area close to Dennery - one of the most popular fishing villages on the island. The dense thickets of semi-arid woodland associated with this part of the island represent ideal habitat for one of the rarest birds we will see on this entire



trip - the White-breasted Thrasher. This near endemic is found only on St. Lucia and one other island. Its population is thought to number fewer than 700 pairs in the wild (and is decreasing).

As we travel further inland, semi-arid woodland is gradually replaced by the lush Des Cartiers Rainforest. Here we will bird until late afternoon. Meandering along the network of easily navigable forest trails lined with a staggering array of flora, ranging from giant Tree Ferns to tiny bromeliads, we delight in the sights and sounds of a host of regional forest-dwelling species and threatened endemics, amongst them, and perhaps most coveted of all - St. Lucia's national bird, the magnificent St. Lucia Amazon.



White-breasted Thrasher by Keith Clarkson

After our time in Des Cartiers with such endemic gems as St. Lucia Oriole and St. Lucia Black Finch, as well as regional indigenous stunners like Rufous-throated Solitaire and Green-throated Carib, we make our way towards Vieux Fort to explore the nearby Aupicon Wetland. This important site is populated by Pied-billed Grebe and such regional specialities as the Caribbean race of American Coot and Black-bellied Whistling Duck as well as a wide variety of overwintering waterfowl and waders from North America.

After making the 20 minute drive back to our cosy, locally-run hotel, nestled within a swathe of lush forest, we settle in to dine while overlooking the scenic coastal setting of Praslin Bay and the Frigate Islands.

Day 3: St. Lucia. We wake early to bird a generous swathe of St. Lucia's Northern Range, dominated by the majestic 2,600+ ft Pitons. Although we are in a mountainous region of the island, it will be the van's engine, not our own power doing most of the work. We drive up a long, steady incline to the



Green-throated Carib by Sam Barone

quaint hilltop village of Bouton from where we set out on a slow-paced walk along a well-worn path, lined on one side with an extensive orchard and on the other with dense rainforest. In this idyllic setting we target such treasures as St. Lucia Warbler, Scaly-breasted Thrasher, St. Lucia Pewee, and Lesser Antillean Swift.

As midday approaches, we make for one of St. Lucia's loftiest vantage points. Here we can gauge the relatively short distances between the Lesser Antillean islands, as both Martinique to the north, and St. Vincent to the south are both clearly visible. With stunning scenery all around, we await the arrival of the species that nests on the



cliff face that rises far below us; and are soon treated to a spectacular aerial display of Red-billed Tropicbirds battling the buffeting, swirling winds to return to their colony.

Later today we join an experienced captain and crew on a search for ocean giants! An astonishing 22 species of whale and dolphin have been sighted off of the coasts of St. Lucia, and our time on the island coincides with that of cetacean migration through the Lesser Antilles. Huge pods of Short-finned Pilot Whales are the most commonly seen while other larger species such as Humpbacks and False Killers have been spotted on previous trips. Finally, although very rarely seen, there is the chance of Sperm Whale, which also dwell in these waters. Who knows what delights this 3 hour cruise holds in store for us.



Bridled Quail-Dove by Beatrice Henricot

Day 4: St. Lucia to Martinique. This morning we board our vessel bound for Martinique. En route we will scan the seas for two species of boobies and the skies above for Magnificent Frigatebirds as well as species of terns, gulls, and shearwaters. Sightings of turtles, dolphins, and flying fish are also distinct possibilities.

After we arrive at port, we make our way to select sites frequented by birds of interest. The island's endemic species of oriole is our prime target, but this small French Territory is also home to other gems such as the near endemic Blue-headed Hummingbird and Lesser Antillean Flycatcher as well as the entertaining Grey Trembler (another near endemic).

The lively capital of Fort de France is our setting for dinner, where we will enjoy local creole cooking set to a backdrop of live music and the swaying of ship masts in the harbour.



Martinique Oriole by Beatrice Henricot

Day 5: Martinique to Dominica. At 10 a.m. we make the short 30 minute flight to Dominica - an island regarded by many as the "Nature Lover's Caribbean Island". Such is the nature of touring the Caribbean that though a mere six hours earlier we awoke at dawn to bird the coastal woodlands of Martinique, the afternoon of the same day sees us setting foot in the rainforests of Dominica in search of completely new species for the trip.

The island's lush forests absolutely teem with life! The latter half of the day sees us embark on a quest for such residents as Purple-throated Carib, Lesser Antillean Saltator, Pearly-eyed Thrasher, Brown Trembler, and one of Dominica's two species of



endemic Amazona parrot - the charismatic "Jaco" or Red-necked Amazon.

Day 6: Dominica. Anticipation will be ripe as this morning brings with it a phenomenal opportunity to enjoy stunning views of the largest and rarest of the Amazona parrots: the undisputed monarch of these forests - Imperial Amazon. We drive to a secluded site deep within montane forest where the Sisserou (as it is known by locals) is known to roost. Before setting out on a quest for fruiting trees the birds often preen and stretch their impressive wings and in so doing allow one to truly appreciate the large size and unique feathering of this bird.



Red-necked Amazon by Steve Kornfeld

Although the Sisserou is undoubtedly the showpiece, this largely unspoiled region of the island is also home to a staggering array of other beautiful species. One sighting of the dazzling colours of the Antillean Euphonia can leave you in little doubt that you are in the tropics, while encounters with the resplendent Red-legged Thrush will no doubt prove equally memorable. With such treasures all around us, we spend the remainder of the morning exploring forest trails in search of other species local to the area, such as Lesser Antillean Flycatcher and Ruddy Quail-Dove, all the while being treated to the cacophony of calls for which such forests alone are reserved.

Day 7: Dominica to Guadeloupe. Guadeloupe is a remarkable island, for its forests not only provide glimpses of some of the more secretive species rarely seen on other islands (as often evidenced by the Forest Thrushes hopping amongst the tables in popular riverside parks and Bridled Quail-Doves walking at your feet!), but where one can get close (very close) to a most curious endemic indeed.



Long-finned Pilot Whales by Ryan Chenery

The movements of the Guadeloupe Woodpecker are somewhat unconventional, with birds often seen dangling upside down directly overhead while clinging to slender swinging branches and plucking ants from clusters of berries! Odd? Yes. But it certainly offers fabulous looks! Having spent the morning taking part in some relaxed forest birding beside crystal clear streams punctuated with crayfish and shoals of river trout, we make for a reliable site for the delightful Lesser Antillean Pewee and the near endemic Plumbeous Warbler. As is in keeping with the sedate nature of the birding on this, the larger of the two French Territories in the Lesser Antilles, we access this site via a clearly demarcated footpath lining the forest edge - and here revel in the sights of two of the smallest near endemics in the region.

The afternoon is ours to relax and enjoy some cocktails on our individual verandas before taking a relaxing dip



in the pool. Antillean Crested Hummingbirds flit amongst the tubular red flowers of Antigua Heath, while in the palms overhead, Tropical Mockingbirds and Grey Kingbirds play out an almost continuous melody of song.



Purple-throated Carib by Steve Kornfeld

Day 8: Guadeloupe to Antigua via Montserrat. From Guadeloupe we travel by private cabin cruiser to an island fondly known as The Other Emerald Isle. With its historic ties to Ireland, the beautiful and peaceful island of Montserrat is a botanists dream. With plant life fuelled by incredibly rich volcanic soil, Montserrat’s vast swathes of forest reveal flowering plants and towering emergents not seen on many other islands.

From the deck of our boat we approach from the west and gaze in astonishment at the still smouldering crater of mighty Mt. Soufriere. As the volcano is still classed as active, no human habitation is found on this coast, and indeed we can see why - a huge lava flow the obvious reason for the abandoned villages that line this coast. We round the southern tip of the island, enjoying views of Red-billed Tropicbirds and Royal Terns pursuing flying fish and make port at a tiny fishing village.

From here we set off in pre-arranged transport to the lush forested foothills of the island, where deep in primary forest and amongst brilliant flowering heliconias we find Montserrat’s endemic – the appropriately fiery-chested Montserrat Oriole. Having spent the day exploring this truly magical forest and getting to know more of its inhabitants - from Montserrat Racers and Montserrat Anoles to Pearly-eyed Thrashers and the local race of Forest Thrush. This evening we board our vessel and enjoy a sunset cruise across to Antigua.

When we arrive in Antigua, we make our way to our beachfront hotel, framed by an impressive cliff face on the shores of the Caribbean Sea. Dinner and live entertainment is on hand with which to celebrate another day’s successful birding. With a shoreline pocketed by inlets and bays, Antiguan boast that they can visit a different beach every day of the year and still not see them all. This large number of beaches ensures that Antigua is an island more popular with sun-seekers than bird-watchers.



Blue-headed Hummingbird by Beatrice Henricot

However, although not home to any endemics, this island does offer the opportunity to see a species unlikely to be seen on any other of the Lesser Antilles - the impressively coiffured White-crowned Pigeon (at home in the swaying palms that surround our hotel) and to explore



a vast wetland for up-close views of several overwintering herons, waders and waterfowl.

Day 9: Barbuda. From Antigua we embark on a day trip to the smaller sister of this twin-island state. We board a privately chartered sleek speedboat and after 90 minutes gliding across some of the most beautiful waters in the Caribbean Sea we are stepping onto the sands of Barbuda. Our main target here is the diminutive Barbuda Warbler. This charming warbler is perfectly at home in the dry scrublands of one of the Lesser Antilles driest islands, and shares the habitat with Common Ground Dove, Caribbean Elaenia, iguanas, and bizarrely, herds of feral donkeys!



Lesser Antillean Saltator by Beatrice Henricot

Barbuda is also home to the largest Magnificent Frigatebird colony in the entire Caribbean. These giants are most commonly seen soaring high above the waves, carefully

scanning the waters for food floating on or close to the surface, so it is a wonderful treat to board a dinghy that takes us across a shallow lagoon absolutely teeming with marine life (as evidenced by the hundreds of jellyfish of every shape and size floating beneath us and clearly visible from our bough) and moors us literally within touching distance of nests, chicks and adults. We spend half an hour in the presence of these incredible birds, observing their behaviour and watching as squadrons of adults manipulate their impressive 6 foot wingspan to return with food to perch beside their young.

Driving around the island, one cannot help but be struck by the spectacular and unspoiled natural beauty of Barbuda. This is “postcard perfect”, a land which offers a window into how many other islands in the chain now dominated by popular beachside condos and villas (such as Antigua) would have once looked. The water is a glistening turquoise blue and the colours of the sands effortlessly blend between brilliant whites and varying shades of pink. With some of the most untouched beaches in the Caribbean literally on either side of us, what better way to spend the rest of the day than to head to a charming “Robinson Crusoesque” beach bar to enjoy an absolutely delicious meal of

Maxine’s mahi mahi, and follow it up with a relaxing swim in sparkling turquoise waters and a stroll along an idyllic white sand beach. We are in full tropical holiday mode. This is truly a case of birding in Paradise!



St. Lucia Warbler by Ryan Chenery

On our return leg across the sun-kissed seas to Antigua, we may have the opportunity for even more memorable dolphin and whale encounters.

Day 10: Antigua to St. Vincent. Our 40 minute midday flight from Antigua to St.Vincent today sees us continue on our southward journey along the



island chain. As the number of miles travelled steadily rises so too does the number of bird species seen. After arrival at the elegant family-run hotel, the afternoon is ours to take part in some light “hotel-ground birding” where targets will include the fascinating all-black colour phase of Bananaquit, Spectacled Thrush, Eared Dove, Tropical Mockingbird and Lesser Antillean Flycatcher.

This can be followed by a swim in the pool, a cocktail at the beach bar or if you’re feeling adventurous why not descend the flight of steps onto the black volcanic sand beaches and go for a dip in the Caribbean Sea (don’t forget to pack your snorkel!) Dinner tonight is at a local bar where we will delve into some truly delicious “Vincy” food.



Grenada Flycatcher by Beatrice Henricot

Day 11: St. Vincent. An early start this morning is warranted as it allows us the perfect opportunity for an audience with the island’s national bird, and one of the rarest birds on the planet – the St. Vincent Amazon. There is something very sobering in the knowledge that you are watching some of the last remaining individuals of a species, in the only country where they can be found, in one of their last expanses of natural habitat. However, what a spectacle they provide as they leave their roosts and commute from one fruiting tree to another, every flit of their wings a mesmeric golden flash against the unbroken dark green backdrop of the island's dense forests. A magnificent sight!

According to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, we follow up our time with St. Vincent’s large and vulnerable endemic with an audience with her minute and endangered endemic - the comically attired Whistling Warbler. As though he were a curious monocled 19th century gentleman, the male Whistling Warbler often will flit out to fleetingly peer down upon you with a cocked head and quizzical stare, as though he were contemplating the motives behind your entry into his forest abode, before rapidly darting away again.



Grenada Dove by Beatrice Henricot

As well as being home to some of the rarest of the rare, St. Vincent will also provide us with the opportunity to see a number of species hitherto unseen on other islands, with the Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Cocoa Thrush, and impressive local race of Common Black Hawk being but a few. On our return journey from another rewarding day of birding, we gaze out the window at the changing topography of this varied and rugged land. Densely forested mountain peaks give way to sparsely vegetated plateaus and eventually grasslands and coastal flora, at which point we arrive back at our hotel, where we enjoy a candlelit



dinner on the shores of the Caribbean Sea.

Day 12: St. Vincent to Grenada. Today sees us take a 30 minute flight to Grenada. From the air this small and densely populated island might seem an odd destination on a birding trip, however, by virtue of our making for one of the last remaining vestiges of suitable habitat in the south of the island, we are soon provided with the opportunity to see the rarest species of the entire trip - the Grenada Dove. Latest counts estimate the surviving number of Grenada Doves to be as low as 140 individual birds. However, with the help of a trusted local guide, we will be treated to a sight few people have had, or will ever have a chance to see in their lifetime. After visiting the last stronghold of this delicate, unassuming dove, we explore the dry woodland that represents its natural habitat and here enjoy sightings of some more of this tiny island's other inhabitants, including Rufous-breasted Hermit, Lesser Antillean Tanager and Grenada Flycatcher. We even climb a well-located observation tower to scan the skies for the local race of Hook-billed Kite.

Our lodgings for the night will be a vibrantly coloured and newly refurbished resort. Standing on our verandas looking out across the moonlit sea that for two weeks we have journeyed across, we watch as her waves gently lap against the shore and reflect on our travels. What a perfect setting to draw to a close our journey through the Lesser Antilles.

Day 13: Final departure. The tour ends this morning after breakfast with a transfer to the Maurice Bishop International Airport.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 13;
- All lodgings;
- Ground and boat transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees;
- Extra activities as mentioned in the itinerary; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).

The tour fee does not include:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any drinks;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.

c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.



d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader. If, therefore, you feel that he has given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip him.

Special Notes:

- We spend some of our time traversing the many islands by small to medium-sized aeroplanes. Baggage restrictions are strictly enforced even for these small hops. Please do not arrive for the tour with more than 19kg (41 lb) of check in luggage and 7kg (+-15 lb) of hand luggage.
- This tour requires a moderate level of fitness. There will be many early morning starts, a number of flights and a fair amount of walking. However, although we cover a diverse range of terrain, there are no steep ascents and trails are primarily well maintained and relatively level. Any light to moderate ascents are conducted at a slow, steady pace with plenty of opportunities to rest along the way.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include ANY airfares. The tour will begin in the afternoon of day 1 on the island of Barbados. Please ensure that you arrive by mid-day to participate in the afternoon birding activities. The tour will conclude after breakfast on day 13 with a transfer to Maurice Bishop International Airport, Grenada (IATA: GND).

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

Grantley Adams International Airport, Seawell (IATA: BGI) on the island of Barbados is the main port of entry for international flights on this tour. The main port of exit for international flights from Maurice Bishop International Airport, Grenada (IATA: GND). **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

