

Lesser Antilles 31 May to 27 June, 2023

Antigua and Barbuda; Barbados; Dominica; Grenada; Guadeloupe; Martinique; Saint Lucia;
Saint Vincent

Feel free to contact me with any questions! David Hollie (davrhollic@gmail.com)

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Introduction: [The detailed itinerary starts at the top of page 4]

The Lesser Antillean islands aren't on most birders' list of dream destinations. After all, one could spend a single hour in Colombia and see more species of birds than I saw in my entire 28 days on these beautiful Caribbean islands. But if you are someone who values quality birds, beautiful scenery, and an amazing experience of biogeography, a trip to the Lesser Antilles should be high on your list! The original inspiration for this trip was the endemic diversity of Troglodytidae and Parulidae (wrens and New World warblers, respectively; my two favorite families) that these islands host, but this trip provided memories that span well beyond just the bird life.

The land area of these islands is miniscule. Of the nine islands I visited, Guadeloupe is the largest island. However, Rhode Island, a US state that is frequently the subject of jokes because of its small size, is 2.5x *larger* than Guadeloupe. Given the small land areas, increasing pressure of land development, and their geographical location that puts them at constant threat of severe storms and hurricanes, the conservation of the flora and fauna of the Lesser Antillean islands warrant more attention than they get from the birding community. I hope this trip report can help bring a spotlight to Caribbean birds that deserve more consideration. Not only because they are amazing species who deserve love, but especially because many of them are in dire need of research to aid in their conservation.

The intended reader of this report is someone hoping to gain insight for trip planning on a budget. If you are looking for fun bedtime reading of my travel escapades in the Caribbean, this is probably not for you. I try to focus on the logistical details of moving on and between the islands and efficiently finding the target birds on each island, but some experiences were so enjoyable that I don't always stick to the bare-bones logistics of everything.

General overview of logistics: While the order in which I visited the islands may seem a bit counter-intuitive, it was based largely on the cost and timing of flights and ferries. I spent several weeks testing out multiple different itineraries and finally landed on what you will see below. Of note, as of the writing of this report (2023), four islands are connected by an inexpensive, reliable (even if late on occasion) ferry service (L'Express des Iles): Guadeloupe, Dominica, Martinique, and St Lucia. All the others are only regularly serviced commercially by airlines. During my trip planning, flights between islands were always more expensive than ferries. Thus, the logical way to group the islands for maximal cost-savings is to do all the "ferry islands" together and all the "airline islands" together. Which group you do first and in what order you do them within the "groups" is entirely dependent on flight prices and availability during trip planning (don't lock yourself into trying to do the islands in a nice north-south or south-north order; sometimes it is cheaper and more efficient to leapfrog).

A note on ferries vs flights: In my experience during this trip, the L'Express des Iles ferry service was reliable (the latest I ever arrived was 1.5 hrs past scheduled arrival). Think of them like a water bus with stops at all four "ferry islands." It doesn't matter whether you are taking the full 8 hour journey from Guadeloupe to St Lucia or only 2 hours to jump off at the first stop, it's one flat and very reasonable fee. The one time I was 1.5 hours past scheduled arrival was because I was on the 8 hour trip and small delays at each stop added up. For flights, InterCaribbean airlines has a near monopoly on daily flight services between the "flight islands." The unfortunate thing is that they are ***incredibly*** unreliable, even by airline standards. Of the four flights that I had with them, three of them were canceled (for no clear reason), resulting in an overnight delay (thankfully they did pay for accommodation, but it significantly altered the course of my trip because we usually didn't leave until the evening of the following day, effectively creating a two day delay for me). One of the flights was canceled because the crew "didn't feel like flying" that night (they gave no official reason, but during my 8 hours waiting in the airport, I befriended one of the attendants who told me this is what happened behind closed doors). This was not unusual. I talked to many regular users of this airline who told me this was expected behavior from InterCaribbean. I have heard that other airlines are trying to dip their toes into the Lesser Antillean market, so hopefully there will be better options in the future.

Drinking water: I exclusively drank tap water on all of the islands except for Antigua/Barbuda (where my Airbnb host specifically instructed me not to drink water from the house tap). I never had an issue and that generally seems to be the case for most travelers based on what I read. Obviously, do what you are most comfortable with, but I suggest bringing a reusable bottle to cut down on plastic usage (also, having an insulated bottle is amazing for those hot afternoons).

Cell service: Normally I travel internationally without cell service, but there were so many moving parts to this trip that I wanted to have access to the internet more than just on wifi at night. I use Verizon and it was less than \$3 per day to add international service. I used this option and am so thankful. The coverage is surprisingly good throughout the Lesser Antillean islands. Even in some remote places where I thought there would be no service, I would have 4G coverage!

Lodging: Initially I was looking for hostels because that's my preferred budget option if they are available. But it seems like they aren't a big thing in the Lesser Antilles; the few that I found were not any cheaper than an Airbnb and not in a good location for easy access to birding. So the entire trip I relied on the extensive network of Airbnbs on the islands and wouldn't change that. I loved getting to meet a variety of hosts and overall it made my experience more enjoyable. Most of the islands had a wide range of price options to fit whatever need one might have.

Island languages/currency: The easiest way to think about the differences in the islands is to group Guadeloupe and Martinique together since they are overseas territories of France. The primary language is French, with a decent amount of English spoken around the islands, but it's by no means a guarantee that you can easily find an English-speaker. The currency is Euros and they definitely prefer that, so come prepared with Euros. All the other islands (that aren't Guadeloupe or Martinique) speak English and usually some form of Creole. The accent and cadence of English might make it difficult to understand, especially for non-native English speakers who are accustomed to US- or UK-style English. But generally, people are very kind and found it funny when they had to slow down even for a native speaker such as myself. They all use Eastern Caribbean Dollars, but USD was widely used and readily accepted (I used mostly ECD, but when rates were given to me in both, the exchange rate was pretty much spot on so there's really not much benefit to using ECD over USD). Barbados is the only non-French island that doesn't use ECD, they have their own currency but also tend to accept USD readily.

Driving/roads: Just like the currency, which side of the road they drive on can be grouped. Guadeloupe and Martinique drive on the right side of the road while all the others drive on the left side of the road. In general, the roads were decent (Guadeloupe and Martinique were especially nice), but expect to have to drive slowly because of the constant potholes and narrow, serpentine mountain roads on most islands. Driving in St. Lucia was especially bad in my experience. I never had an accident on any of the islands, but all of my close calls were in St. Lucia. It's definitely good to be in a defensive driving mindset and constantly be looking for potholes, they have a way of sneaking up on you!

Below I provide an island-based detailed itinerary with my personal expenses to help provide a gauge for others who like to travel on a budget. I basically lived on bread, fruit, and nuts while I was there, so food costs are not reported here due to the negligible addition to my travel expenses (gotta love local markets with amazing fruit!). All costs are given in USD and reflect the *total* price I paid (including relevant taxes, Airbnb service fees, etc). The target species listed for each island include the species and notable subspecies that are endemic or near-endemic (or in some cases, difficult to find on other islands, so included as a target). As you read along, you might find it useful to reference my [eBird Trip Report](#) where you will find all of the species I saw as well as the checklists which have extensive audio and photos embedded (click [here](#) for the checklists in reverse chronological order). I won't be embedding photos in this report, so if you want to see my bird photos, you can click on the associated "eBird lists" that I put at the end of each paragraph or see the [photos section](#) of my trip report which has all of my uploaded photos organized by species (click on a photo to see the location/date). I also won't be regularly

referencing species that are not in the “Target List” section for the islands, so if you want to know where I saw more common/widespread species, the eBird trip report is a quick and easy way to do that.

Martinique—31 May to 3 June

Cost of lodging (3 nights): \$150

Cost of rental car: \$114

Cost of gas/petrol: ~\$30

Ferry from Martinique to Dominica: \$64

Logistical notes: I would recommend staying north of Fort-de-France, as that is where all of the target birds can be most easily found. I stayed in an Airbnb right at the base of the Caravelle peninsula. My hosts, Yannick and Camille, were wonderful people and I highly recommend staying with them if you can. I really enjoyed talking with them in the evenings! [Link to Airbnb listing](#)

Unfortunately for me, it rained *extensively* every single day I was in Martinique. I’m used to the American tropics where storms often roll through in the hot afternoon, but this was not that. It rained almost constantly from morning through night, with brief periods of dryness to get out and bird. It was the rainy season, but I didn’t experience anything like this on any of the other islands. I think it was just bad timing. It did put a damper (emphasis on damp) on photography, but all in all, I still had a wonderful time birding the island.

Target species:

- **White-tailed Nightjar** (the only Lesser Antillean island to host this species which also has a presence in Central and South America)
- **Blue-headed Hummingbird** (endemic to Martinique and Dominica)
- **White-breasted Thrasher** (endemic to Martinique and St. Lucia, but the Martinique ssp is noticeably different, don’t skip this fun bird!)
- **Gray Trembler** (endemic to Martinique and St. Lucia)
- **Rufous-throated Solitaire** (found from Dominica through St. Vincent, but they were easiest to find in Martinique)
- **Lesser Antillean Euphonia** (most easily found on Dominica, Martinique, and St. Lucia)
- **Martinique Oriole** (endemic to Martinique)

Day 1 (31 May): I arrived at the FDF airport around 14h00, picked up my rental car, and started exploring the south of the island. There were no target birds down there, but I knew I wouldn’t be back to this end of the island for the rest of my time so I wanted to bird a bit down there. I was dodging rain the whole time and eventually made my way up to [Reserve Naturelle de La Caravelle](#) where White-breasted Thrasher and White-tailed Nightjar were the main targets. The last kilometer or so of the road to the reserve is not paved and a bit bumpy, but easily passable with my tiny economy car. Despite arriving less than an hour before sunset, I easily found the

thrashers along the Short Mangrove Trail [directions to the trail: from the [parking area](#), walk southeast downhill on the paved road toward [Chateau Duboc](#) (you'll see a sign pointing you to the right towards "Ruines du Chateau Duboc"). At the base of the hill by the large fence, you will see a trail to the left/east (there are signs with a picture of the thrasher). I found multiple pairs of **White-breasted Thrashers** all along this trail, starting from the beginning. Others have even reported seeing them on the paved walk before the trail. ([eBird list](#))

I got back to the parking area around 18h30 and grabbed my torch to prepare for the nightjar search. Less than 100 m southwest (towards town) of the parking area, you will find a wooden fence and stairs down to a defunct viewing platform. There is a [large open area](#) visible on satellite image where a male White-tailed Nightjar displays. He started singing about 5-10 minutes after sunset and can be easily visible even without a torch if you are there when he starts singing (he liked to perch on top of an elevated dead branch to start on both nights when I went to watch). **PLAYBACK IS NOT NECESSARY**, so please respect this scarce species for Martinique. The vocalization is quite different from mainland birds (different because of divergence or just a local dialect? I would love to see some research done on these Martinique birds!); if you are expecting to hear a drawn out whistle like the mainland birds, you might miss this bird in the cacophony of frogs and insects. For birders familiar with Black Phoebe, it reminded me a lot of their call. As of the writing of this report, my recording is the only one of the Martinique ssp eBird. See my checklist from the next night (same location) with the [embedded recording and photos](#).

Day 2 (1 June): I started the morning at [Plateau Boucher](#) (the road just north of this has an extensive widened area for easy and safe parking) with the main target being Martinique Oriole. It rained on me for most of the hour I spent here. I had a heard-only **Martinique Oriole** that stayed hidden in the forest which was a bit frustrating. However, I did enjoy my first great views (with the accompanying spectacular song) of **Rufous-throated Solitaire** here! ([eBird list](#))

Just a few hundred meters down the road (south) is [Riviere Blanche](#) (a road running east of the main highway). When I was here, the gate was closed, but fresh tire tracks indicated that the road is used. So do your best to park in a way that doesn't block the gate. I would hate for birders to get a bad name by blocking the road. This is another place where people consistently have orioles. And my luck was much better here, as ~250 m from the main highway, I ran across a pair of calling **Martinique Orioles**. I got on one as it flew across the road and landed in a small tree less than 5 m from me. It was actively feeding and I missed the photo op. Within 20 seconds, both birds were out of sight away from the road, still calling. I walked back and forth along the road through multiple downpours hoping for more orioles, but they never reappeared. I saw this species a total of three times on the island, and every observation was exactly like this. I hear them calling, I see them for about 20 seconds, then they disappear. I nicknamed them the Burnt Umber Ghosts (their color is an amazing experience, photos don't do the subtle hues justice). While walking the road, I had many **Blue-headed Hummingbirds**, **Gray Tremblers**, and three **Lesser Antillean Euphonias** (I highly recommend learning the call of the euphonia as they can be difficult to detect without knowing the call: a thin, descending whistle). Another notable bird was a flushed **Ruddy Quail-Dove**. ([eBird list](#))

I drove south down the main highway towards [Jardin de Balata](#), another place the orioles are semi-regularly reported (but often missed). With an admission price of €16, I didn't feel it was worth it (though I might have felt differently if I hadn't seen orioles yet). I walked around a bit outside the premises but didn't hear or see any orioles ([eBird list](#)). I took a hike in the rain on a forest trail north of Jardin de Balata (trailhead [here](#)). The habitat seemed reasonable for orioles, but I didn't hear or see any. With good weather, I suspect there would have been different results. I flushed a **Ruddy Quail-Dove** on this trail and heard another one, so this is another opportunity to look for this species. ([eBird list](#))

In the afternoon, I returned back to [Riviere Blanche](#) to try for another opportunity with the orioles and was treated to more rain. At one point, there was a torrential downpour for ~40 minutes. Thankfully I was near a patch of Heliconia that provided good shelter and I managed to keep my equipment relatively dry. I flushed several more **Ruddy Quail-Dove** along the road on my walk back to the car. In the same spot as earlier this morning (~250 m from the intersection with the main highway), I came across a calling **Martinique Oriole**. This time I was prepared and immediately started taking photos. And just like this morning, it disappeared as quickly as it appeared. ([eBird list](#))

In the evening, I returned back to [RN Caravelle](#) to enjoy more time with **White-breasted Thrashers** and to watch the displaying **White-tailed Nightjar** again. ([eBird list for Mangrove Trail](#) and [eBird list for nightjar](#))

Day 3 (2 June): Since I was already very pleased with my experience with all of the Martinique targets, I used this day as a "free day" to explore without specific birds in mind. My Airbnb hosts recommended a great hike on the Prêcheur - Grande Rivère Trail. The distance from Grand Rivère to Anse Couleuvre is about 15 km, so I decided to do the one way hike, parking at the town of [Grand Rivère](#) and being picked up by a boat at [Anse Couleuvre](#) (arranged by my wonderful Airbnb hosts). It was a spectacular hike through the rainforest. I thoroughly enjoyed my time despite being rained upon for more than half the journey. There were numerous **Ruddy Quail-Doves** along here, though I still was unable to photograph one. I had a very confiding pair of **Lesser Antillean Flycatchers** that allowed for great photos. About 6.5 km into the hike, I came across a beautiful pair of **Martinique Orioles** that put on the same show as always, appearing for 20 seconds then disappearing, never to be seen again. ([eBird lists for first](#) and [second](#) halves of trail)

I arrived at Anse Couleuvre a couple hours before my boat was scheduled to pick me up (there is no cell service at Couleuvre, so the time was pre-arranged the day before). So I found a trail which led to Cascade Couleuvre (once at the [parking lot for Anse Couleuvre](#), there are trail signs for the cascade trail). The most notable thing along this trail was abundant **Ruddy Quail-Doves**, I still missed photos though! ([eBird list](#)) My boat showed up at the agreed upon time and gave me a 20 minute ride back to the town of Grand Rivère where I parked. The views of the coastline on this boat ride were SPECTACULAR! Totally worth the hike and €15 euros for the boat ride back.

Day 4 (3 June): I took the L'Express des Iles ferry from Fort-de-France to Roseau (Dominica), departing the port at 09h15. I definitely recommend being outside as much as you can if you are interested in picking up some pelagic birds. During this journey, I saw **Red-footed** and **Brown Boobies**, **Sooty Tern**, **Great Shearwater**, and **White-tailed Tropicbird**.

General reflections on Martinique (the “do I wish I had done things differently?”/cost-saving section): If the weather and birds were perfect, I think it is quite possible to see all targets in one day (Martinique Oriole is the only bird that seemed difficult to pin down). Indeed, I have seen some tour groups only spend one full day in Martinique. If target birds are the only goal and you are trying to save on cost, this might be a viable option. But I don't regret having three days on the island, it allowed me to take things slowly and really enjoy the beautiful island. I also think it would be very difficult to do this island without a rental car, as I don't think there are regular public transport options servicing the necessary birding locations.

Dominica—3 June to 7 June

Cost of lodging (4 nights): \$123

Cost of rental car (5 days): \$255 (includes cost of Dominica driving permit—not necessary if you have an IDP)

Cost of gas/petrol: ~\$50

Ferry from Dominica to Guadeloupe: \$85

Logistical notes: I stayed in an Airbnb in Paix Bouche because of the great deal I got. It was a bit out of the way but extremely quiet and peaceful and the price was totally worth the extra 15 minutes of driving I had to do. The price has gone up since my stay there ([link to Airbnb listing](#)). Portsmouth makes the most logistical sense given its close proximity to Syndicate (the Portsmouth-Syndicate area is all you need for all of the Dominica targets except for Forest Thrush), so if you can find good accommodation there, that would be an ideal choice.

Dominica is by far the most under-developed island of the ones I visited and I initially had trouble finding a responsive rental car company. I used [Qwick Rentals Dominica](#) for my rental car and highly recommend them. The price is reasonable, they had quick communication, and were incredibly flexible with picking up and dropping off right at the ferry port. It couldn't have been an easier process for me.

Target species:

- **Blue-headed Hummingbird** (endemic to Martinique and Dominica)
- **Barn Owl** (At the time of my travels, Dominica was by far the easiest place to find the Lesser Antilles ssp)
- **Red-necked Parrot** (endemic to Dominica)
- **Imperial Parrot** (endemic to Dominica)
- **Lesser Antillean Pewee** (a split candidate endemic to Guadeloupe, Dominica, and Martinique. Dominica seems to be one of the best islands for them)
- **Dominica [“House”] Wren** (endemic to Dominica)

- **Red-legged Thrush** (Dominica is the only Lesser Antillean island where it can be found)
- **Forest Thrush** (endemic to Guadeloupe, Montserrat, and Dominica. The ssp in Dominica is quite distinct visually and vocally from the Guadeloupe/Montserrat birds, so I highly recommend targeting this bird if you have the time. Regardless of its species status, it is an stunning bird that deserves attention)
- **Lesser Antillean Euphonia** (most easily found on Dominica, Martinique, and St. Lucia)
- **Plumbeous Warbler** (endemic to Guadeloupe and Dominica)

Day 4 (3 June) continued: After disembarking and picking up my rental car, I headed north. I immediately noticed that Dominica was *much* drier than Martinique. Some of the scenery reminded me of being in the desert southwest of the US. My first stop was in the small town of Colihaut (an eBird hotspot, I parked [here](#) by the basketball/football area) . There is a road that runs east/north along a riparian corridor that has decent birding. It was the heat of the day and I needed to refill my water, so I didn't stay long. **Red-legged Thrush** and **Plumbeous Warbler** were the two highlights of my short walk here ([eBird list](#)). On my way to the Airbnb, I made a quick stop in Portsmouth to look for a roosting **Barn Owl**. I was able to see it in its usual spot in a locked building northeast of the St. John & St. Lewis Roman Catholic Church (the exact building pinned [here](#)). I had to peer through the windows, which of course attracted the attention of a passerby. I had a nice conversation with her and showed her my picture of the owl that I had taken through the window. She was clueless as to the presence of this gorgeous bird in her town! I asked about the church and she said church employees are there during weekdays (this was a Saturday) and they would probably open the building for me if I wanted a less obstructed view ([eBird list](#)). At this point, I was very hot, exhausted, and thirsty, so I decided to call it a day and settle in my Airbnb.

Day 5 (4 June): I left predawn to try to arrive at [Syndicate Nature Trail](#) early in the morning (currently, there are three Google Maps markers for the Syndicate trail. *The one I linked is the correct one.* I have submitted the error to Google, but I have no idea how long it will take or if it will be corrected). The road to Syndicate isn't smooth by any means, but my tiny economy car did just fine. Between 6.5 and 7.0 km after leaving the main highway, you will need to take a left. It is well-signed, but the road for the left turn is not in Google Maps so I wanted to note it here so you know to be on the lookout. After the left turn, you will continue on that road for a couple more kilometers (no obvious ways to mess up, just continue on the same road) until you see the [visitor center](#) on the right. The visitor center was never in operation during my three visits. The last few kilometers of the road itself are quite good bird birding (**Dominica Wrens** are downright abundant), but I would recommend making a beeline to the trail given that Imperial Parrot can be very hit-or-miss (I give this advice in hindsight, I birded the road on my way in: [eBird list](#)). You will need to pass through the gate to the right (southeast) of the visitor center and make the short walk to the viewing points. There are three viewing points along the valley, the lower (most northwest) viewing point was by far the most productive for me, given its wider field of view. If you want to go straight to the lower viewpoint, take a left at the fork in the trail (note that there is a sign that says "viewpoints" pointing to the right. The trail is a "lollipop" trail and this intersection is the start of the loop). The three viewpoints are no more than a couple hundred meters apart from each other, so it's fairly easy to go back and forth if you so desire. **Red-necked Parrots**

are abundant here. **Dominica Wren** and **Plumbeous Warbler** were also relatively easy. I had **Lesser Antillean Euphonia** at both the upper and lower viewpoints during my visits on three separate days. For this first visit, I was unsuccessful in hearing or seeing Imperial Parrot. But not to worry, I had more days! ([eBird list](#))

Day 6 (5 June): I once again left predawn and arrived at the lower overlook before 05h30. I spent the next 12 hours waiting and waiting for Imperial Parrot. Thankfully, the overlooks are beautiful and I really enjoyed spending time with some of the local birds, getting great photos of **Red-necked Parrot**, **Broad-winged Hawk**, **Lesser Antillean Euphonia**, and **Antillean Crested Hummingbird**. Finally, at 17h39, I heard a different sound. I was distracted by a **Lesser Antillean Flycatcher** at the time and wasn't quite registering the sound. Then it hit me, it was the distant calls of **Imperial Parrots**! At a distance and while distracted, my first thought was a corvid, almost like a Blue Jay experimenting with some flutey sounds (as they often do). It's a sound that is completely different from a Red-necked Parrot. I highly recommend learning the call ahead of time as it can probably save a bit of adrenaline every time a Red-necked Parrot flies by in the valley. [Here](#) is a link to my recording of the birds taken the next morning. Look at the media notes for the timestamps of when Imperial Parrots are calling, as Red-necked Parrot also makes an audio appearance. Unfortunately for me, I wasn't able to see them even though I waited until it was dark enough that all roosting parrots quieted down. I ended up spending more than 13 hours at Syndicate on this day alone. Imperial Parrot is such a special bird though, so whether it takes 15 minutes or 15 hours to have the opportunity to spend time with them, cherish every second of it! ([eBird list](#))

Day 7 (6 June): Since I was there when the Imperial Parrots went silent the previous night, I thought there would be a good chance that they would be in the same spot at wake up time. Sure enough, I heard them in exactly the same spot on the ridge across from the lower viewpoint at 05h29. After they flew away a little after 06h00 I waited around for a couple more hours but they were never heard or seen again. It was truly a surreal experience waking up with these birds and will forever be one of my favorite memories of my Lesser Antilles trip. ([eBird list](#))

I decided to head back to Lower Colihaut to see if I could find Lesser Antillean Pewee which is seen from time to time along the road. I parked in the same place by the basketball court ([here](#)) and started walking my way up the road. **Caribbean Elaenias** are abundant along this road. I also saw plenty of **Red-legged Thrushes** and **Plumbeous Warblers**, plus decent looks at a family group of **Brown Tremblers**. It wasn't until 1.4 km up the road that I finally found a **Lesser Antillean Pewee** hawking insects back and forth across the road. Within 30 seconds of finding it, I noticed that I was standing right under a nest with two nearly-fledged young! I spent almost two hours photographing these amazing birds and got some great results. This is a likely split (from Puerto Rican and St. Lucia Pewees), so it's definitely worth putting in effort to try to see them in Dominica. ([eBird list](#))

On my way back to the Airbnb, I made another stop at the St. John & St. Lewis Roman Catholic Church to try for a better view of the roosting **Barn Owl**. I talked to the kind secretary of the church who happily opened the door for me, allowing great looks at the bird without a dirty

window obstructing the view! The bird did not seem disturbed in the least, but I was alone and very cautious. As always, **please be respectful of roosting owls!** ([eBird list](#))

Day 8 (7 June): I checked out of my Airbnb well before dawn so that I could start my journey south. Given that my ferry to Guadeloupe didn't depart until the late afternoon (16h15), I decided to check out some birding on other parts of the island. I chose to take the highway on the east coast and was rewarded with a beautiful sunrise over the water. The eastern half of the island is also noticeably more lush and green compared to the west coast. My first destination was [Emerald Pool](#) to look for the Dominica ssp of Forest Thrush. I parked just after 06h00 and almost immediately heard **Forest Thrush** singing. The song is completely different from the recording in Merlin (from Guadeloupe), so I thought it might be a Spectacled Thrush until I actually laid eyes on the bird and heard the distinctive "smack" call. They are relatively skulky and prefer the dark parts of the forest, so it was quite difficult to get the initial sighting. I spent a couple hours birding on the trails here and ended up getting fantastic photos of the Forest Thrushes and enjoyed the beautiful Emerald Pool as well. Other notable birds included **Dominica Wren, Brown Trembler, Ruddy Quail-Dove, and Plumbeous Warbler**. I did notice a significant drop in bird activity after 08h15. The forest went almost silent. It may have just been the morning I was there, but if you have the ability to get here early, don't sleep in too much in case this is the usual course of a morning there. ([eBird list](#))

Forest Thrush was my last target bird for Dominica but I still had quite a bit of time to kill before my ferry, so I headed to the [Middleham Falls Trail](#) in Morne Trois Pitons National Park. This is a place I had noted in case I still hadn't seen Forest Thrush or Lesser Antillean Pewee at this point. There was a lot of construction happening on the road to the trailhead (possibly an ecolodge/resort?), but it didn't interfere with parking (I parked [here](#), which is also by the trailhead). The road is a bit steep and bumpy, but my little car did just fine. However, I could imagine a scenario after lots of rain and erosion that this would *not* be the case, so drive with care. There were several **Forest Thrush** on this trail, but I didn't have any luck getting eyes on them (possibly the time of day). The most notable species here was my only observation of **Rufous-throated Solitaire** from my time in Dominica. ([eBird list](#))

Since I still had some time to spare, I went back to Roseau and walked around the [Dominica Botanical Gardens](#). The birds here were mostly the common species on the island, but I enjoyed the short hike up to [Morne Bruce Cross](#) which provided fantastic views of the city. ([eBird list](#))

There was a \$32 USD exit tax paid by cash (USD or ECD) or credit at the ferry terminal. The ferry ride from Dominica to Point-a-Pitre was mostly uneventful with **Sooty Tern** and **Brown Booby** being the only notable pelagic species.

General reflections on Dominica: I purposely planned "too much" time on Dominica, partly because I knew that Imperial Parrot could be difficult and partly because I really wanted to take my time and enjoy this under-birded island. I think it could be reasonably done with two full days (instead of my four), but given how rare Imperial Parrot is, I would hate to rush it or miss it. While there are public transport options on the main highway that loops the entire island,

Syndicate is so far off the main highway (~10 km) that it would be incredibly difficult to do this island without a rental car.

Guadeloupe—7 June to 9 June

Cost of lodging (2 nights): \$76

Cost of rental car (1 day): \$46

Cost of gas/petrol: ~\$20

Ferry from Guadeloupe to St. Lucia: \$85

Logistical notes: I only spent one full day in Guadeloupe (arriving by ferry after dark on 7 June and leaving by ferry in the morning on 9 June). Given that all the target birds can be easily seen in Parc National de la Guadeloupe, I found an inexpensive Airbnb on that side of the island (west). My host, Nadia, didn't speak much English and I don't speak much French, but we were able to communicate with lots of gesturing and translation apps. She is an extremely kind person and I would highly recommend staying there if it also fits your needs. [Link to listing](#)

Target species:

- **Bridled Quail-Dove** (can be found on other Lesser Antillean islands, but Guadeloupe is by far the easiest location of the 9 islands included in this report)
- **Guadeloupe Woodpecker** (endemic to Guadeloupe)
- **Lesser Antillean Pewee** (Guadeloupe and Dominica are probably the easiest locations)
- **Forest Thrush** (Guadeloupe/Montserrat birds are quite different from Dominica birds)
- **Plumbeous Warbler** (endemic to Guadeloupe and Dominica)

Day 9 (8 June): I arrived at the [parking area for Cascade aux Ecrevisses](#) at 05h50 and was immediately greeted by two **Bridled Quail-Doves** in the parking lot. It turns out that there is a woman who feeds the birds by tossing out crumbs first thing in the morning. I talked with her and she feeds them most mornings and definitely has a connection with the birds, as they feed right at her feet. The quail-doves, **Brown Tremblers**, **Pearly-eyed Thrashers**, and **Lesser Antillean Bullfinches** all participate in this, giving great photo opportunities. She said that Guadeloupe Woodpeckers are often in a tree right by the parking lot, but I didn't see any during my time there. I walked down to the waterfall and saw **Forest Thrush** and more **Bridled Quail-Dove** along the path. When I drove by here later in the morning (around 09h00), the parking lot was packed with people (including several tour buses), so I *highly recommend* getting here early for the best chance at seeing the quail-doves and Forest Thrush well. ([eBird list](#))

I then drove down to [Corossol](#), a beautiful place with lots of picnic shelters. Here I had more **Forest Thrush** as well as my first **Guadeloupe Woodpeckers**. There are abundant **Purple-throated Carib** here with great photo opportunities. ([eBird list](#))

Just down the road from Corossol is [Maison de la Foret](#). There is a nice trail system here if you're looking to hike some in the deep forest, plus I had another **Guadeloupe Woodpecker** in the parking lot. ([eBird list](#))

Given that all of my Guadeloupe targets were satisfactorily seen and photographed, I decided to check out a walking path that I had marked as a backup location for Lesser Antillean Pewee in case I missed it in Dominica. The eBird hotspot is called [Jules / Petit-Bourg](#) and I parked [here](#) near the Inrae buildings. I walked SW down the road and stayed on the main path whenever there was an intersection. In total, I walked a bit over 3 km before turning around. I had a conservative count of nine **Guadeloupe Woodpeckers** including a juvenile, so this is a great place to come if this is still a needed bird; I got much better looks here than anywhere else (including breathtaking views of the maroon belly!). I also got a much better appreciation for just how large these birds are! I also saw plenty of **Brown Tremblers**, **Plumbeous Warblers**, and a few **Forest Thrush** far down the trail and a pair of **Spectacled Thrush** much closer to the parking area. It wasn't until my walk back when I was ~500 m from the parking area that I saw a **Lesser Antillean Pewee**. Not nearly as cooperative as the Dominica birds were but still a great bird! ([eBird list](#))

Day 10 (9 June): I had an early morning ferry departure for St. Lucia, an 8+ hour ferry ride! I spent a lot of time outside on this trip but it was slow birding. I did see **Brown Noddy**, **Sooty and Bridled Terns**, and **Great, Cory's and Sooty Shearwaters**.

General reflections on Guadeloupe: Given that Guadeloupe Woodpecker is the only true endemic here (though Bridled Quail-Dove and Forest Thrush are also important targets), I don't think it's necessary to have more than a day here. I had seen and photographed all of these birds within the first couple of hours of birding. That being said, I think it would have been fun to have an extra day to explore the eastern half of the island! Like Martinique, there doesn't seem to be a robust network of public transport to random places in Guadeloupe. Public transport might be sufficient while in the city, but rental cars are cheap here and totally worth the convenience (especially if your stay is short like mine was).

St. Lucia—9 June to 14 June

Cost of lodging (5 nights): see below

Cost of rental car (5 days): see below (possibly not necessary if on a tight budget)

Cost of gas/petrol: ~\$78

Flight from St. Lucia to St. Vincent: \$148

Logistical notes: My (non-birder but nature-loving) parents joined me for both St. Lucia and St. Vincent, so these two islands will look a bit different as far as the intensity of birding and costs (my parents prefer to travel a bit more comfortably than I do, though still pretty rugged by many Americans' standards). Before I knew they were joining me, I had scoped out Airbnbs and rental cars. [Here](#) is a reasonable (\$35/night) Airbnb that I was planning to use, it's a few houses down from where I ended up staying with my parents. Soufriere is a great place to be since all targets except for the nightjar and thrasher can be seen within walking distance of the town. Which

brings me to my next point: I was not planning to rent a car here when I thought I was going to be alone (we did end up with a car since my parents care about more than just the birds). The Rufous Nightjar requires a guide (who uses his vehicle) and the thrasher spot is right off the highway, perfect for using St. Lucia's public transport. Thus, if you're looking to save money and capable of walking a lot, it might make sense to take public transport from Castries (ferry port) to Soufriere and then use a guide for the nightjar and public transport for the thrasher. If you plan to use the public transport, here are a few tips:

1. Public transport minibuses/vans can be identified by their **green license plates starting with "M"**
2. Have ECD, as public transport is the one time that ECD seems strongly preferred
3. Simply flag them down anywhere on the side of a main road. They will stop *anywhere* if they aren't full (this is also something to be aware of if you are driving behind one!)
4. The minibuses/vans that take you from Castries to Soufriere can be found within a few hundred meters from the ferry port. My understanding is that they are just east of the Castries Central Market (approximately [here](#)). Locals are very friendly and helpful, don't be afraid to ask directions (but don't accept an offer for them to lead you there unless you plan to tip). The Castries-Soufriere trip should only be about \$15 ECD (~5 USD)
5. You can probably do a round trip Soufriere to Thrasher for \$30 ECD (~10 USD) or less, the island public transport system is *extremely* affordable and not even comparable to rental or taxi

Also note that if you have large bags, you will likely be expected to pay for two people (which is more than reasonable since you are taking up space. There is no trunk space for bags so you will have to put it on a seat if it doesn't fit in your lap). If you do decide to rent a car, I used [Unique Automotive](#). It's a family-owned business and they were great about communication. They were flexible and met me with the car at the ferry dock and met us at the airport for dropoff, making for a very convenient and seamless arrival and departure!

Target species:

- **Rufous Nightjar** (endemic ssp)
- **St. Lucia Parrot** (endemic to St. Lucia)
- **St. Lucia (Lesser Antillean) Pewee** (endemic ssp, good candidate for a split)
- **St. Lucia ["House"] Wren** (endemic to St. Lucia)
- **White-breasted Thrasher** (endemic to Martinique and St. Lucia, but the ssp are noticeably different. It's worth the time and effort to see the St. Lucia birds)
- **Gray Tumbler** (endemic to Martinique and St. Lucia)
- **St. Lucia Oriole** (endemic to St. Lucia)
- **St. Lucia Warbler** (endemic to St. Lucia)
- **St. Lucia Black Finch** (endemic to St. Lucia)

Day 11 (10 June): My parents were supposed to arrive by plane around the same time I arrived by ferry (the previous evening), but due to airline issues in the US, they weren't scheduled to arrive until the afternoon of this day. So that left me with more than half a day of birding on my own to try to nail down as many targets as I could to allow for a less birding-focused time with

my parents. I started the morning off at [Bouton Junction](#), a road that runs west off of the main highway (note that if you plan to walk here from Soufriere, it's about 5 km straight up a hill. I walked this road some [and many locals do as well]. But be aware that it is a winding road with some risk as a pedestrian. If you see a public transport van it's probably worth the \$1 or \$2 for them to take you up there). As soon as I parked at the Junction, I heard **Gray Trembler**, **St. Lucia Parrots**, and a **St. Lucia Warbler**. I was told later by our nightjar guide that St. Lucia Parrots spend a lot of time in the magnolia tree just east of the first house on this road. I walked down the road and just after the first bend (just past the house), I heard the harsh call of a **St. Lucia Oriole** and was treated to incredible views of a male as he fed for several minutes along the road. I later learned that I was very lucky to get this bird so quickly, as the oriole is the most unpredictable endemic (with some people spending 3+ days on the island and never seeing or hearing one). About 1.5 km from the Junction, I heard my first **St. Lucia Wren** beside the road which eventually led to a few quick views of this beautiful singer. **St. Lucia Warblers** were abundant throughout my walk. On my walk back, I came across a pair of **St. Lucia Black Finches** in the forest just west of the first house (near where I had the oriole, not far from the Junction with the main highway). And just like that, 2.5 hrs of early morning birding produced all targets but the pewee, thrasher, and nightjar (pewees are often seen along this road too!). ([eBird list](#))

I still had a good amount of time before my parents arrived, so I made the drive over to the east side of the island where there's an eBird hotspot called [White-breasted Thrasher spot](#) because it has become "the" spot to see them. I parked on the side of the road [here](#) where there was a guy selling watermelon (shoutout to David who I talked to for a bit. He was excited to finally learn why so many white people walk into the woods here. Apparently not many "white people" go out of their way to talk to them, so here's a reminder that people are generally awesome. Talk to locals, it enriches the experience so much!). There is a little two-track path that goes into the woods on the north side of the highway. Be aware, **Fer-de-lance (venomous pitvipers) are common at this location**. I say this not to cause fear, but because a healthy sense of respect should be maintained at all times here. The thrashers are incredibly sneaky birds and sometimes "just one step over" can give you a better view. Look carefully before each step. The snakes aren't aggressive, but you don't want to step on one (it would undoubtedly be a trip-ruiner). Within ~70 m of walking in, I saw a pair of **White-breasted Thrashers** dart across the trail. Several minutes of searching and listening for calls or leaf shuffles turned up nothing. I continued down the road and it turned into a one-track which I took for less than 100 m. In this stretch I had another thrasher which perched up and gave me great views but took off when I tried for photos. There was also a male and fledgling **St. Lucia Black Finch** in this little stretch. I stayed for nearly two hours walking back and forth along the ~250 m stretch of trail hoping to get photos of a thrasher or find St. Lucia Pewee (which is frequently reported here). I was successful in seeing and (barely) photographing another thrasher near where I first saw them (within 70 m of the highway), but struck out on the pewee. I think the thrashers might have been much easier if it wasn't a brutally hot afternoon, so if you have the option to get here early or late, it's probably a better choice. ([eBird list](#))

Just for fun, I decided to drive north on the highway to bird in the Dennery district since I knew I wouldn't be birding here later in the trip (I get great pleasure from filling in my eBird maps). About 2.4 km from the thrasher spot, just before a big eastward curve, I pulled over and parked [here](#). There was a (at the time) dried creekbed that I birded along (less than 100 m) and found another pair of **White-breasted Thrashers**! I also had great views of a **St. Lucia Pewee**, noticeably different in both sight and sound from the Lesser Antillean ssp seen on other islands. Make sure you recognize the call, as they are quite vocal and can blend in with the local frog sounds if you're not paying attention. With the addition of the pewee, all targets except for Rufous Nightjar were seen in about half a day! ([eBird list](#))

Still having a bit more time to kill before picking my parents up, I looked for eBird hotspots near the airport and landed on [Eau Piquant Pond](#) which is just 5 minutes from the UVF airport. There were **American Coots** and **Common Gallinules** scattered across the pond, but the country's first eBird record of **Black-necked Stilt** was undoubtedly the highlight for me. I didn't even realize how rare they were until I saw it got flagged and looked it up to see a blank eBird map for St. Lucia! ([eBird list](#)) When arriving at the airport to pick up my parents, several **Eared Doves** flushed from the side of the road. They are quite common on the islands further south, but the southern tip of St. Lucia in the general region of the airport is the only place they are regularly seen on this island (apparently they are expanding north, though). Also, if you are in the vicinity of the UVF airport, don't sleep on [Moule a Chique](#), a lighthouse that has Red-billed Tropicbirds year-round. I didn't see this location until I was already off the island (I was also told that during spring 2023, Vieux Fort, the town that you drive through to get there, had several recent gang shootings at night. So keep that in mind for the time of day you visit).

My parents were very tired after a long trip, so we decided to relax for the rest of the day. We did enjoy spectacular sunset views at [Mirador Piton Santa Lucia](#) which overlooks the two pitons and the city of Soufriere.

Day 12 (11 June): I started off the morning walking from the Airbnb to Anse Chastanet. The birding along the [road to Anse Chastanet](#) is quite good, I walked it several times while on the island and got a pretty good sense of what was around. There are numerous **St. Lucia Warblers and Wrens** as well as a regular pair of **St. Lucia Pewees** that seemed to consistently hang out near some dumpsters roughly [here](#). ([eBird list](#))

Later in the afternoon we were to meet with a guide for the nightjar excursion which is on the north part of the island, so my parents and I decided to explore up north since we weren't planning to return there later. We went to [Pigeon Island National Park](#) which has a \$10 USD entrance fee. It's a pretty area with mediocre birding, but historically it's pretty neat (and you can see Martinique from the fort!). ([eBird list](#)).

When I was looking into Rufous Nightjar before the trip, I talked to a US-based birder who had lived in St. Lucia for several years. He told me that, while technically it's possible to see them without a guide, the roads are not on Google Maps and it's on private-ish property. So it was strongly suggested that I use a guide. I enjoy supporting local guides when I can, so I requested

a half day tour with [St. Lucia Birding and Wildlife Ambassadors](#). We met with Willow at 15h00 and had a wonderful afternoon birding with him. He is really connected to all aspects of the island and is a well-rounded naturalist. I highly, highly recommend birding with him (perhaps even more than just a nightjar excursion if you can afford it!). We first birded around the public areas of the Marquis Estate for some diurnal birds ([eBird checklist](#)) before heading deeper in as the sun started to set. At 18h45, we heard our first **Rufous Nightjar** and heard a couple more as it got darker. I really appreciated the way Willow handled the use of playback. He wanted to balance our enjoyment of the birds while respecting the birds' stress levels. I could tell he had a relationship with the birds; he only played the call a few times, just enough for us to get breathtaking views of a close bird. Truly a spectacular experience with a wonderful person who loves the island and its wildlife. ([eBird list](#))

Day 13 (12 June): At this point, all my St. Lucia targets had been seen, so I was focusing on having a fun time with my parents (and the remainder of St. Lucia may not interest the reader if target birding is the sole focus; we still do plenty of birding though!). In the morning, we hiked [Gros Piton](#). St. Lucia is famous for its two pitons, Gros and Petit Piton, two peaks which can be seen from most places on the island. It's a short (distance) but strenuous hike, though perhaps not as strenuous as I was led to believe. It is required to have a guide (\$50 USD per person) and the first guide shows up at 07h00 though technically they don't open until 07h30. I didn't bring my heavy camera because I thought I was going to be scrambling over rocks. This was not at all the case, it's just a long game of stairmaster, essentially. My parents are in their late 60s but very physically fit. It took us about 4 hours, but we could have done it faster if we had a faster guide (our guide walked very slowly). The birding was pretty decent with abundant **St. Lucia Wrens and Warblers** serenading us for most of the hike. Hiking Gros Piton is a classic St. Lucia experience, so I recommend doing it if you have the physical ability, time, and money. ([eBird list](#))

In the afternoon we went snorkeling at [Anse Chastanet](#). If you are into snorkeling, this is a great place with free access and great fish as soon as you hit the water. If you aren't into snorkeling but are willing to try, this is a wonderful place to dip your toes in the water. To me, snorkeling is like birding underwater! It's always something I keep in mind when travel planning, because I love dual birding-snorkeling trips! If you need equipment, there are a couple rental options right on the beach. The road is walkable from Soufriere, and it might be possible with a tiny economy car (we had a 4WD vehicle, but I saw several small cars make the journey. Once you're past that first extremely steep hill, you're home free. Just turn off your air conditioner before attempting this hill). This [website](#) has a great snorkeling guide for this location.

After snorkeling, we went up to Bouton Junction to watch **St. Lucia Parrots** going to roost around 18h00. We were treated to three separate pairs flying over; the setting sun really made the color shine on these rainbow parrots! ([eBird list](#))

Day 14 (13 June): We got up early to drive to the Edmund Forest Reserve/Des Cartiers Trail (the trail runs through the reserve). The road to the trail isn't even on Google Maps, but the app MAPS.ME was perfect for navigating on these roads. We parked at the Enbas Saut trailhead

and walked into the Edmund Rainforest from there. Download the MAPS.ME app and click this link from your phone (http://ge0.me/0kxrLUN_Ec/Forest), it should open within the app. Navigate to that pin and follow signs from there. Or, if you're a Google Maps purist, navigate to [here](#). Once you make that eastward turn off of the last Google-Maps-marked road, you can follow signs to Edmund Forest Reserve (or Enbas Saut) from there. While I have no qualms about pushing the limits of a small economy car, driving here without a 4WD might be a bit too much, especially considering some areas can be muddy depending on recent rain. Where the "road" ends and where the "Des Cartiers Trail" begins is not clear. It seems they are one in the same, which is why we decided to park at Enbas Saut and continue on foot. The birding was good here, I saw more **St. Lucia Black Finches** than anywhere else. We got lucky and got great looks at perched **St. Lucia Parrots** and also enjoyed the beautiful song (with views) of **Rufous-throated Solitaire**. There were also numerous **St. Lucia Pewees** throughout the hike. While hiking on the Micoud side (no difference in the trail, I just used Google Maps to see the district lines), we heard and then saw a pair of **St. Lucia Orioles**. I'm thankful my parents got to see this gorgeous species since I had only seen the one before my parents arrived on the island. ([eBird list for the Soufriere side](#) and [eBird list for the Micoud side](#))

We snorkeled again at Anse Chastanet and I took a birding walk down the [road to Anse Chastanet](#) in the evening, getting great photos of **St. Lucia Pewee**, **Wren**, and **Warbler**. ([eBird list](#))

Day 15 (14 June): I birded along the [road to Anse Chastanet](#) again in the morning, targeting more photos of the **St. Lucia Pewee**, **Wren**, and **Warbler**. If you are wanting great looks at these species, this is a great walk for that ([eBird checklist](#)). We snorkeled some more in the late morning and then drove back up to Castries to prepare for our evening flight to St. Vincent.

General reflections on St. Lucia: I spent five full days on this island, which is more than enough. As noted earlier, I saw all targets except for the Rufous Nightjar in the first half day of birding. Of course, I was incredibly lucky to get St. Lucia Oriole so quickly, but I still think two to three days is realistic if you're willing to spend a lot of time in the field (it seems that St. Lucia Oriole isn't particularly uncommon, it's just about being in the right place at the right time). If you want to have time to do non-birding focused things like snorkeling and/or hiking Gros Piton, then four days is probably reasonable to comfortably accomplish that. As for the rental car, it definitely made things more convenient. But if you're on a tight budget, I think everything can be accomplished without a rental car as long as you plan things well and are comfortable walking and using public transport.

St. Vincent—15 June to 19 June

Cost of lodging (5 nights): see below

Cost of rental car (5 days): see below (possibly not necessary if on a tight budget)

Cost of gas/petrol: ~\$60

Flight from St. Vincent to Grenada: \$118

Logistical notes: My parents also joined me for St. Vincent, so we stayed in a slightly pricier Airbnb than I would have chosen if I were by myself; we also rented a 4WD vehicle. We stayed in Peter's Hope, which was a great central location for the birding and snorkeling. Before I knew they were coming, I wasn't planning to use a rental car since all targets can be seen at the Vermont Nature Preserve and public transport can be used to get within a 15 minute walk of a few Airbnbs up in the Vermont/Table Rock area (e.g. [this one](#)). See my notes above about public transport in St. Lucia, as everything applies except I am unaware of there being a set license plate color/letter. Just wave down any van (frequently colorful with lots of graffiti, the public transport system uses drivers who personalize their vans) and they will stop if they have room! If you do decide to rent a car, we used Avis at the airport. I have no complaints, they accommodated an after-hours pickup since our flight arrived after they closed.

Target species:

- **Common Black Hawk** (not a Lesser Antillean endemic, but this is the only island of the trip that hosts them)
- **St. Vincent Parrot** (endemic to St. Vincent)
- **Yellow-bellied Elaenia** (abundant throughout Central and South America, but St. Vincent and Grenada are the only two islands hosting them on this trip)
- **Grenada Flycatcher** (endemic to St. Vincent and Grenada)
- **St. Vincent ["House"] Wren** (endemic to St. Vincent)
- **Cocoa Thrush** (found in South America, but only in St. Vincent and Grenada for the Lesser Antilles)
- **Whistling Warbler** (endemic to St. Vincent)
- **Lesser Antillean (St. Vincent) Tanager** (endemic to St. Vincent and Grenada, each with its own ssp and a possible future split)

Day 16 (15 June): We started the morning off at the [Vermont Nature Trail](#) (St. Vincent Parrot Preserve). The gate doesn't open until 08h00, but you can park outside and walk in without any issues. There is an entrance fee of \$5 ECD per person that you can pay on your way out if you arrive before the gate opens (the visitor center manager is very friendly, take some time to talk to her!). We saw **St. Vincent Parrots** flying by the visitor center and **Grenada Flycatchers** were calling along the river. On the road up to the trail, both **Short-tailed** and **Lesser Antillean Swifts** were flying around and dipping into the ponds. **Cocoa Thrushes** were singing and calling soon after we entered the forest (make sure to learn the call, initially I thought it was a weird Whistling Warbler). The parrots were quite common throughout the hike, and we had great views of them as well as **Common Black Hawks** flying by at the viewing platform. I also flushed a **Ruddy Quail-Dove** from the trail near the viewing platform. **Whistling Warblers** are perhaps the toughest bird on St. Vincent, but we had two singing from the viewing platform and

got quick but satisfying views of this very skulky bird. We heard **Lesser Antillean (St. Vincent) Tanager** several times, but didn't get more than unsatisfying views of silhouettes in the canopy ([eBird list](#))

In the afternoon, we headed to [Wallilabou Bay](#), made famous by its role as the filming location for the introduction of *Captain* Jack Sparrow in the first *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie (and also a great snorkeling site). There was a singing **St. Vincent Wren** just north of the set, the last St. Vincent target bird! If you come here, be sure to find Kenny who lives on the beach. He's a wonderful man who was an extra in the film and has Johnny Depp stories. He also lent me his fins (the only snorkeling equipment I didn't bring) multiple times and refused to take money for them! He has such an interesting perspective on the world, definitely worth a chat! ([eBird list](#))

Day 17 (16 June): My father loves flowers and exotic plants, so we headed up to [Montreal Gardens](#) on the windward (eastern) side of the island. It's \$10 USD per person entrance fee. The birding was actually pretty decent here and the flora was quite enjoyable as well. All three hummingbirds (**Antillean Crested Hummingbird**, **Purple-throated** and **Green-throated Carib**) made a good showing here as well as both **Yellow-bellied** and **Caribbean Elaenia**. This was the only location I saw **Brown Tremblers** while on the island. The highlight was undoubtedly the **Lesser Antillean (St. Vincent) Tanagers** which put on a good show, more than making up for the unsatisfying views at the Vermont Nature Preserve. ([eBird list](#))

In the afternoon, we went snorkeling at [Wallilabou Bay](#). It is spectacular snorkeling, but it's definitely more for advanced snorkelers who are comfortable with open water and free diving since a lot of the reef is relatively deep. Also, if you want to see the famous [Pirate Rock](#) (the arch in *Pirates of the Caribbean* during one of the [opening scenes](#)), you either have to swim around the corner (with lots of great snorkeling on the way!) or hire Kenny to take you out there on his boat (unsure of the price since we just swam out there).

Day 18 (17 June): We enjoyed the hiking and birding so much at the [Vermont Nature Trail](#) that we decided to go back up there again. It was similar to the first time, but with even more **St. Vincent Parrots** (a flock of 18 flew over while walking up the road past the visitor center!). We got a surprisingly good look at **Whistling Warbler** from the viewing platform and heard (and saw silhouettes of) more **Lesser Antillean (St. Vincent) Tanagers**. ([eBird list](#))

We spent the afternoon snorkeling in Wallilabou Bay.

Day 19 (18 June): My parents wanted to have a relaxing morning since they had a long travel day ahead of them. So I spent the morning birding around our Airbnb in the quiet neighborhood of [Peter's Hope](#). There are numerous singing **St. Vincent Wrens** in this neighborhood (especially along the road pinned in the above link, best seen in satellite view). ([eBird list](#))

Because it took so long to drive them to the airport and back (lots of traffic in Kingstown), I didn't do much else this day aside from more birding in Peter's Hope.

Day 20 (19 June): Back on my own, I decided to make another visit up to the [Vermont Nature Trail](#), partly because it is a wonderful place and partly because I knew there were Ruddy Quail-Doves there, the only species which had evaded my camera up until this point. I arrived early (05h52) to maximize my chance of seeing this species and was rewarded with numerous (at least 6) **Ruddy Quail-Doves** throughout the loop! I barely managed to photograph one as it flew by the trail, it truly is a terrible photo but at this point I didn't care since they had evaded me so many times. I think the reason I had far more quail-doves than any of our other visits is because I got there an hour earlier and was alone. The experience was otherwise the same as the previous visits, with lots of **St. Vincent Parrots**, a couple of **Whistling Warblers** heard near the platform, and terrible views of singing **Lesser Antillean (St. Vincent) Tanagers** (it seems like they are relatively common here but you have to be lucky to get views that aren't just silhouettes up in the canopy). ([eBird list](#))

Up until this point, the trip had amazingly gone off without a hitch. But here's where everything started to fall apart. I'll spare most of the details, but just know the upcoming week was comically and tragically chaotic for me. I was supposed to fly to Grenada in the evening, but due to the utter incompetence of InterCaribbean Airlines, they delayed, delayed, delayed, then canceled the flight, putting us up in a hotel at 23h00).

Day 21 (20 June): We were scheduled to fly out first thing in the morning (as one would expect, given our plane was literally waiting for us at the airport and all of the passengers had things to do and places to be), but lovely InterCaribbean managed to find some way to delay the flight, keeping us sitting in the airport for 3+ hours. Thankfully, we did manage to leave St. Vincent around 10h30.

General reflections on St. Vincent: We saw all target birds on our first day, though we didn't get satisfying views of the tanager until the next day. So I don't think 5 days is at all necessary if you're trying to cut costs. I thoroughly enjoyed my 5 days though and wouldn't change anything if I were to do it over again. But I also really enjoy snorkeling as well, so I had more than enough to keep myself occupied during the 5 days. Having a rental car definitely isn't necessary if you're comfortable using public transport and walking. Vermont Nature Trail has all the targets and is overall a fantastic place to be. The only bird that might be less-than-satisfactory there is the Lesser Antillean Tanager. They were there all three times I visited, but they proved to be difficult to actually see well (though there are some decent photos from this location on eBird, so that's not everybody's experience).

Grenada—20 June to 23 June

Cost of lodging (4 nights): \$147

Cost of rental car: N/A

Cost of gas/petrol: N/A

Flight from Grenada to Antigua (via Barbados): \$249

Logistical notes: A car is definitely not needed for Grenada if you are comfortable taking public transport and/or walking. I got an Airbnb in Ruth Howard ([listing](#)), ~1.5 km from Mt. Hartman National Park (the Grenada Dove sanctuary) at which all targets but the tanager and hermit can be easily found. Public transport is very reliable in Grenada and functions similarly to what was on St. Lucia and St. Vincent, but the vans actually have large decals on their windshields telling you the routes. [This website](#) provided all the information I needed to quickly and easily get where I wanted to go (and I will also reference the details of the buslines I took below).

Target species:

- **Grenada Dove** (endemic to Grenada)
- **Rufous-breasted Hermit** (throughout South America but this is the only island on this trip to see them)
- **Hook-billed Kite** (common throughout Central and South America, but endemic Grenada ssp)
- **Grenada Flycatcher** (endemic to St. Vincent and Grenada)
- **Grenada [“House”] Wren** (endemic to Grenada)
- **Lesser Antillean (Grenada) Tanager** (endemic to St. Vincent and Grenada, each with its own ssp and a possible future split)

Day 21 (20 June) continued: We arrived in Grenada around 11h00, I zipped through customs/immigration, took a taxi to my Airbnb to drop off my stuff, and was on my way (by foot) to Mt. Hartman NP by 11h45. Along the 1.5 km walk to Mt. Hartman there were multiple singing **Grenada Wren**, the first target of the trip! When I arrived at the [visitor center](#), I heard a **Grenada Dove** immediately, but it was deep in the woods behind a fence. So I took the first trail I saw which was behind the bird identification sign (before/west of the visitor center) which took me to a viewing platform. I heard another Grenada Dove from here. Then I went back out and took the trail at the SE corner of the visitor center (this definitely seems to be the entrance to the main trail system). The trails aren't well-maintained and a few times I wasn't even sure I was on a trail, but it seemed to work well enough. I heard and saw multiple **Grenada Doves, Wrens, and Flycatchers** on this trail. I eventually popped out at a series of clearings (visible on Google Maps satellite view) that seem to host cattle from time to time based on the scat. The view from [this clearing](#) allowed me to see the sky and I locked on to a pair of **Hook-billed Kites**! I continued moving SE until I was in dense forest again but didn't hear any more doves so I turned around and retraced my steps back to the visitor center, hearing and flushing a few more doves on my way back. The conservative, one-way count from this heat-of-the-day afternoon walk was SEVEN Grenada Doves!

Having been successful with all the targets at Mt. Hartman, I decided I might as well try to seal the deal with the last two targets at [Grand Etang](#) since I still had a few hours of daylight. I walked back to where the road to Mt. Hartman intersects with the main road ([here](#)) and talked to a couple locals to make sure I knew how to get to Grand Etang using the public transport. I hopped on a bus for [route #1](#) which ends at the large bus terminal in St. George's and cost \$2.50 ECD. The bus driver kindly pointed me to the area where [route #6](#) buses sit. Once my minibus filled up, we left on the route that includes Grand Etang. I tapped on the roof when we approached the Grand Etang visitor center and asked the driver to let me off. This ride cost \$5 ECD. There is a menial entrance fee, I believe it was \$3 ECD. I walked a trail behind (to the east of) the visitor center where I caught a glimpse of a **Rufous-breasted Hermit** zipping across the trail. I also easily found a pair of **Lesser Antillean (Grenada) Tanagers** which provided nice views, despite an ill-tempered Bananaquit chasing them around. ([eBird list](#))

The road down to the lake is lined with "lobster-claw" heliconias. I knew the **Rufous-breasted Hermits** loved them so I waited for about 2 minutes before one appeared chasing an **Antillean Crested Hummingbird**. I also found another pair of **Lesser Antillean (Grenada) Tanagers** near the lake. ([eBird list](#)) And just like that, in under four hours, I had seen and photographed all of the Grenada targets without a rental car—and in the heat of the day, no less!

I hopped on the route #6 bus heading back to St. George's but instead of immediately getting on a route #1 to take me back to Ruth Howard, I walked up to [Grenada National Cricket Stadium](#) because some White-winged Swallows had been seen there in previous weeks. This is a South American Species that may be (?) starting to expand its range north. I had to walk back and forth a bit, but I eventually found a juvenile **White-winged Swallow** feeding over the canal (south of the stadium) with a **Caribbean Martin**. ([eBird list](#)) After birding the town for a bit, I hopped back on a route #1 bus and went back to my Airbnb. The total round-trip cost for the trip to Grand Etang was ~15 ECD (~5 USD).

Day 22 (21 June): Since all targets had been seen, this was a bonus day (and was supposed to be my last full day here...*foreshadowing*). I decided to go back to Mt. Hartman since the Grenada Dove is an incredibly special bird. I wanted to spend some quality time with them (or at least their habitat). I spent almost three hours here and saw similar birds to the previous day, with much better looks (and photos) of **Grenada Dove**. I also spent some time with my **Grenada Wren** friends who were building a nest under the eaves of the visitor center. ([eBird list](#))

From Mt. Hartman, I walked over to the [Woburn MPA Observation Tower](#) which I thought would allow for a nice view over some mudflats. It did not. The mangroves are so overgrown around the tower that you really can't see much from the tower. There were, however, mudflats that unfortunately were devoid of waders at the time (this location does have waders from time to time, so worth a check if you want to boost the trip list). ([eBird list](#))

Day 23 (22 June): I was supposed to have an early morning flight to Antigua (connecting in Barbados), but I woke up to an email saying the flight had been canceled. Well, at least they didn't make me wait in the airport all day before canceling it. I had to transfer Airbnbs and then

spent the evening birding in the [Calliste](#) area which included a walk down to [Secret Beach](#) which added two new birds to the trip list: a pair of **Semipalmated Plovers** at the beach and a pair of **Fork-tailed Flycatchers** along the airport fence. **Grenada Wrens** were also abundant throughout this area. ([eBird list](#))

Day 24 (23 June): We were scheduled to leave first thing in the morning, but of course that didn't happen. InterCaribbean Airlines somehow made us wait in the airport for 6 hours (we could literally see the plane sitting on the tarmac). The pilots and crew seemed just as confused and frustrated as us. We left so late that we missed my connection to Antigua, meaning I would miss my flight to Montserrat the next day (having 36 hours of buffer time isn't good enough when InterCaribbean is involved). I struggled to find a way to logistically work in Montserrat given my remaining days but could not find a feasible way to do so without chartering a private plane/helicopter (way out of my budget). We finally made it to Barbados where I spent some time in the airport parking lot (outside of security) waiting for them to take me to a hotel for the night. **Barbados Bullfinch** was easily seen, much like House Sparrows are around many US airports. ([eBird list](#))

Day 25 (24 June): With so much time wasted because of InterCaribbean incompetence, I was bummed about missing Montserrat. There was a silver lining, however. While birding the hotel grounds in the morning (where there were abundant **Barbados Bullfinch**), I noticed an unusual swift. It didn't look like Black or Lesser Antillean Swift (the two swifts I had seen on multiple other islands). It didn't even look like anything I had seen in South America either (the next most likely occurrence given the geographical location of Barbados). I started looking through swifts on eBird and landed on **House Swift**, which incidentally had been reported from Barbados as a first Western Hemisphere record just three weeks prior! I reported it on eBird and the reviewer emailed me to say that they were still working on a positive ID since Horus and Little Swift were also possibilities. It is currently (September 2023) still being evaluated by Dutch and Belgian ornithologists who specialize in Apus swifts. ([eBird list](#))

The wonderful InterCaribbean Airlines took us to the airport in the morning but delayed our flight by 12 hours before finally taking off, arriving in Antigua after 22h00.

General reflections on Grenada (and Barbados): Grenada can easily be done without a rental car if you are on a budget and comfortable with walking/taking public transport. It's difficult to imagine a rental car making things all that much faster considering I saw and photographed all targets within four hours during one of the worst times of the day for birding (I started at 11h45). The people of Grenada are wonderful, I never felt unsafe while walking or using public transport, even with several thousand dollars of gear on me. ***As for Barbados***, I don't even have a separate section for that since the bullfinch is the only target bird there. You can see them from the airport, possibly through a gate window. If you are planning to try for the bullfinch on a layover (as I was), just know that airlines in the Caribbean are quite unreliable (and InterCaribbean is a special kind of unreliable, to say the least). I ended up getting a longer layover than I bargained for, but it's also quite possible to get a shorter-than-expected layover due to more mild (and common) delays. I would say that an hour is the bare minimum that I

would be comfortable to go through immigration (there are dozens of electronic immigration machines, just choose “through passenger” and “0” for number of nights), see the bullfinches in the parking lot within seconds, and come back through to clear security. And more than likely your Barbados flight will be delayed anyway ;-) (I’m a bit cynical about Caribbean air travel at this point).

Antigua and Barbuda—25 June to 27 June

Cost of lodging (2 nights): \$100

Cost of rental car: N/A

Cost of gas/petrol: N/A

Logistical notes: I didn’t use a rental car here because Antigua itself has no unique bird species, so I really didn’t need to get around the island. Antigua serves as the hub to get to both Montserrat (via [Fly Montserrat Airways](#)) and Barbuda (via [Barbuda Express Ferry](#); as of June 2023 this is the only regular ferry operator between Antigua and Barbuda). Montserrat was unfortunately unsalvageable for me at this point, but I was going to try my best to salvage the situation with Barbuda. The ideal scenario is to go to Barbuda any time from Tuesday through Saturday since the ferry leaves the harbor at St. Johns at 06h45 and returns at either 15h00 or 15h30, depending on the day (see the up-to-date schedule [here](#)). You do *not* want to be stuck taking the ferry on Sunday or Monday when it’s a *much* shorter time frame. I stayed at an Airbnb in Potter’s Village ([listing](#)) which wasn’t my first choice, but I had to rearrange all my plans due to arriving in Antigua two days late and missing Montserrat. It served its purpose well enough, it was 5 km from the port in St. Johns and 7 km from the airport, so I stayed on foot the entire time I was on the island.

Day 26 (25 June): As mentioned above, you do NOT want to get stuck taking the ferry on Sunday or Monday. Well, 25 June was a Sunday and my departure back to the US was 27 June, so I was in a bit of a pickle. While I was stuck in the Barbados airport all day on 24 June, I was messaging with Barbuda Express Ferry trying to figure out if I could salvage a Barbuda trip. If I went on Sunday (25 June), I would have ~1.5 hours on the island during the heat of the day (13h30 to 15h00). If I went on Monday (26 June) I would have have 20-30 minutes on the island during the early morning hours (08h15 to ~08h45). I decided I would much rather roll the dice with a longer period of time even in the heat of the day given that just a 5 or 10 minute delay with the Monday schedule would spell instant disaster. So I hopped on the ferry at noon with an optimistic attitude. The pier for the departure is called [Bryson’s Pier](#) on Google Maps and was easy to locate from the end of High St. Thankfully, they departed right on schedule and arrived only 3 minutes late (the ferry docks [here](#)). It’s a small boat with <20 passengers, so it was an easy disembarkment and I made a beeline for River Rd (“Rte 1” on Google Maps). I turned left (west) onto River Rd and immediately started hearing **Yellow (Golden) Warblers** which were difficult to ignore given the surprising similarity to an incomplete Barbuda Warbler song. About 200 m down River Rd, I heard my first **Barbuda Warbler** and saw one soon thereafter. All in all it took <10 minutes before I laid eyes on my first Barbuda Warbler. This left me with much more time than I expected, and I savored every moment on the island with these spectacular birds. There isn’t a whole lot more to say about the bird life on the island, as I didn’t get the opportunity

to go to the frigatebird colony which is the other natural attraction of the island. The return boat departed on time to the minute, so if you are here with a short time frame like me, don't push your luck. Be back at the dock on time. ([eBird list](#))

Day 27-28 (26-27 June): I spent the day of the 26th exploring Antigua on foot, walking over 20 km just for fun. There isn't much to note since the resident birds of the island are all of the same birds commonly seen on the other islands. The main difference was that **White-crowned Pigeon** was the default and very abundant pigeon, while on the other islands I visited, Scaly-naped Pigeons were the predominant large Columbids.

I flew back to the US on 27 June.

General reflections on Antigua and Barbuda: A car definitely isn't necessary here if you're willing to walk. The distance between the airport and the ferry port is 8 km, so finding lodging in between is ideal. If at all possible, plan the ferry to Barbuda anytime from Tuesday through Saturday to avoid having to rush things.

Montserrat supplement

Because of the incompetence of InterCaribbean Airlines, I was unable to make it out to Montserrat, despite having an entire 36 hours of buffer. However, I did do some planning for it and thought I would share some of that briefly here. I was *not* planning to use a rental car since Montserrat Oriole is the only endemic bird and its habitat is not that far from the airport. I was going to stay with this Airbnb ([listing](#)) which, at the time, was \$50 a night but looks like the price has increased. Jayesh, the host, was absolutely amazing to me and I highly recommend him. He gave me a full refund even though my cancellation was within 24 hrs of check in (I was holding out hope that I could still make it to Montserrat). From Jayesh's place, it's only a 1.6 km walk up to [Dry Waterfall Trail](#) which is a very regular place for Montserrat Oriole (plus other nice birds like Forest Thrush and Bridled Quail-Dove). As a backup location, [Blackwood Allen Trail](#) is about 3 km from Dry Waterfall Trail, and the road between the two takes you through more oriole habitat, so it would provide even more chances.

To see a complete list of species observed on this trip, see my [eBird trip report](#).