

GGBA Cuba's Birding Hotspots with Northern Highlights 2026

February 25 - March 7, 2026

ITINERARY

BLD = Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Wednesday 02/25/2026 Havana Palacio de los Corredores or similar

Upon arrival in Havana, you will be met and taken to your Casa Particular. Check-in begins at 3 pm.

Thursday 02/26/2026 Havana Palacio de los Corredores or similar (BLD)

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

Friday 02/27/2026 Viñales Casa Particular (BLD)

Depart for Viñales in western Cuba. Along the way, stop for birding at Las Terrazas, a UNESCO-designated Biosphere Reserve, where you'll be guided by Justo Arteaga from the Ecological Station of Las Terrazas. Las Terrazas is not only a nature reserve but also a self-sustained ecological community that began as a reforestation project in 1967. Target species are Cuban Grassquit, Cuban Trogon, Cuban Tody, Red-legged Honeycreeper, and Olive-capped Warbler. Meet with community residents who helped save this site that is now a model of sustainability and ecotourism. This afternoon, continue to Viñales, an area famous for its massive limestone formations called mogotes and home to species such as the Cuban Solitaire, Cuban Tody, Cuban Pewee and Cuban Bullfinch.

Saturday 02/28/2026 Viñales Casa Particular (BLD)

An early breakfast is followed by morning birding, looking for Cuban Solitaire, your target species, as well as Scaly-naped Pigeon. This afternoon, tour a local family's tobacco farm and learn about Cuba's innovation in agricultural sustainability. Then, visit the home of world-renowned nature artist and author Nils Navarro, who will provide a lecture, talk about his book, and show his art studio.

Sunday 03/01/2026 Zapata Peninsula Casa Enrique or similar (BLD)

Depart early for the four-hour drive to the Zapata Swamp, Cuba's largest wetland and a Ramsar-designated Wetland of International Importance. The Zapata area, sprawling nearly 1,700 square miles, consists of scrub, mangrove swamp, and coastline. Over 200 species have been recorded here, including the endemic Zapata Wren and Zapata Sparrow. Also look for species such as Cuban Blackbird, Cuban Green Woodpecker, Cuban Oriole, and Cuban Emerald. Late afternoon birding if time permits.

Monday 03/02/2026 Zapata Peninsula Casa Enrique or similar (BLD)

Following an early breakfast, depart for the Santo Tomás area, where you may find Zapata Wren and Zapata Sparrow. After lunch, enjoy birding at Las Salinas, an area frequented by many species of waterbirds that live in mangrove swamps, coastal lagoons, and woods. Over 165 indigenous and migratory birds, as well as mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates, are found here. Expect to see flamingos, herons, pelicans, Roseate Spoonbill, Glossy and White Ibises, Peregrine Falcon, Cuban Black Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, and others. Have dinner out at a local restaurant.

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Tuesday 03/03/2026 Zapata Peninsula

Casa Enrique or similar (BLD)

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

Wednesday 03/04/2026 Morón

Casa Particular (BLD)

Head out early for the long drive to Morón. Birding en route and lunch at Laguna de la Leche. On arrival in Morón, we settle into our casa particular to rest after a tiring day of travel. A perfect base for our birdwatching adventure. We will be rising early tomorrow to head out to the cayos. Afternoon birding in the area, if time permits.

Thursday 03/05/2026 Morón

Casa Particular (BLD)

We start the day at Cayo Guillermo and spend the afternoon at Cayo Romano. The Cayo Coco area combines an ideal spot for observing Cuba's bird life with beautiful beach and snorkeling opportunities, if desired. Look for Oriente Warbler, Thick-billed Vireo, Bahama Mockingbird, and Cuban Gnatcatcher, in addition to a variety of waterbirds including the West Indian Whistling-Duck.

Friday 03/06/2026 Morón

Casa Particular (BLD)

Begin the day at Cayo Paredon Grande, hopefully catching any species we may have missed in the cayos. Farewell dinner this evening at a local Paladar.

Saturday 03/07/2026 Depart

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Enjoy the morning at leisure before a group transfer to Camaguey Airport in time for flights back to the U.S.

\$5,095 per person in double occupancy

Single Supplement \$750 per person

For more information or to enroll, contact Dawn Lemoine travelprogram@goldengatebirds.org