

# Herp-Watching Adventure in Cuba East Tour



“Cuba has an exquisite and unique herpetofauna. Amphibians are represented by 62 species, 95% of which are endemic to Cuba. The Reptile fauna contains 154 species, and 87.5% of endemism. Both groups constitutes the most important part of the land vertebrate fauna in the island”.



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**Day 1 (Sept. 2). Arrival to José Martí National Airport. Florida Hotel BB**



*Eleutherodactylus orientalis*



*Bufo taladai*



*Anolis cyanopterus*



*Eleutherodactylus iberia*



*Diploglossus delasagra*



*Osteopilus septentrionalis*

**Day 2 (Sept. 3). Flight Habana (National Airport)-Holguín. Hotel Niquero HB**

**Breakfast in the hotel.** Flight to Holguín province will depart approximately at 6:30 am from the National Airport, and will take around one hour. From Holguín we will go by road to Cabo Cruz, Granma province. During the trip we will border the north slope of the Sierra Maestra. **Snack in Bayamo. Check in at Hotel Niquero. Lunch in Bayamo.** In the afternoon visit to the trail El Guafe. The main habitats are evergreen and deciduous forests that grow on limestone ground. We will enjoy local endemics like the common Cabo Cruz Banded Anole (*Anolis guafe*), the rare Cabo Cruz False Chamaeleon (*Chamaeleolis aguerói*), the Cuban Giant Anole (*Anolis equestris verreonensis*), and the Cabo Cruz Pallid Anole (*Anolis ruibali*). It will be also possible to see the Cuban Side-blotched Curly Tail (*Leiocephalus macropus phyllax*), the Cuban Trunk Anole (*Anolis argenteolus*), and the Cuban Twig Anole (*Anolis angusticeps*). At night we will come back for frogs, such as the local endemic Cabo Cruz Frog (*Eleutherodactylus tonyi*), Eastern Giant Toads (*Bufo peltocephalus*), the Cuban Groin Spot Frog (*E. atkinsi*), a very rare population of the Bromeliad Frog (*E. varians*), and the Cuban Tree Frog (*Osteopilus septentrionalis*). We will start trying to find the first Cuban Night Lizards (*Cricosaura typica*), but will have enough time the following day. **Dinner in the hotel.**

**Day 3 (Sept. 4). Full day herpwatching in Cabo Cruz. Hotel Niquero HB**

**Breakfast in the hotel.** Full day herpwatching in Cabo Cruz. In route to the trail Morlotte-Fustete. We will have more opportunities to see many of the species mentioned above, and also the locally endemic Cabo Cruz Trunk Anole (*Anolis confusus*). The Cuban Three-banded Sphaero (*Sphaerodactylus nigropunctatus*) is a beautifully colored gecko, with banded females and spotted males on a yellow background. Other very rare anoles have been reported from this trail: the Dwarf Green Anole (*Anolis isolepis*), the Spiny Anole (*A. loysianus*), and the Turquino Twig Anole (*Anolis guazuma*). **Lunch in Parque Desembarco del Granma. Dinner in the Hotel.**

**Day 4 (Sept. 5). Niquero-Caimanera. Hotel Caimanera FB**

**Breakfast in the hotel.** In route to the semidesertic south coast of Guantánamo Province. In about 3 hours we will be arriving to the surroundings of Guantánamo Bay. **Lunch in Guantánamo City. Check in at Hotel Caimanera.** There is a captivating herpetofauna associated to the dry scrub vegetation of the south coast of Guantánamo (which also includes tall column cacti) growing on marine terraces, limestone walls, and typical small outcrops of volcanic rock called



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*Anolis imias*



*Sphaerodactylus ruibali*



*Tropidophis wrightii*



*Bufo peltocephalus*



*Anolis baracoae*



*Eleutherodactylus ronaldi*



*Eleutherodactylus simulans*

"monitongos". A very interesting local endemic is the Imias Rocky Anole (*Anolis imias*), an endangered species that was long time hard to find due to the generalized ignorance of its life habits. The semidesertic region is also the habitat of nice colored geckoes of the genus *Sphaerodactylus*, such as the Guantánamo Bay Sphaero (*S. ruibali*), and the Cuban Broad Banded Sphaero (*S. torrei spielmani*). We will take advantage to visit the protected area of Hatibonico and also, by road, some marine terraces. The small Crombie's Tarentola (*Tarentola crombiei*) is a recently described species that occurs together with the Cuban Giant Gecko (*Tarentola americana*). To find *Tarentola* and Sphaeros we will turn out dry plants of the genus *Agave*, for which it is important to protect hands. Along our tour we will see the subspecific variation of the Cuban Coast Anoles (*Anolis jubar*). Other species are the Oriente Pallid Anole (*Anolis litoralis*), Cuban Ameiva (*Ameiva auberi*) (including several subspecies), racers, the rare Oriente Brown-capped Ground Snake (*Arrhyton redimitum*), the Gracile Banded Trope (*Tropidophis wrightii*), the wonderful Green Blotched Giant Anole (*Anolis smallwoodi palardis*), the Pallid Curly Tail (*Leiocephalus raviceps*), and many others. Amphibians are poorly represented, but the locally endemic Oriente Coastal Frog (*Eleutherodactylus etheridgei*) is very well adapted to survive in the desert conditions. Also relatively common are the Eastern Giant Toads (*Bufo peltocephalus*), the Cuban Groin Spot Frog (*Eleutherodactylus atkinsi*), and the Cuban Tree Frog (*Osteopilus septentrionalis*). The hotel is very close to interesting natural areas, so will be easy to access them from there in a short time. Please, be prepared for the extremely high temperatures!. **Cena en el hotel.**

**Day 5 (Sept. 6). Full day herp-watching at the surroundings of Guantánamo Bay. Hotel Caimanera FB**

**Day 6 (Sept. 7). Caimanera Baracoa. Hotel Castillo Porto Santo HB**

**Breakfast in the hotel.** In route to Baracoa (about one hour). Along the trip we will have very nice views of the semidesertic south coast of Guantánamo. We will stop in the way to take pictures and for herps (like *Anolis imias*, *Anolis jubar*, *Anolis litoralis*, and *Sphaerodactylus*). **Check in at Hotel Porto Santo in Baracoa. Lunch in Hotel Castillo Porto Santo.** In the afternoon, will visit the surroundings of El Yunque, a very famous flat top mountain that first captivated Christopher Columbus when arriving to Cuba. Very close to the base of El Yunque is the Duaba River, with clean waters. The locality is covered by rainforests. It takes one and half hour to climb up to the mountain with a local guide, which also requires to cross the river at a point. There are several species of amphibians and reptiles in this locality, such as the hard to see but easy to hear Guantanamera Frog (*Eleutherodactylus guantanamera*), the very common Oriente Mottled Frog (*E. simulans*), the Cuban Khaki Frog (*E. ronaldi*), and two local beautiful endemics which are possible to find climbing up to 300 m: the Cuban Red-rumped Frog (*E. acmonis*) and the Baracoa Dwarf Frog (*E. orientalis*). There is also an acoustic variant of the Cuban Telegraph Frog (*E. auriculatus*) that may represent an undescribed cryptic species. The Cuban Spotted Toad (*Bufo taladai*)



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*Anolis allisoni*



*Cricosaura typica*



*Sphaerodactylus nigropunctatus*  
Male



*Sphaerodactylus nigropunctatus*  
Female



*Ameiva auberi*



*Anolis argenteolus*



*Leiocephalus macropus*

is also very common in this place, and use to breed at the edges of the Duaba River. The Cuban Tree Frog (*Osteopilus septentrionalis*) is everywhere. Lizards are represented by the Baracoa Giant Anole (*Anolis baracoae*), the beautiful and common Green Fern Anole (*A. cyanopleurus*), the Blue Eyed Twig Anole (*A. alutaceus*), the hard to see Guantanamo Twig Anole (*Anolis alayoni*), the frequent Cuban Side-blotched Curly Tail (*Leiocephalus macropus asbolomus*), the difficult to see Oriente Bearded False Chamaeleon (*Chamaeleolis porcus*), and many others. Snakes are not very common, but it is possible to see the Cuban Lesser Racer (*Caraiba andreaei*), the Cuban Racer (*Cubophis cantherigerus*), and the Giant Trope (*Tropidophis melanurus*). The Oriente Black Ground Snake (*Arrhyton supernum*) is a very hard to find local endemic, only known from few individuals. Also rare is the Cuban Spotted Galliwasp (*Diploglossus nigropunctatus*). Because El Yunque is just few kilometers far away from the Hotel, the option is to spent the afternoon and early night looking for herps. Dinner at the hotel and rest.

### Day 7 (Sept. 8). Full day herp-watching in the Baracoa Sector of the Humboldt Park. Hotel Castillo Porto Santo HB

**Breakfast in the hotel.** Full day herp-watching in the Baracoa Sector of the Humboldt Park. This sector is about 40 km away from Baracoa, with relatively easy access to well stablished trails. Today the star is the Monte Iberia Dwarf Frog (*Eleutherodactylus iberia*), one of the smallest frogs in the World. We will looks for this tiny frog in the leaf litter of the tropical forest. Besides herps, there is also a big population of the Cuban Painted Snail (*Polymita picta*), one of the most beautifully colored shells on the Earth. Trough the trails crossing tropical forests, there is a second chance to see many of the species mentioned for El Yunque de Baracoa. **Lunch in Finca Duaba.**

### Day 8 (Sept. 9). Baracoa-Santiago de Cuba. Hotel Bucanero AI

**Breakfast in the hotel.** Back to Santiago de Cuba province (about 2 hours). **Check in at Hotel Bucanero. Lunch in Guantánamo City.** The hotel is located in a coastal location surrounded by cliffs and vegetation. We will check around the hotel for herps.

### Day 9 (Sept. 10). Excursion to La Gran Piedra. Hotel Bucanero AI

**Breakfast in the hotel.** Excursion to Gran Piedra, using proper jeeps, during the day and afternoon. The Sierra de la Gran Piedra is in the eastern portion of Sierra Maestra, and has 1 125 m above the sea level. After the high lowland temperatures, we will enjoy the cool enviroment of the mountain. It is a very different habitat with one of the biggest frog communities in the island. It will be possible to see: the Oriente Yellow Mottled Frog (*Eleutherodactylus ricordii*), the Oriente Spiny Frog (*E. gundlachi*), the Yellow Striped Dwarf Frog (*E. limbatus*),



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the Oriente Dark Bellied Frog (*E. intermedius*), the Guantanamera Frog (*E. guantanamera*) (easier to find inside the bromelias compared with other localities), the Cuban Grass Frog (*E. varleyi*), the Cuban Telegraph Frog (*E. auriculatus*), and others. Reptiles are represented by the local endemic Santiago Grass Anole (*Anolis relictus*), which is relatively easy to find. Other species are the Spanish Flag Anole (*Anolis allogus*), the rare Cuban Forest Sphaero (*Sphaerodactylus ramsdeni*), and the Oriente Giant Anole (*Anolis noblei galeifer*). **Lunch in La Gran Piedra.**

**Day 10 (Sept. 11). Back to Havana from Santiago de Cuba airport. Hotel Florida BB**

**Flight at 19:30 horas.**

**Day 11 (Sept. 12). Departure to Cayo Coco from the National Airport (Havana). Hotel Oassis Playa Coco AI**

**Breakfast in the hotel.** Departure to Cayo Coco from the National Airport (Havana). Cayo Coco is one of the small islands of the archipelago Jardines del Rey, located north to the Ciego de Avila province. The herpetofauna is relatively poor compared with other parts of Cuba, but with espectacular herps like the hard to find (but not impossible!) Blue Giant Anole (*Anolis equestris cyaneus*), the Cuban Coast Anole (*Anolis jubar cocoensis*), the Cuban Striped Curly-tail (*Leiocephalus stictigaster septentrionalis*), the Cuban Small Eared Toad (*Bufo empusus*), the Cuban High-crested Toad (*Bufo gundlachi*), and the Cuban Grass Frog (*Eleutherodactylus varleyi*). We will also try to find the rare Mangrove Salt Marsh Snake (*Nerodia clarkii*).

**Day 11 (Sept. 13). Full day herpwatching in Cayo Coco, Cayo Guillermo, and Cayo Paredón Grande. Hotel Oassis Playa Coco AI**

**Day 12 (Sept. 14). Return to Havana in the afternoon. Hotel Florida BB**

**Day 13 (Sept. 15). Back to Belgium.**

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