



CENTRAL ASIA: BIRDING THE SILK ROAD UZBEKISTAN, KAZAKHSTAN & KYRGYZSTAN

MAY 2-24, 2026

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In the heart of Central Asia, we find the attractive countries of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (Kirgizia). Uzbekistan is a country steeped in ancient history. In early times it was a rich region with splendid cities and cultures based along the Great Silk Route to China—a true crossroads between east and west. The country is steeped in fabled historical sites in Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara where ancient civilizations have travelled and fought over possession of central Asia for thousands of years. Superbly intact and incredibly beautiful, extravagant, ancient architecture is everywhere in our midst. There is also a short-list of very special birds to be found. Several species at the western edge of their range in Asia such as Indian Paradise-Flycatcher, Long-tailed Shrike, Rufous-naped Tit and Pied Bushchat mix with local specialties such as Pygmy Cormorant, White-tailed Lapwing, Menetries's Warbler, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, the very rare Hume's Lark, Yellow-breasted Tit, Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Finsch's Wheatears, White-throated Robin, Eastern Orphea



Warbler and Clamorous Reed-Warbler. At the top of the “want-list” is the enigmatic and curious Turkestan Ground-Jay, easily found in the sand deserts of Kyzyl Kum.

For a long time, Kazakhstan has been known for its large variety of rare Western Palearctic species and alluring steppe species like Black Lark and White-winged Lark. In Kazakhstan everything is on a vast scale, which is not surprising as it’s the ninth largest country in the world! Great expanses of flat steppe grasslands merge into sandy and stony deserts. Dotted here and there are saline and freshwater lakes which act like magnets to nesting and migrant birds. The bird-life is stunning! Apart from a large list of more typically European species, there is a remarkable list of very special breeding birds largely confined to Central Asia. The most attractive to Western birders are near-mythical species such as the previously mentioned Black and White-winged lark; the critically endangered Sociable Plover; sensational Macqueen’s Bustard; flocks of the secretive and rare Pallas’s Sandgrouse; colorful Caspian Plover; and tiny Asian Desert Warblers singing loudly in the vast plains of Sogety. Visits to the declining Turanga Forest near Balkhash Lake is a certainty for White-winged Woodpeckers, Saxaul Sparrow, Shikra and the very rare Yellow-eyed Pigeon.



Exquisite Caspian Plovers are found in the Tau-Kum Desert © Machiel Valkenburg

In sharp contrast, we find the tiny nation of Kyrgyzstan. The ‘Switzerland of Central Asia’ is well-known for the massive towering peaks of its Tien Shan Mountains—an extension of the Himalayas—edging onto China, rising to over 20,000 feet. Here we find ecosystems varying from massive tracts of deciduous and coniferous forest cut by untamed rivers in deep gorges at lower elevations, to snow-capped peaks and flower-rich alpine meadows higher up. In Kyrgyzstan we meet a plethora of Himalayan specialties like pleasing White-tailed Rubythroat; glamorous looking Ibisbill; crazy, colorful White-browed Tit-Warblers; and an odd White-winged Grosbeak or two. We relish the Curlew-like calls from Himalayan

Snowcock and the flying strawberry, better known as the Red-mantled Rosefinch, which is found in some dwarf-junipers. We expect to find some very interesting mammals, butterflies and reptiles as well.

European birders have been enjoying these stable countries and their fantastic birds and history ever since they gained independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union. (VENT operated its first and highly successful tour in 2009.) A combined visit to these destinations is a guaranteed success and an unforgettable experience, and we feel sure that participants will be delighted with extraordinary Central Asia.



Stunning White-browed Tit-Warblers inhabit junipers in the Tien Shan Mountains © Machiel Valkenburg

May 2-3, Days 1-2: Travel to Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Travel time to Tashkent varies greatly depending on your departure city, routing, and airline. Whatever option you choose, please plan your flight to arrive Tashkent on, or before, May 4. As many flights arrive after midnight, a room at the Hyatt for May 3 has been included in the cost of the tour.

NIGHTS: (May 2 & 3) Aboard aircraft in transit to Tashkent

May 4, Day 3: Arrive Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Upon arrival in Tashkent, you will be met and transferred to our hotel, where your room is reserved for immediate check-in. We will gather in the hotel lobby for a get-acquainted session, tour orientation and welcome dinner at 6:30 p.m. on May 4.

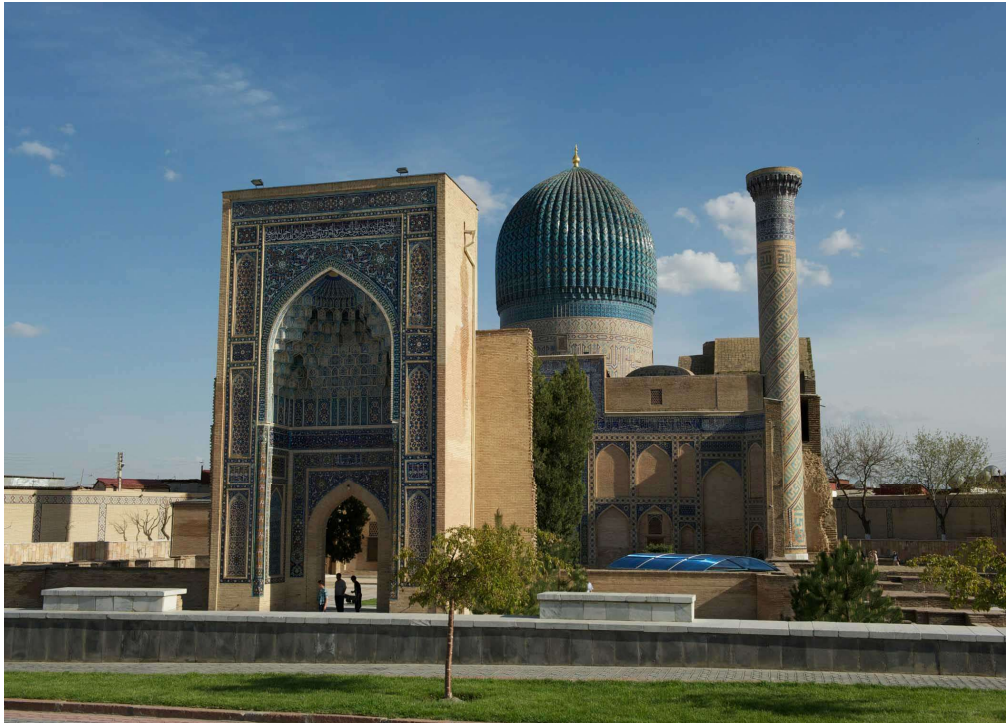
NIGHT: Hyatt Residence, Tashkent

May 5, Day 4: Drive Tashkent to Samarkand. After a hearty breakfast, we will start out for Samarkand. En route we will hopefully come across the first large flocks of Rosy Starling in addition to a nesting colony of White Storks. We should arrive into Samarkand around noon. Initially, we'll go for a rich-flavoured plov, a widely eaten Central Asian dish, said to originate from Uzbekistan, and arguably the best plov is found in Samarkand. After our delightful lunch, we have a short break before doing some preliminary exploration of this fabulous city.

NIGHT: Malika Prime Samarkand

May 6, Day 5: Samarkand. Today there are many wonders in store with a day based in and around the ancient city of Samarkand. We will commence with an early morning start, driving out of the city to the rocky, scrub and bush-covered hills of the Takhtakaracha Pass lying between Samarkand and Zarafshan, where Tamerlane roamed in centuries past. (Tamerlane was a Turco-Mongol conqueror who founded the Timurid Empire in and around modern-day Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asia, becoming the first ruler of the Timurid dynasty.) High on the wanted list and our main targets for today are the very skulky White-throated Robin, the Eastern Orphean Warbler and the obscure Hume's Lark. The latter sometimes taking lots of time to find. Also here are Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Turkestan and Yellow-breasted Azure tits, Indian Paradise-Flycatcher and common White-capped Bunting. Back in time for lunch, we will wander from our hotel into the quiet, small ancient city to explore its historical treasures. The massive Bibi Khanum Mosque (once the largest in Central Asia), The Registan, Timur's Mausoleum, the Street of Tombs and the local bazaar present a stunning and memorable "visual overload" of exquisitely elaborate tiled, painted and carved buildings.

NIGHT: Malika Prime, Samarkand



Gur-Emir Mausoleum, Tombs of the Temurids, Uzbekistan © Tom Trompert

May 7, Day 6: Samarkand to Bukhara. We can opt for an early start to nearby wetlands on the outskirts of Samarkand for such specialties as White-tailed Lapwing or spend more time immersing ourselves in the historical delights of Samarkand. Later in the morning, we'll continue our journey along the Silk Road to Bukhara (also known locally as Buxora). Formerly one of the most important trading cities anywhere in Central Asia, there is a rich and colorful history and an overwhelming number of historic sites of interest. The turquoise-blue domes and towering minarets of Bukhara provide a wonderful backdrop to our stay here, while the markets and covered bazaars are bustling. This is a great place to barter for a huge range of very inexpensive souvenirs such as jewelery, spices and the famous Bukhara rugs. Needless to say, we shall have some time to explore this wonderful city.

NIGHT: As-Salam Hotel, Bukhara

May 8, Day 7: Bukhara & quest for Turkestan Ground-Jay. Today's birding will perhaps be one of the most memorable. A very early start must be made into the Kyzyl Kum Desert where we expect to arrive just after dawn. This very special region is home to one of the most sought-after of all the birds in Central Asia—the legendary Turkestan (Pander's) Ground Jay. It is best to search in the cool of the early morning when they can often be found along the roadside. We will return to Bukhara for lunch followed by some relaxing and more opportunities to take in last sights of Bukhara, including the historic town centre with its surrounding old madrassahs, the Kalyan Minaret, a 150-foot-tall tower built in the 12th century, the Miri-Arab Madrasa and Trade Domes, The Ark, the fortified citadel of the Emir within the immense city walls, the Bolo-Hauz Mosque, the 10th century Ismail Samani Mausoleum, and the Char Minar with its four elaborately tiled minarets.

NIGHT: As-Salam Hotel, Bukhara

May 9, Day 8: Bukhara to Tashkent. "So much to do – so little time!" We will have an early start to spend much of the morning exploring close-by wetlands which surround the oasis city of Bukhara. These oases can be extremely attractive to a wealth of water and marsh-loving species, and we hope for plenty of Pygmy Cormorants, Dalmatian Pelicans, Glossy Ibis, an abundance of herons and egrets, the Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, plus, perhaps, scarcer finds such as Marbled Duck. Elegant White-tailed Lapwings are easily found. The extensive reed beds and marshy and dry scrub cover here is home to many additional smaller species of interest: Menetries's Warbler, Clamorous and Eurasian reed warblers, Rufous-tailed Bush-Robin, Pied Bushchat, and Long-tailed Shrike (the latter two at the furthest west of their Asiatic range).

In the afternoon, we will take the high-speed train from Bukhara, arriving in Tashkent in time for dinner at our comfortable Hyatt Hotel.

NIGHT: Hyatt Residence, Tashkent

May 10, Day 9: Chimgan Hills. We plan to spend our final day in the Chimgan Hills. These lush, green hills will provide a perfect ending to our amazing trip in Uzbekistan. We will be able to show you some gorgeous little gems. Both Yellow-breasted Tit and the arduous Rufous-naped Tit are the main attraction for this region, and we will do our best to show you these birds. Overhead we might see European and Oriental honey-buzzards. The hills are set amid mixed forest. We should find Red-rumped Swallows and Common House Martins as well as Common Nightingales, and Greenish and Hume's leaf warblers. We will arrive back in Tashkent in time to enjoy a final dinner in a local traditional restaurant.

NIGHT: Hyatt Residence, Tashkent

May 11, Day 10: Fly to Almaty, Kazakhstan. After breakfast, we will drive to the Tashkent airport and take a flight to the attractive city of Almaty. If time permits, we will commence our exploration of the Almaty area this afternoon.

NIGHT: Mercure Hotel City Center, Almaty

May 12-13, Days 11-12: Almaty to Sogety Plains. Heading out from our hotel in Almaty this morning, we travel 125 miles (200 km) east to one of the more spectacular and well-known sites in Kazakhstan—the red, yellow and black canyons of the Charyn River gorge. Amidst this lovely scenery, we should encounter raptors such as, Himalayan Griffon and Cinereous vultures; Long-legged Buzzard; Golden Eagle; and Lesser Kestrel. Saker Falcons have become increasingly rare due to the illegal falcon trade. In the occasional wetlands, small rivers and scrub running through this expansive, dry, rocky landscape are possibilities for Black Stork; Chukar; Tawny Pipit; Pied and Isabelline wheatears; Rufous-tailed and Blue rock-thrushes. Hume's Whitethroat is rarer here than in Uzbekistan; while White-capped, Gray-necked, Rock and Red-headed buntings are often found here. We may come across roadside colonies of the bizarre, pink-and-black, nomadic Rosy Starlings.

We continue our explorations, seeking out species still missing and adding further special birds such as Mongolian Finch coming down to drink at the edge of a little remote well. As well, we will be on the lookout for the eruptive Pallas's Sandgrouse, an elusive species known to breed in the stony deserts of the Sogety Valley.

NIGHTS: Hunting Lodges, Charyn Canyon



During our excursions in the Sogety Plains, we focus on finding the rare Pallas's Sandgrouse.

© Machiel Valkenburg

May 14, Day 13: Drive to Karakol, Kyrgyzstan. The day starts with a walk on the Sogety plains to ensure that everybody has seen the Pallas's Sandgrouse. This elegant bird is unfortunately always difficult to see

because of its skulky behaviour and rare existence in this part of Central Asia. In the Kokpek Pass we might come across ten-thousands of Black-veined Whites. These gorgeous butterflies fly in large numbers during the month of May; we only need to be lucky with the correct weather circumstances.



Close views of gorgeous Demoiselle Cranes are almost guaranteed © Machiel Valkenburg

Our journey continues in a southern direction towards the Kyrgyz border where a lunch stop might render cute Rock Petronias. When we come close to the mountains, the ground becomes more suitable for growing crops and in these agricultural lands, we have a chance to come across some really interesting birds such as the only breeding Upland Buzzard in Kazakhstan and more opportunities on the long rows of telephone poles to come across the magnificent Saker Falcon. Large groups of gentle Demoiselle Cranes are seen regularly just before crossing the border to Kyrgyzstan. The border crossing is an adventure in nowhere land. We drive for a long time in green steppe-like meadows before finding a Soviet style border crossing, including friendly border guards requiring lots of papers! We arrive in the early evening to our great guesthouse. After check-in we'll take a short drive to a local restaurant to enjoy a shaslik dinner.

NIGHT: Matsunoki Guesthouse, Karakol

May 15, Day 14: Chon-Ashuu (May Saz). Today we embark on an excursion to Chon Ashuu Pass, the highest pass on the tour at a dazzling 3,822 meters (12,539 feet). We will climb above the tree line and look for a rather special set of avifauna. The nearby wild streaming river holds both White-bellied and Brown dippers. We need to be lucky to come across an attractive Lammergeyer patrolling the sky. The lush meadows are home to one of the strangest waders of the world— the elusive Ibisbill. We have found this amazing wader on all of our past trips to Central Asia. Rufous-backed Redstart together with Black-throated and Brown accentors are quite common up here. The gorgeous White-browed Tit-Warbler needs time to be found as well as his colorful friend, the White-winged Redstart. In the open patches of mature, mixed deciduous/coniferous forest, Greenish and Hume's warblers are quite common. In the evening, we return to our lovely guesthouse in Karakol to enjoy another flavorful dinner in a local restaurant.

NIGHT: Matsunoki Guesthouse, Karakol



Gorgeous Juniper habitats are home to most of our Himalayan targets.

May 16, Day 15: Barskoon Gorge We have a full day in this glorious high-altitude landscape to find a wonderful array of alpine specialists. Black-throated, Altai and Brown accentors, Sulphur-bellied Warbler, Red-mantled Rosefinch, White-tailed Rubythroat, White-winged Grosbeak and the incomparable White-browed (Severtzov's) Tit-warbler await us! Higher up in the mountains near a gold mine at an altitude of 10,500 feet, we will look for Lammergeier, Himalayan Griffon, Red-billed and Yellow-billed choughs, Plain Mountain-Finches, White-winged (Güldenstädt's) Redstart and the star attraction: Himalayan Snowcock, which we have a good chance to see but always requires some searching. They are best found a little later in the morning, when the first rays of sun start shining down on the rocky slopes of the Tien Shan Mountains. When they start calling, we'll focus to find these giants snowcocks using a Swarovski scope.

NIGHT: Matsunoki Guesthouse, Karakol



Captivating White-tailed Rubythroats await in the high mountains of the Tien Shan.
© Machiel Valkenburg



Another high mountain specialist, Güldenstädt's Redstart (White-winged Redstart), with probably the best name of all! © Machiel Valkenburg

May 17, Day 16: Karakol to Almaty. Birding en-route, we retrace our steps back to Almaty. This is a full transfer day, which we will mostly spend admiring the landscape from the bus. The road is long, mostly unpaved and we'll take several stops to refresh and stretch our legs. A stop in one of the small villages along the road might render Red-rumped Swallows, Indian Golden Oriole, Lesser Gray Shrike, Long-tailed Shrike, Greenish Warbler, and lovely Laughing Doves. We'll arrive at our excellent hotel in Almaty in the late afternoon, where a refreshing shower awaits.

NIGHT: Mercure Hotel City Center, Almaty

May 18, Day 17: To Taukum Desert. We set sail for a Taukum Desert adventure, passing through fields of poppies and other wildflowers, all with the spectacular backdrop of the icy Tien Shan Mountains. We will take an *al fresco* lunch in the field before continuing on to our yurt camp in the Taukum Desert: a comfortable tented camp of nomadic dwellings used by the local inhabitants of this beautiful country. All things being equal, we should arrive in time for afternoon tea and an opportunity to view Black-bellied and possibly more Pallas' sandgrouse coming to drink at an artesian waterhole near our tented camp.

NIGHT: Private Yurt camp, Taukum Desert

May 19, Day 18: Taukum Desert & Turanga Woodland. Today is a wonderful day in which we will encounter a wide variety of habitats and some fine birds and other wildlife. In the midst of this remote desert, we will likely be awakened by the song of thousands of larks, the descending call of the Red-headed Bunting and displays of lovely Greater Sand Plovers. Caspian Plovers are breeding nearby, and we will head out to find these amazing birds. Persian Gazelles can be spotted as well—all before breakfast! Then we will set forth along narrow back-roads through a variety of steppe/desert habitats to an area of unique Turanga woodland. Here, with a bit of luck, we should encounter such specialties as Turkestan Tit, Saxaul Sparrow,



Range-restricted Saxaul Sparrows are found in the rare *Populus diversifolia* forests near Lake Balkhash © Machiel Valkenburg

White-winged Woodpecker, Pale-backed Pigeon (Eversmann's or Yellow-eyed Dove) and, if we are especially lucky, Pallid Scops-Owl. The latter, having changing roosts, are very difficult to find during daytime. Along the way we will undoubtedly encounter a myriad of Greater Short-toed, Asian Short-toed and Calandra larks, Isabelline Wheatears and Isabelline (Red-tailed) Shrikes, amongst which we must diligently search for Steppe Gray Shrike. Other possible species along our way include Pied and Desert wheatears, Rock Petronia, Spanish Sparrow, gorgeous little Azure Tits and more Long-legged Buzzards. After dinner we head out for a night excursion in the hopes of finding the cute Common Wonder Gecko; the curious Small five-toed jerboa and the Libyan Jird, found on our 2022 expedition.

NIGHT: Private Yurt camp, Taukum Desert



We will explore the area around our private yurt camp in hopes of finding the cute Common Wonder Gecko © Machiel Valkenburg

May 20, Day 19: Return to Almaty. Early this morning we will drive for about 15-20 miles into the desert looking for Caspian Plover and Greater Sand Plover that should look exceptionally smart in breeding plumage. After breakfast we will break camp and head back towards Almaty. With a bit of luck, we may find something exceptional such as Little Bustard, which we encountered on past tours! Nearby fringing scrub acts as a magnet for migrant and nesting birds such as Eurasian Hoopoe, European Roller, European Bee-eater, Shikra, Lesser Gray Shrike, Blyth's Reed Warbler, Sykes's Warbler, Oriental Turtle-Dove and the rare and seldomly found Desert Finch. Along the way we'll make a first stop at fantastic Sorbulak Lake. Here the photographers amongst us might enjoy a colony with European Rollers and European Bee-eaters. On the lake itself, gorgeous Dalmatian Pelicans; rare Ferruginous Ducks; Great Crested, Black-necked and the amazing Slavonian grebe might be seen. On the mud flats, waders in the form of Little and Temminck's stint are quite common. Terek Sandpipers are seen yearly in good numbers. We will arrive in the early evening to refresh and enjoy a drink at the hotel bar.

NIGHT: Mercure Hotel City Center, Almaty

May 21, Day 20: Fly Almaty to Astana. A morning flight will bring us to the capital of Kazakhstan where, amidst the steppes, a futuristic new city rose from the ground. The surrounding area is one of seemingly endless steppe and marshland interspersed with immense reed beds and marshes, resplendent with large numbers of waterbirds and our first Paddyfield, Cetti's, Grasshopper and Savi's warblers; Bluethroat; Citrine Wagtail; and a variety of colorful races of Western Yellow Wagtail. We'll enjoy our first walks in the windy steppes of Central Asia.

NIGHT: Hilton Astana, Nur-Sultan

May 22, Day 21: Korgalzhyn State Nature Reserve. We will depart early this morning for the best birding sites in the Korgalzhyn State Nature Reserve. Despite being three hours from Astana and possessing a collection of birdlife that has recently attracted a nomination for UNESCO World Heritage Site status, the Korgalzhyn area remains surprisingly unknown, even within Kazakhstan. The vast wetland area, a combination of virgin steppe and lakes, is home to wolves, marmots and saiga antelope. With the latter becoming increasingly easier to find in recent years. However, it is the birds that are the real attraction. Located at the crossroads of two migration routes, the wetlands act as a giant motorway junction service station for birds (Lake Tengiz alone has the capacity to feed 15 million birds).



In some years we are lucky to come across steppes full of Schrenk's Tulips. © Machiel Valkenburg

Most of the area is protected as a *Zapovednik* (national nature reserve) and is home to the world's northernmost population of Greater Flamingos. It also supports over 300 bird species, including one of the largest wildfowl populations in Asia. Other notable residents include pelicans, cranes and a variety of birds of prey.



The major highlight of a visit to the northern steppes is the near-endemic Black Lark.
© Machiel Valkenburg

Our main targets here are nesting groups of the globally endangered Sociable Lapwing, which our local guide should have “staked-out” for us. There are many other fine attractions in this vast landscape. Roadside colonies of Black-winged Pratincoles and White-winged Black Terns in glorious breeding plumage should be dotted with migrant shorebirds such as Red-necked Phalaropes, Spotted Redshank, Terek Sandpiper, Ruffs, displaying in all their finery, and Little and Temminck’s stints. These enumerable wetlands and lakes should also produce breeding Dalmatian Pelican, Great Bittern, White-headed Duck, Red-necked and Eared grebes, Whooper Swan, Graylag Goose, Red-crested Pochard and Caspian Terns. More special still are often close colonies of splendid Great Black-headed Gulls, with a supporting cast of Steppe and Slender-billed gulls!

The damp, grassy steppe contains elegant Demoiselle Cranes while scattered scrub bush should hold Booted Warbler, Pallid Harrier and gorgeous little Red-footed Falcons. Two other very special birds we should find today are Black and White-winged larks—often numerous along the roadside, both species are confined to the Central Asian steppes.

NIGHT: Hilton Astana, Astana

May 23, Day 22: Astana. On our last day in the city, we will enjoy the morning birding just outside of the city to search for that one good picture of the dancing Pallid Harrier or an extra race of Yellow Wagtail. In the afternoon we’ll enjoy an extensive city tour followed by a grand final dinner in the best local restaurant of the city! The tour ends with the final list in the Hilton Hotel.

NIGHT: Hilton Astana, Astana

May 24, Day 23: Departure for Home. A transfer will be provided very early this morning to Nursultan Nazarbayev International Airport (airport code NQZ) in time for the Turkish Airlines flight to Istanbul or Lufthansa flight to Frankfurt, both departing very early in the morning (3-5 a.m.) on May 24.

NOTE: The tour schedule depends closely on internal flights, which may change from the itinerary listed. If so, the itinerary will be altered, but with all of the special regions still being visited.

Essential Tour Information

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 8 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Aleksander Povarintsev



Aleksander Povarintsev was born in the Siberian town of Nizhneudinsk. He lived for most of his life in Irkutsk, the Paris of the East. Nature, especially birds, interested him since childhood. For many years, he studied the avifauna of the Irkutsk region. He conducted bird surveys on birds of prey in the South Baikal migration corridor and wintering waterfowl on the Angara River. In 2010, he graduated from Irkutsk State University with a major in biology, and three years followed working in the Research Institute of Biology. He currently works part-time at the Irkutsk State Agricultural University in the Institute of Natural Resources Management while working full-time for Rubythroat Birding Tours as a liaison for all of its operations in Russia. His PhD is devoted to factors that influence migratory behavior of

raptors in the South Baikal migration corridor. Aleksander is a very social person and a true gentleman with a beautiful, dry, English sense of humor. He leads most of Rubythroat's tours in Russia and Kazakhstan, plus an occasional trip elsewhere in Central Asia.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION:

TOUR FEE: The fee for the tour is **\$11,995** per person in double occupancy from Tashkent, Uzbekistan (tour ends in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan), meals beginning with dinner on Day 3 and ending with dinner on Day 22, lodging as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation, internal air flights, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leader and local guides. Tour fees do not include airfare from your home to Tashkent and return from Nur-Sultan; Medical Evacuation Insurance (required); transfers or accommodation other than those mentioned in the itinerary; alcoholic beverages; special gratuities; departure taxes; visa fees; phone calls; laundry; or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the group does not have sufficient registration, a small party supplement may have to be charged.

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: The single supplement for this tour is **\$1,850**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: You may register for this tour through the VENT [website](#) or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The initial deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. A second deposit of **\$3,000** is due 210 days prior to departure (October 4, 2025). We accept MasterCard and Visa for both deposits. If you choose not to register online, you may pay your deposit by credit card, check, money order, or bank transfer. If not paying online, or by card, your tour space will be held for 10 days pending receipt of your deposit.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 150 days (December 3, 2025) prior to the tour departure date.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TIPPING: An important part of the value of a VENT tour is knowing that tips for local service providers at our destinations—restaurant staff, hotel staff, drivers, local guides, and various other support staff—are included in your tour fee. If you would like to offer any of your local guides an additional tip, \$5 to \$10 a day is a common amount.

Tips for your VENT tour leader(s) are **not** included, but it is customary to tip one or both if you feel that you have received exceptional service. To assist in your planning, we recommend tipping your VENT tour leader(s) \$15 to \$20 per day, or the equivalent of approximately 2–4% of the tour fee.

If you plan to give tips by cash, they should be given directly to your tour leader at the end of the tour and **not** sent to the VENT office. Some of our tour leaders use mobile payment applications such as Venmo, PayPal, and Wise. If you would like to use this method, please ask your tour leaders directly whether they can accept tips through such an application.

We emphasize that tipping is optional and that these amounts are only recommendations. The amount you decide to tip is based entirely on your experience and at your discretion.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS

CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT: Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 210 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$500** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new

registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months from the date of participant tour cancellation, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 209 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the tour fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. **For participants' protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

<u>If participant cancels:</u>	<u>Participant's refund will be:</u>
210 days or more before departure date	Your deposit(s) minus \$500*
209 to 151 days before departure date	No refund of the deposits, but any payments on the balance will be refunded
150 days or less before departure date	No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months from the date of participant tour cancellation, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

CANCELLATION BY VENT: If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement. A **"Force Majeure"** event means any act beyond VENT's control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE/PROTECTION REQUIREMENT: This tour visits remote locations where immediate access to primary medical care may not be available. **For this reason, travel insurance/travel protection which covers you for emergency evacuation is required for participation on this tour.** This coverage is included in the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** program. Alternatively, comparable service can be obtained through **Medjet** and its **MedjetAssist** plan. If you choose not to purchase insurance/travel protection through Ripcord or Medjet, you are

required to obtain it through another provider. Please read the remainder of this section for additional information.

SUGGESTED OPTIONS: To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with **Redpoint Travel Protection** as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend its comprehensive Ripcord plan, which includes a medical evacuation benefit. With this in mind, it is important to note that medical evacuation is not offered by Redpoint as a stand-alone policy or benefit. For travelers not interested in comprehensive travel insurance, VENT recommends **Medjet** and its **MedjetAssist®** plan. Medjet is not an insurance company, and Medjet Assist is not an insurance product; rather, Medjet is a membership-based air-medical transport company specializing in moving hospitalized travelers from an admitting hospital to a medical facility of choice. Medjet does not provide medical evacuation service from the point of injury or illness; yet, the MedjetAssist plan offers robust enough travel protection to satisfy the medical evacuation insurance requirement in place for many VENT tours.

About Redpoint Travel's Ripcord Plan

Ripcord is a completely integrated travel insurance program with single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims. Critical benefits include comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice; medical expense coverage, death of pet, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or political or security reasons, waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion, and a "Cancel for Any Reason" benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.*

For a price quote or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: [Ripcord Travel Insurance](#); or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help > Preparation and Insurance > Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, second deposit, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The "pay as you go" approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to "pay as you go," you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip costs in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy. Redpoint maintains a [Coronavirus FAQ page](#) on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

About Medjet's MedjetAssist Plan

MedjetAssist is a membership program that functions like AAA for motorists. The company's primary service is air medical transport. Critical benefits of MedjetAssist include a staff on call and ready to provide assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; all-expenses-paid air medical transport in the United

States and internationally to medical facility of choice, regardless of medical necessity; repatriation of remains; and no exclusions for pre-existing conditions.

For travelers under 75, MedjetAssist may be purchased as Short-Term Memberships of 8, 15, 21, and 30 days, or Regular Annual Memberships from 1 to 5 years. For travelers 75–84, Medjet offers a Diamond Membership that is the same program but with a few additional conditions.

For a price quote or to purchase MedjetAssist, please visit: [Medjet.com/VentBird](https://www.Medjet.com/VentBird) or call 1-800-527-7478. Pricing is based on type and term of membership.

GETTING THERE & REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

AIR TRAVEL: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international.* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. **Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be held responsible for any air ticket penalties.**

*An air ticket will be purchased by Victor Emanuel Travel on behalf of the traveler with the traveler's consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveler (i.e. voluntary change of plans), the same fee rates apply for the reissue process, in addition to any fees that may be charged by the airline.

BAGGAGE: Please limit baggage to one piece of luggage and one carry-on. The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. Please consult your pre-departure materials and/or airline to find out specific weight restrictions.

As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security, we recommend that you check the website of the [Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\)](https://www.transportation.gov/tsa) for information pertaining to permissible carry-on items.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:

PASSPORTS: A valid passport is required for travel to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. We strongly recommend that your passport be valid for at least six months beyond your planned return date.

VISAS: Visas are also required for entry to Uzbekistan and must be obtained prior to arrival. Instructions on obtaining your visa will be provided after registration. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan do not require a visa for US citizens, for those staying no longer than 30 days. Non-United States citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTHING: This is one of those trips where a little bit of everything is a good idea! Light, easily washable, quick-drying clothes, sunglasses and sun-hat for the hot steppe and desert, with some lightweight, but very warm, layered clothing for the higher altitudes (up to 10,500 feet). This includes a warm hat, fleece, light gloves, etc. You should bring a light waterproof jacket, too. Light, but sturdy walking boots should cover all eventualities. It is best to avoid shorts for protection from the sun. It is a conservative region, although in the cities people are very “modern” and wear light western clothing; 24-hour laundry is available at the hotels in the larger cities (Tashkent, Almaty and Astana). Furthermore, it is advisable to take a pair of comfortable sneakers for long travel days, and on those days, we visit the enchanted mausoleums and madrassas along the Silk Road

EQUIPMENT:

- **Belt pack or day pack:** good for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc.
- **Toiletries:** Items such as toothpaste, soap, deodorant, and cosmetics can be purchased in-country, but it is simpler to bring your own supply.
- **Insect repellent:** many mosquitoes are not anticipated, but some damper and marshy areas may host a few, so a small amount is a good idea.
- **Thin sleeping bag liner:** sleeping bags are provided for the few nights of camping, but you may wish to bring a liner.
- **Quick-drying camping towel:** lightweight, super-absorbent, microfiber
- **Moist towelettes and/or hand-cleanser:** a pleasant way of keeping refreshed—especially useful are the antiseptic type for hand-washing prior to the picnic lunches.
- **Sunscreen:** a must!
- **Small headlamp or flashlight:** good for nights spent camping; they will also prove very handy during the evening excursions to find Wonder Geckos and Small Five-toed Jerboas!
- **Photography accessories:** for those who enjoy scenic photography, there are excellent photo opportunities; bring plenty of digital storage cards, ensure you have batteries, and means to recharge and store images.

Binoculars: We strongly recommend good binoculars of at least 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 magnification. We recommend that you do NOT bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like “minis” because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. Trying to find a bird in your binoculars using minis is like trying to read a book through a keyhole. You will be very frustrated, and even if you do manage to get the bird in your binoculars before it flies, you will have a poor view. You will find that 8x32 or 8x42 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Spotting Scopes: Your tour leaders will have scopes available for group use throughout the trip, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

DESTINATION INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS

CLIMATE & WEATHER: Climate will be quite varied—very hot in the desert areas of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan (possibly up to 35+ C/100 F), yet cool (5+ C/40 F) in the high altitude of the Tien Shan Mountains of Kyrgyzstan. Rain, or even snow, is a possibility in the mountains.

CONDITIONS: We will at times have to travel long distances, some on poor or unpaved roads—but the journeys help emphasize the vastness and adventure. Transport will vary from place to place and in most areas, good, comfortable, modern coaches will be used, but more rugged four-wheel drive vehicles will be

required in Samarkand only. Walking for these tours is mostly easy to moderate; even in the high elevations of the Tien Shan Mountains, we are mostly walking short distances on flat terrain or downhill.

ACCOMMODATIONS: In Astana, Almaty, Karakol, Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara the hotels will be of reasonable, three-to-four-star standard and some are really very attractive. The lodges in the Charyn Canyon will be the most basic throughout the tour where every building has shared toilet and washing facilities but being located in a fantastic valley along the river, it proves to be a real oasis for birds and an ideal location to come up close with calling European Scops Owls and Azure Tits! Camping in the deserts of Kazakhstan is the best and only way to experience the area and reach far into this vast semi-desert. We have our own exclusive yurt camp set up for us with large (5-yard diameter!) sleeping tents with normal single camping-beds in each yurt. Sleeping bags are provided. There is a separate yurt for meals and shower & toilet. The toilet is located about 25 yards outside of the centre of the camp, a torch is handy during a nightly stroll.

CURRENCY: Local currency in Kazakhstan is the Tenge and in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan the Sum, of which you will probably need very little. US Dollars can be exchanged on arrival. ATM machines are readily available in Kazakhstan and some of the hotels will exchange currency. Credit cards are not widely accepted in Uzbekistan.

ELECTRICITY: 220 V AC, 50 Hz; round two-pin continental plugs are standard

LANGUAGE: Kazakh, Uzbek, and **Kyrgyz**; all Turkic languages

TIME: Central Asia is 10 hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Savings Time

HEALTH & SAFETY

HEALTH: VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which includes vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases. Among these so-called Routine Vaccinations are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers), and Varicella (Chickenpox). You should also be up-to-date with Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations.

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

COVID-19: We continually emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. Although VENT no longer maintains any of its COVID-era prevention protocols, we strongly recommend best practices for protecting yourself and your fellow travelers against COVID-19 illness. These measures include receiving the primary series vaccinations for those eligible, staying “Up to Date” with COVID-19 booster shots, wearing high filtration N-95 or KN-95 masks when in airports and on airplanes, and avoiding risky social settings in the lead-up to your tour. These recommendations are firmly rooted in CDC guidance for avoiding COVID-19.

SUN EXPOSURE: The sun’s ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes), even in winter and early spring. Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. A severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors and be sure to bring an ample

supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

INSECT REPELLENTS: There are insect repellents for the skin and an insect repellent used to treat clothing that should not be applied to the skin.

Insect repellents for the skin are commonly available in three forms:

- **DEET:** (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide): A chemical compound that is marketed under various brand names (OFF!®, Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered in a variety of formulations including sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The formulations will state a percentage of the active ingredient DEET on the packaging. DEET may be applied to exposed skin directly and/or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.
- **Picaridin:** A synthetic formulation that is derived from piperine, a substance found in plants that produce black pepper.
- **Herbal insect repellents:** Various mixtures of organic ingredients such as oils from eucalyptus, citronella, cedar, and other herbs. The herbal repellents are more difficult to categorize because of the difference in ingredients from one brand to another. There is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

Insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

- **Permanone® (Permethrin):** is an odorless spray-on repellent that may be used for pre-treatment of clothing, gear, and tents. It should not be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pre-treatment process requires a number of hours to complete and must be done outdoors, so it is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment must be repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.
- **Insect Shield® apparel:** Clothing pre-treated with Permanone is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

The [US EPA](#) offers a search tool to help choose a repellent that is best for a particular situation. For example, some repellents work for mosquitoes, but not for ticks.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta Georgia. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636), or you can check their website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION

A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

FIELD GUIDES:

Aye, Raffael, Manuel Schweizer & Tobias Roth. *Birds of Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan*. Princeton University Press, October 2012. First-ever field guide to the birds of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and

Afghanistan, and covers 618 species including all residents, migrants, and vagrants. **This will be the guide to bring along for field identification on this tour!**

Svenson, Lars, Peter J. Grant, Killian Mullarney, and Dan Zetterstrom. *Birds of Europe*. Princeton University Press, March 2000. This is the best of the Europe/Middle East/North Africa guides and covers most species we encounter other than localized and near-endemic birds. It has the most up-to-date taxonomy, identification detail and illustrations than other guides and has received excellent/rave reviews.

OTHERS:

Kazmierczak, Krysz and Ber Van Perlo. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2000. This book of Indian birds also covers a large number of the species encountered, including most of those not covered by the European guides. Well-illustrated and modern.

Knystautus, Algirdas. *The Natural History of the USSR*. Century Press, 1987. This book is possibly out of print, but gives an interesting, attractively illustrated and very digestible overview of all habitats and wildlife of the former USSR, of which Kazakhstan was part. Well written and nicely illustrated, it is good pre-tour background reading.

Porter, Richard, Lars, S. Christensen and P. Sciermacker-Hansen. *Field Guide to the Birds of the Middle East*. Helm, 2004. This is another very well-illustrated, up-to-date guide to a region (the Middle East) that will include many of the species we may encounter.

Wassink, Arend and Gerald Oreel. *The New Birds of Kazakhstan*. De Cocksdorp, Texel, 2015. (ISBN-13: 9789081146203) This book is not a field guide, but an interesting atlas, listing and mapping species occurring in Kazakhstan. Published privately by Arend Wassink. Useful background with a few good photos – but not the book to buy for identification.

TRAVEL:

Bloom, Greg, Noble, John and Bradley Mayhew. *Central Asia Travel Guide*. Lonely Planet, latest edition.

Abazov Rafis. *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics*. Greenwood Press, 2007. ISBN 0-313-33656-3

Macleod, Callum and Bradley Mayhew. *Uzbekistan*. Odysee Travel Guides, most recent edition.

Schreiber, Dagmar. *Kazakhstan Nomadic Routes from Caspia to Altai*. Odysee. 2008. ISBN 978-962-217-789-5. A beautifully illustrated, superbly presented and well researched account of this fascinating country. Arguably one of the very best travel guides I have ever come across.

CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY APPS & ONLINE RESOURCES:

eBird: Among the largest and most successful citizen science projects in existence, eBird is an essential tool in promoting bird study and conservation. Among a range of benefits, eBird allows users to keep a variety of lists in a single application. When taxonomic splits are incorporated, lists are automatically updated. Additionally, trip leaders can share daily lists, so one only need accept a shared list and it will upload to your files! **Highly recommended.**

MERLIN BIRD ID: Merlin is an app designed as a birding coach for beginning and intermediate bird watchers. Excellent for use in the field, Merlin asks the observer a series of questions regarding his or her bird sighting, including date and location, and color, size, and behavior of a bird. Merlin then processes the viewer's responses to present a shortlist of possible identifications, from which the user can choose the likely bird. Species profiles include a brief physical description, photographs, and sound samples. The Photo ID feature allows anyone with a camera to snap a photo and obtain a list of

suggestions. Merlin's Sound ID feature allows identification of birds through audible recognition. To use Merlin, download the app, followed by the appropriate regional "pack."

TERMS, CONDITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, "**VENT**") act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on July 29, 2025 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant's Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant's risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the "**Airline**") is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline's aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

View the complete [Terms and Conditions](#) on our website.

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