



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

## COLOMBIA: DIVERSE WESTERN BOGOTA

JANUARY 18–24, 2025

Please note that this tour is part of our Colombia Trilogy, and can be taken in combination with two other tours:

*Undiscovered Eastern Colombia: Birding Secrets of the White Sands of Inirida, January 5-13, 2025*

*A Birding Adventure in the Llanos of Colombia: Hato La Aurora, January 13-19, 2025*



Bogota Rail, *Rallus semiplumbeus* © D. Ascanio

*Bogotá, Colombia's capital city, located in the heart of the Eastern Andes, will be our "Base Camp" for this birding trip. The Bogotá area holds more bird species than most people expect. There are several country-endemic species and a good number of near-endemic and endemic subspecies.*

*The Andes, the largest mountain range in the world, extends from Colombia to Argentina and far east to the coast of Venezuela. Given the rich altitudinal ecozones, it hosts one of the most biodiverse biomes in the world. The tropical portion is probably the most biodiverse of all. Steep mountains rising from almost sea level to about 15,000 feet (or even higher) allow a mosaic of habitats difficult to match, and for that reason, has captivated explorers and scientists alike for centuries.*

*The Andes arise in Colombia with three main ranges, separated by steep cliffs and river valleys, which have triggered a unique process of evolution allowing each one to host a particular flora and fauna. These three ranges are called Western Andes, Central Andes, and Eastern Andes. Each range, and furthermore each slope, has different geographical and climate conditions that make them unique; triggering a speciation process that has allowed an interesting process of endemism.*

*Our seven-day trip will be based the heart of the Eastern Andes. We will be birding the Bogotá plateau and the west slope of the Eastern Andes. It's a privilege for Bogotá to have easy access to these different areas. Along with the impressive birds, you will be amazed with the landscape, vegetation, climate, and the changes as we reach different elevations. We expect to go birding in high altitude Wetland, high Andean Forest (dwarf forest), premontane (Cloud Forest) and Tropical Dry Forest.*

**January 18, Day 1: Half-Day Cultural Tour.** After a relaxed morning, tour participants will meet at the hotel reception at 11:00 a.m. to be transferred for lunch, followed by a visit to the Gold Museum of Bogotá. The museum displays pre-Columbian gold artifacts (it is said to be the largest in the world) along with pottery, shells, and textile objects. Through a neat and well-designed layout, you will enjoy more than 6,000 gold artifacts from the most important ancient cultures in Colombia. The "Balsa Muisca" (Muisca raft) displayed in the museum is the most iconic gold artwork in Colombia and is closely linked to the famous El Dorado legend. We'll return to the hotel in the early evening for dinner.

For those just joining the tour, you should plan to arrive in Bogotá (El Dorado International Airport code BOG) the day prior (January 17) in preparation for meeting at 11:00 a.m. on January 18.

NIGHT: Hilton Garden Inn Bogota Airport, Bogotá

**January 19, Day 2: Florida Wetland, Tabacal Lagoon and Enchanted Garden.** An early departure (5:00 a.m. approximately) will allow us to reach the Florida wetland in time to search for the secretive (Endemic) Bogota Rail as well as Andean Duck, Masked Duck, Spot-flanked Gallinule (Endemic subspecies), Silvery-throated Spinetail (Endemic), Subtropical Doradito, Yellow-hooded Blackbird (Endemic subspecies) and Rufous-browed Conebill (Near-endemic). After breakfast, we will head to the Tabacal Lagoon, a wetland located at lower elevation where we have found higher bird richness including Moustached Puffbird, Bar-crested Antshrike (Near-endemic. Endemic subspecies), Blue-lored Antbird (Near-endemic), Plain Antvireo (Endemic-subspecies), Rusty-breasted Antpitta, Stripe-breasted Spinetail (Near-endemic), Ash-browed Spinetail (Endemic subspecies), White-bearded Manakin (Endemic subspecies), Scale-crested Pygmy Tyrant, Black-bellied Wren (Endemic subspecies) and Speckle-breasted Wren (Endemic subspecies). Other passerine species include Rufous-naped Greenlet (Near-endemic); Velvet-fronted Euphonia (Endemic); Rosy-thrush Tanager (Endemic subspecies); Orange-billed Sparrow (Endemic subspecies); Black-headed Brushfinch (Near-endemic); Buff-rumped Warbler (Endemic Subspecies); Gray-throated Warbler (Near-endemic); Crimson-backed Tanager (Near-endemic); and Bay-headed, Blue-necked and Plain-colored tanagers.

The day will close with a visit to the Enchanted Garden where Mrs. Leonor, the owner, started feeding hummingbirds for distraction and eventually turned her property into a birding hotspot. Some of the hummingbirds that have been reported in the Enchanted Garden include Indigo-capped Hummingbird (Endemic); Gorgeted Woodstar (Near-endemic); White bellied Woodstar; White-vented Plumeleteer (seasonal); Ruby Topaz; Red-billed Emerald; Sparkling, Lesser and Brown violetears (the latter seasonal); and Green Hermit.

NIGHT: GHL Style Hotel Occidente, Bogotá

**January 20, Day 3: Chicaque.** An early departure will find us heading to a “classic” birding destination near Bogotá. Chicaque is the best place to enjoy the cloud forests of the western slope of the Eastern Andes. Privately owned, it is a reserve that protects over 300 Hectares (740 Acres) of Cloud Forest. It has a convenient trail that goes from 2,600 meters (8,530 feet) down to 2,100 meters (7,980 feet), allowing sight of birds related with each ecological level. One of the main attractions of Chicaque are the mixed species flocks which can always bring exciting moments! Some of the species reported from previous tours are Black Inca (Endemic), Golden-bellied Starfrontlet (Endemic), Whiskered Wren (Near-endemic), Sharpe’s Wren (Near-endemic. Endemic subspecies), Moustached Brushfinch (Near-endemic), Southern Emerald Toucanet, Chestnut-crowned Antpitta, Brown-billed Scythebill, Ash-browed Spinetail (Endemic subspecies), Variegated-Bristle-Tyrant, Rufous-breasted Flycatcher (Near-endemic), Rufous-tailed Tyrant as well as Blue-and-black, Grass-green, Beryl-spangled, Flame-faced, Metallic-green and Fawn-breasted tanagers.

NIGHT: Gyrola Birding Hotel Boutique & Spa, West of Bogotá

**January 21, Day 4: Los Cactus Reserve.** After an early breakfast we will head to Los Cactus Reserve, a family-owned property. In contrast to the previous locations, here the dominant ecosystem is Tropical Dry Forest, a biome that is probably more threatened than any other rain forest type. Los Cactus is located west of Bogotá in the Magdalena Valley foothills of the Eastern Andes. Martha and Alain, the owners, are always happy to receive visitors and prepare a delicious lunch to be enjoyed near the hummingbird and fruit feeders. Despite much of the deforestation in the past, the reserve has experienced forest recovery and thus, it has become a magnet to forest understory birds such as tyrant-flycatchers and antbirds. Some of the target species previously recorded are Colombian Chachalaca (Endemic), Red-billed Emerald (Near-endemic. Endemic subspecies), Shinning-green Hummingbird (Near-endemic. Endemic subspecies), Whooping Motmot, Barred Puffbird (Near-endemic), Olivaceous Piculet (Endemic subspecies), White-bellied Antbird (Near-endemic. Endemic subspecies), Jet Antbird, Black-crowned Antshrike, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Sooty-headed Tyrannulet, Greenish Elaenia (Endemic subspecies), Fulvous-crowned Scrub-Tyrant, Apical Flycatcher (Endemic), Black-chested Jay (Near-endemic), Buff-breasted (Endemic subspecies) and Black-bellied wrens (Endemic subspecies), Velvet-fronted Euphonia (Endemic), Orange-billed (Endemic subspecies) and Black-striped sparrows (Endemic subspecies), Buff-rumped Warbler (Endemic subspecies), Pileated Finch (Endemic subspecies) and White-eared Conebill.

NIGHT: Gyrola Birding Hotel Boutique & Spa, West of Bogota

**January 22, Day 5: Pedro Pablo Lagoon Road; Return to Hilton Garden.** During the morning, birding along the road that leads to a wetland (Pedro Pablo) will allow us to look for the Speckle-breasted Wren in addition to Black Inca (Endemic), Short-tailed Emerald, Crowned Woodnymph, Crimson-rumped Toucanet, Stripe-breasted Spinetail (Near-endemic), Ash-browed Spinetail (Endemic subspecies), Azara’s Spinetail, Yellow-headed Manakin (Endemic), Rufous-breasted Flycatcher (Near-endemic), Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, and a good assortment of tanagers including Blue and Black, Grass-green, Beryl-spangled, Black-capped, Flame-faced, Metallic-green and Fawn-breasted. Of special interest is the Turquoise Dacnis, a Colombian endemic. The road to the lagoon crosses good patches of Cloud Forest that hold several Andes specialties. The lake was sacred to the ancient people that inhabited the area before the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors. Its indigenous name, Tenasucá means “The eyes that saw the first sunrise.” We will bird this area on our way to Bogotá; after birding, we will stop for lunch at a traditional Colombian mountain restaurant.

NIGHT: Hilton Garden Inn Bogota Airport

**January 23, Day 6: Full Day Guasca Mountains and Andean Forest.** Until recently, the area of Guasca has been out of the scope for the birding community, but no longer and for good reason. A few years ago, Don Fredy Acosta arranged an area in his backyard with hummingbird feeders and later started looking for key species in the area, bringing Guasca to the fore as a hotspot for birdwatchers. After a couple of years, he had found a roost for Andean Potoo (greatly unreliable) and in other years he has been successful in locating Grass-green Tanager and Brown-breasted Parakeet. More recently, he started feeding the Muisca Antpitta and it has been a great hit for nature lovers and bird photographers alike. Being with Fredy in his *Observatorio de Colibries* will give you the opportunity to look for Sparkling and Lesser violetear, Longuemare's Sunangel, Tyrian Metaltail, White-bellied Woodstar, Blue-throated Starfrontlet, Mountain Velvetbreast and even Sword-billed Hummingbird. In addition, we may come across feeding flocks containing Superciliaried Hemispingus, Montane Woodcreeper, Blue-capped Tanager, Bluish and Masked flowerpiercers and Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager. On the 2024 tour we nailed all of the above and also added Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle and Black-billed Mountain-Tanager to our trip list. Birding in the high Andes is like opening a Pandora's box. In some years we come across a large feeding flock and in other years we find the forest quiet. Although highly unpredictable, they day promises to give you some great hummingbirds and tanagers plus a wonderful view of the Eastern Andes with their impressive paramo vegetation and the unique Espeletia plants.

NIGHT: Hilton Garden Inn Bogota Airport

**January 24, Day 7: Departures for Home.** Transfers to the airport will be provided for departures at any time today.

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour will be limited to 10 participants.

**TOUR LEADERS:** David Ascanio & Camilo Orjuela



**David Ascanio**, a Venezuelan birder and naturalist, has spent 39 years guiding birding tours throughout his native country, Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Costa Rica, the Orinoco and Amazon River basins, Trinidad & Tobago, Suriname, the Guianas, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, the Lesser Antilles, Cuba, Chile, and Panama. He is especially interested in bird vocalizations and has a private library containing voices of more than 70% of all the birds of Venezuela. David combines superb birding skills with an astonishing command of bird vocalizations. He has published a book for children about bird songs and has coauthored the descriptions of two new species, the Rio Orinoco Spinetail and the Delta Amacuro Softtail. David has also published various manuscripts about the birds of the *llanos* (plains), the Orinoco River Island species, and the pan-tepui endemic species for which he has become an authority. He is the senior

author of the *Field Guide to the Birds of Venezuela* (2017). David is an excellent communicator, has a great sense of humor, and is tireless in helping others find birds and wildlife. These traits have made him one of the most popular naturalists/guides in the Neotropics.





**Camilo Orjuela**, Born and raised in Bogotá, Camilo has been a nature and bird enthusiast since early childhood. He has been birding since 2001 and leading birding tours in Colombia since 2018. Camilo holds a master's degree in environmental management from Macquarie University in Australia, where his academic work was related to biodiversity conservation and ecotourism. Fluent in English and focused on customer satisfaction Camilo will put all his efforts, knowledge, experience, passion and good eye, to make sure trips run smoothly and visitors have a great experience in every sense.

**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.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for this tour is **\$3,985** per person in double occupancy. This includes all meals from breakfast on Day 2 to dinner on Day 6, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Bogotá and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$200**. 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:** To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, the deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your deposit by check money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at <https://ventbird.com>) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

**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 (August 21, 2024) prior to the tour departure date.

### **CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:**

#### **Cancellation by Participant:**

Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 180 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 179 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. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre- and post-tour extensions. **For participants' protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

If participant cancels:

180 days or more before departure date

179 to 151 days before departure date

150 days or less before departure date

Participant's refund will be:

Participant's deposit minus \$500\*

No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance of the tour fee will be refunded

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.**

**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.

**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.

**TRAVEL INSURANCE:** 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 their **Ripcord** plan. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most comprehensive travel protection programs available.

Critical benefits of Ripcord include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation and rescue services** from your point of injury or illness to your **hospital of choice**; comprehensive travel insurance for **trip cancellation/interruption**, medical expense coverage, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as security evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or other security events, **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: <https://ripcordtravelprotection.com/ventbird>; or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help and 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, mid-payment, 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 cost in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

#### **Coronavirus (COVID-19):**

In line with the decision made by the federal government (including the CDC), 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.

Please visit the **Coronavirus FAQ** page at the following link:

[https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid\\_19\\_faq/](https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/)

**AIR INFORMATION:** 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.

**Trip Classification:** This may be regarded as a moderately active tour. We'll be walking mostly on roads or forest tracks. Of necessity there will be early morning departures because that is when birds are most active. Early mornings are cool and pleasant but temperatures may rise at mid-day, especially in the dry forest habitat type.

**BAGGAGE LIMITS:** The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. Please consult your airline to find out specific weight restrictions. 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) for the most updated information: <http://www.tsa.gov/>.

Since we will be returning to the Hilton Garden Inn Bogota Airport, it is entirely appropriate to leave some of your luggage in the storage room.

**CLIMATE:** Weather conditions will generally be pleasant in the mornings but definitely hot by mid-day and afternoon (temperatures in the high 80s to mid- 90s). In general humidity should not be exceptionally high (more likely highest in early morning) but not uncomfortable during mid-day. But, do expect some hot mid-day temperatures. Some limited walking in mid-day full sun will be necessary; however, most birding outings will be in shady forest. There will be air-conditioned breaks of 1 ½ to 2 hours most days. Rain is unlikely although packing a small umbrella might be prudent and can certainly be useful for shade protection from the sun.

**CLOTHING:** Bring only long pants and long-sleeved shirts as these provide protection against both sun and insects. You should have a broad-brimmed hat for sun protection and a Buff® or other neck scarf/gaiter for additional sun and insect protection. Also bring a good sunscreen. Footwear should include water-resistant hiking boots (relatively light weight ones with ankle support should be sufficient), and perhaps a second pair of walking shoes and/or sneakers/Texas/sandals for wear at the hotel. **Rubber boots are not necessary.** Shower thongs will be useful.

**LODGING:** Rooms are well ventilated, and meals are served in open shady areas.

**HEALTH:** No infectious disease has been reported in the area covered by this itinerary.

While not a requirement for entry into Colombia unless you are arriving from an infected area in another country, a yellow fever vaccination is a good idea for most people traveling to third world, tropical countries, and the vaccination is good for 10 years. People with compromised immune systems should consult with their personal physician before getting any vaccination. Leishmaniasis is a disease transmitted by a small fly that is mainly active at dusk or during the night. It is not a common insect and only a few of the flies are disease carriers; proper clothing and the use of insect repellent are the best protection. Dengue fever also is very infrequent and is transmitted by day-flying *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes. Again, proper clothing and use of some insect repellent, especially in lowland areas, is the best protection.

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 regarding recommendations for avoiding COVID-19. Please visit the Coronavirus Travel Update page of our website <https://ventbird.com/covid-19> for our official statement regarding COVID-19 and the operation of our tours. Please visit the CDC website for the most up to date information about COVID-19 and associated guidance for proper health and hygiene: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

**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.

An 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 is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment has to 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.

<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/which-insect-repellent-right-you>

**\*We strongly recommend the use of Insect Shield® clothing.** Insect Shield is a process by which clothing is treated with an EPA-approved formula of the insect repellent permethrin. Such clothing is highly repellent to insects and provides durable and long-lasting protection, even after dozens of washings. Outdoor wear with Insect Shield protection includes name brands such as Ex Officio and Tilley, and can be purchased at outdoor recreation stores such as REI and from a variety of online retailers. In lieu of Insect Shield clothing, you should consider treating your clothes with permethrin, which has the same effect, and that can be purchased at outdoor recreation stores and from a variety of online retailers.

**CURRENCY:** Colombian Peso. A small number of pesos may be useful for alcoholic drinks and other personal items. **You should exchange dollars at the international airport on arrival.**

**DOCUMENTS:** For U.S citizens, a passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure is required. A visa is not required. Non-United States citizens should check with their local Colombian consulate or embassy.

**EQUIPMENT:** We strongly recommend that participants bring a wide-mouth water bottle that can be easily refilled from large water tanks at the hotel. A day pack to manage personal items is essential. Also consider a “dry bag” for water-proofing cameras and other gear in the field. Feel free to bring snacks, trail mix or dried fruit as your luggage weight limit permits although some items of this nature may be available locally. Also pack all personal medications in your carry-on bag. Earplugs sometimes come in handy.

**MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS:** There will be opportunities to recharge batteries for electronic equipment at virtually all locations where we stay but participants should bring enough spare batteries to last for a couple of days between charges in case of unplanned electrical outages. Or bring one or two small portable power packs (now widely available). Electrical plug-ins in Colombia usually are two flat-pin type (same as in USA) and **electrical current typically is 110 volts**. You might find a surge protector useful although most electrical equipment today comes equipped to handle 110/220 volt current. We recommend that everyone, including especially those persons with dietary restrictions or other dietary requirements, bring some trail snacks and other emergency food items that are portable.

**INTERNET:** Wi-Fi should be available, although we caution that in remote regions like this it may be slow, confined to hotel lobbies, and often intermittent. **Your best bet is to confine your communication to phone calls and text messages** (the latter, especially, require very little band width). Attempting to send large files and photos can be very slow, tedious and often futile.

**SUGGESTED READING:** 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](http://www.amazon.com) which has a wide selection; [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com) and [www.nhbs.com](http://www.nhbs.com) which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

### ***Field Guides:***

Hilty, S. L. ***Birds of Colombia***. 2021. The recommended field guide for Colombia. Forward-looking taxonomy includes all species and subspecies groups (as in Clements checklist). Illustrations are from 16-vol. *Handbook of Birds of the World* (Lynx) with many updates and additions. All species, as well as subspecies, and subspecies groups are illustrated and mapped. Unique for South America, this book contains a QR code for every species, which allows users to quickly link, via mobile phone, to Cornell’s *Birds of the World* website and listen to vocalizations, view photos, and read an expanded text. Almost like having an App embedded in this book (and Colombia has remarkably good cellular coverage so this feature should be usable almost everywhere). Available from Lynx Editions [www.lynxeds.com](http://www.lynxeds.com), Buteo Books/ABA sales, and elsewhere.

Mc Mullan, Miles; T. Donegan, G. Pantoja-Peña; T. Tuncer-Navarro; A. Bartels & T. Ellery. *Field Guide to the Birds of Colombia*. Bogotá, Colombia: Rey Naranjo Editores, 2018. Illustrates every species known to have occurred in Colombia and includes range map for each species. The text is concise and includes a description of the bird vocalization. A color-band separating each family may be a useful way to find the species when using in the field. Represents a significant achievement in simply dealing with nearly 2,000 species in a book that is remarkably compact and portable.

McMullan, Miles, T. M. Donegan & A. Quevedo. *Field Guide to the Birds of Colombia*, 2nd edition. Bogotá, Colombia: ProAves, 2014. Ca. 360 pages. Paperback. Illustrates every species known to have occurred in Colombia, and includes a very small range map for each species. Although you will want this for the updated taxonomic treatment of species, and for the maps, you will find that even in this improved second edition many species still cannot be identified accurately because of the poor printing (colors dull and muddy or inaccurate), especially hummingbirds, flycatchers, furnariids and some species in other families. A few brief, text remarks accompany each species. The index is brief but adequate and the print is very small. Despite some drawbacks we recommend that all visitors obtain a copy of this little book (available from Buteo Books, USA and Amazon store). It is jam-packed with helpful information but due to the quality of the illustrations, it should be regarded as a supplement for field identification (not a solution to

all identifications). Nevertheless, it represents a significant achievement in simply dealing with nearly 2,000 species in a book that is remarkably compact and portable.

### ***Bird Apps:***

- *Merlin Bird ID*. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The best app to use in the field. Nowadays considered the “future of birding.” Once the app is downloaded, you must download the packs for Colombia. As this itinerary was made, there are four packs for Colombia available. Includes a brief bird description, photos and voices. Also, there is a section for Bird Photo ID which can be useful. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**.
- *Ebird*. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. A friendly and essential tool for the modern birdwatcher, this is nowadays your best way to keep your life list, all in a single application. Users can compile personal bird lists by location and by trip. When taxonomic splits are incorporated, your list will be automatically updated. Furthermore, your guide will be able to share the daily list. You can just accept the shared list from your VENT leader and have it uploaded in your account! An essential tool to promote bird conservation. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**.
- *Bird Data*. A free App that provides summarized information for each species, including the subspecies and presence in neighboring countries. It has a section of endemic species. Look for the Colombia package. Providing that you have data access in your phone, it will show the eBird hotspots near your location, thus being one of its main advantages.
- *The Birds of Colombia*. IMB publicación. A basic app showing a list of the birds of Colombia based in taxonomic order and arranged by family. Contains an ornithological dictionary.
- *All Birds Colombia*. Sunbird Images. Blue Level Series. Available in Apple Store. This app was made from the information in *Birds of Northern South America* by R. Restall et al (Helm Field Guide). It contains images, maps and bird voices. The user must be aware that the maps used from the publication were out-of-date at the time of printing. The most powerful aspects are the bird voices and the sonograms accompanying each species as well as the search tools. Good source to study the voice of the birds and get acquainted with the plumage and other aspects of the species natural history.
- *Colombia – guía de viaje y mapa offline*. Tripwolf. The free download provides limited information. A good source for those wanting to learn about culture, important dates and other aspects of the country. To access all the information, an upgrade must be purchased.
- *MAPS.ME*. This app allows you to navigate offline. Detailed maps, all free of cost. Once the application is downloaded, you will have to download the map (s) for Colombia.

### ***Natural History:***

Hilty, Steven. *Birds of Tropical America: A Watcher's Introduction to Behavior, Breeding and Diversity*. University of Texas Press, 2005. Highly recommended for background information on how things work in bird communities in tropical latitudes. Includes chapters on diversity, speciation, hummingbird and antbird communities, mixed species flocks, fruit eating adaptations, flycatcher radiation, manakin displays, plumage color in the tropics, Amazonian River islands, cacique and oropendola breeding behavior, environmental constraints on bird song and more.

Kricher, John C. *A Neotropical Companion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989. Excellent broad-based resource on just about everything from plants and birds to insects, herps and mammals in the Neotropics.

### ***General Travel:***

Porup, J, K. Raub, C. Soriano & R. Reid. *Lonely Planet Guide to Colombia*. Most recent edition. A good introduction to Colombia life, culture and just getting around the country. A little time with this or a similar book should provide a richer travel experience for almost anyone. **Note that there are several other travel books available** (Rough Guide, etc.) and any of these may be equally good. See on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

**TIPPING:** Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that tips are not expected and are entirely optional. Tips should be given directly to your tour leader; they should not be sent to the VENT office.

**RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT:** 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 June 3, 2024, 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 Airline Reporting Corporation.

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