



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

COLOMBIA: DIVERSE WESTERN BOGOTA JANUARY 17 - 23, 2026

Please note that this tour is part of our Colombia Trilogy,
and it can be taken in combination with these two superb tours:
Undiscovered Eastern Colombia: Birding Secrets of the White Sands of Inirida,
January 2-10, 2026
Birding Adventure in Colombia's Llanos: Hato Aurora & Reserva Casanare,
January 10-17, 2025



Bogota Rail, *Rallus semiplumbeus*. D. Ascanio ®.

Bogotá, Colombia's capital city and its surrounding birding locations, located in the heart of Eastern Andes, will be our "Base Camp" for this birding trip. Bogotá surroundings hold much more bird species than most people expect, there are several country endemic species and a good number of near-endemics 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) allows a mosaic of habitats difficult to match, and for that reason, it has captivated explorers and scientists alike for centuries. In Colombia, the Andes arise in three main ranges, separated by steep cliffs and river valleys. The result is 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 makes them unique, triggering a speciation process that has allowed a interesting process of endemism.

Our seven-day trip will be based the heart of Eastern Andes. We will be birding the Bogotá plateau and the west slope of 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 also with the landscape, vegetation, climate, and the changes as we reach different elevations. We are expecting to go birding in high altitude Wetland, high Andean Forest (dwarf forest), premontane (cloud forest) and even tropical dry forest.



Indigo-capped Hummingbird, *Saucerottia cyanifrons*. D. Ascanio ®.

January 17, Day 1: Arrival. Participants should plan to arrive in Bogotá (El Dorado International Airport code BOG) at any time today, but please bear in mind that we will be departing for our first day afield quite early the following morning (by about 5:00 AM), so you may consider arriving a day early. On arrival, you will be met and transferred to our hotel in Bogotá for the night. Upon request, the VENT office will be happy to assist with early arrival lodging and airport transfers.

NIGHT: Hilton Garden Inn Bogotá Airport, Bogotá.

January 18, Day 2: Florida wetland, Tabacal lagoon and Enchanted Garden. An early departure (05:00 a.m. approximately) will allow us to reach the Florida wetland in time to search for the secretive (Endemic) Bogota Rail. Also, Andean Duck, Masked Duck, Spot-flanked Gallinule (Endemic subspecies), Silvery-throated Spinetail (Endemic), Subtropical Doradito (Rarely seen), 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 Antipitta, 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), Bay-headed, Blue-necked Tanager and Plain-colored Tanagers.



White-bellied Woodstar, *Chaetocercus mulsant*. D. Ascanio ®.

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 (Seasonal), and Red-billed Emerald. Sparkling, Lesser and Brown Violetears (latter seasonal) have also been reported as well as the Green Hermit.

NIGHT: GHL Style Occidente, Bogota



Flame-faced Tanager, *Tangara parzudakii*. D. Ascanio ®.

January 19, 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 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 (8530 feet) down to 2,100 meters (7980 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 in previous tours are Black Inca (Endemic), Golden-bellied Starfrontlet (Endemic), Wiskered 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 Lodge, West of Bogota

January 20, 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 in the Magdalena Valley foothills of the Eastern Andes (West of Bogotá). Martha and Alain, the owners, are always happy to receive visitors and prepare a delicious lunch to be enjoyed by 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),



Barred Puffbird, *Nystalus radiatus*. Photo: D. Ascanio ®

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 Lodge, West of Bogota.



Andean Potoo (Chick), *Nyctibius maculosus* (Feb. 2025). ©. Photo: D. Ascanio.

January 21, Day 5: Pedro Pablo lagoon road. Return to Hilton Garden. 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. During the morning birding along the road that leads to a

wetland (Pedro Pablo) will allow us to look for the Speckle-breasted Wren. Also 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 and difficult to see), 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 that we will be looking for.

NIGHT: Hilton Garden, Bogota

January 22, Day 6: Full Day in the high Andes near Bogotá: Guasca and Hummingbird Observatory at La Calera. On our last day, we will travel northeast to the Guasca Mountains, an area with a completely different landscape and ecosystems. We will visit a relatively new birding project where Fredy, its creator, is feeding worms to a couple hard to get Eastern Andes Endemic birds: Pale-bellied Tapaculo and Muisca Antpitta. It is fascinating to see him call “his” birds by names that he has given such as “Chuchin” (For the Tapaculo) and “Chavita” (For the antpitta). We also may see a pair of the beautiful Black-billed Mountain-Toucan flying around the area while astonishing hummingbirds will be observed at the feeders, including the spectacular Blue-throated Starfrontlet. In addition, the elusive Brown-breasted Parakeet (Endemic) can be heard and with luck seen visiting fruiting trees at the forest edge.



Muisca Antpitta *Grallaria rufula* ®. Photo: D. Ascanio.

The highlight moment for the day will be, without a doubt, being able to see one of the hardest birds to find in the tropical Andes. Provided that Fredy has found one in his area of study, we will walk in a narrow trail to enjoy a close view of a mythical creature, the Andean Potoo. Please be aware that this bird can suddenly disappear from its habitual area, thus it is never guaranteed. To finish our short but productive and fun trip, we ended the afternoon at the famous Hummingbird Observatory. Some of the species we expect to see are the near-endemic Coppery-bellied Puffleg and Sword-billed Hummingbird. These are birds that will take your breath away! We might also see Great Sapphirewing, Green and Sparkling violetears and Glowing Puffleg, many hummingbird species perform altitudinal migrations and our visit during the dry season will be reflected in the number of rare or occasional species that we will see there.

NIGHT: Hilton Garden Inn Bogotá Airport, Bogotá

January 23, Day 7: Departures for Home. Transfers to the airport will be provided for departures at any time today.

TOUR SIZE: Limited to 10 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: David Ascanio & Camilo Orjuela.



David Ascanio, a Venezuelan birder and naturalist, has spent 36 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 first 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, has been a nature and bird enthusiast since early childhood. He has been birding since 2001 and has led 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 direct all his efforts, knowledge, experience, passion, and good eye to making sure that trips run smoothly and visitors have a great experience in every sense.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for this tour is **\$4,585** per person in double occupancy. This includes all meals from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on day 5, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leader. 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 **\$350**. 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 deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. We accept MasterCard and Visa. 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 (August 20, 2025) prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS: 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.

<u>If participant cancels:</u>	<u>Participant's refund will be:</u>
180 days or more before departure date	Participant's deposit minus \$500*
179 to 151 days before departure date	No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance of the tour fee 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.

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 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 Ripcord

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: 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, 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.

Coronavirus (COVID-19):

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 MedjetAssist

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 or call 1-800-527-7478. Pricing is based on type and term of membership.

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 dry forest type of habitat.

BAGGAGE LIMITS: All tour participants must limit their baggage to **a single bag of no more than 15 kilos (ca. 32 lbs.) and a single carry-on item such as a back pack limited to 5 kilos (ca. 12 lbs.** Since we will be returning to the Hotel Hilton Gardens, it is entirely appropriate to leave some of your luggage in the storage room.

CLIMATE: Weather conditions will generally be pleasant to cool in the mornings (a wind breaker and fleece will be necessary during the birding field trips in the high Andes). In the high Andes expect a very cold morning. Please, bear in mind that the weather in the Andes can change abruptly in a short period of time. For that reason, dressing in layers is the key. In the early mornings it can vary from cold to cool and warmer by mid-day and afternoon. In general humidity should not be uncomfortable unless it is raining. Most birding outings will be in shady forest. Rain is unlikely although packing a small umbrella might be prudent and can certainly be useful for unexpected rain or shade protection from the sun.

CLOTHING: **Bring only long pants and long-sleeved shirts** (including clothing protecting you during cold mornings) as these provide protection against cold temperature, sun radiation and insects (in lower elevations). 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.

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 Permethrin 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>

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). You can check the CDC website at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html> (click on Travel Health).

***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: Several 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.

Birds:

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, 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.

Bird references to explore prior to the tour:

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. Some users have expressed that it has 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.

Hilty, S. L. and W. L. Brown. *Guide to the Birds of Colombia*. Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1986. **A classic but now out of print and difficult (expensive) to find.** Good source of information on voice, behavior, breeding and status and habitat, range maps for almost all species. Plates excellent but taxonomy now dated.

Hilty, S. L. *Birds of Venezuela*. Second Edition. Princeton University Press, 2003. Very useful for this trip (we are within 30 kilometers of border) as a reference but heavy for field use. Excellent color illustrations and detailed maps showing specimen records and sight records.

Ridgely, R & G. Tudor. *Field Guide to the Birds of South America: Passerines*. Helm Field Guides, 2009. An essential field guide for those wanting to go birding in South America. Very well illustrated and concise but relevant accounts.

Ascanio, David, G. Rodriguez & R. Restall. *Helm Field guides: Birds of Venezuela*. 2017. More compact than the above books but some may still consider it heavy for field use. Has good maps (smaller and less detailed than the Hilty book on Venezuela), a brief, high condensed text; color illustrations well organized, variable in quality but overall, quite useful. Has updated taxonomy (to ca. 2016).

Restall, R., C. Rodner, and M. Lentino. *Birds of Northern South America*. Vol. 2. Plates and maps. London: Christopher Helm, 2006. Relatively up-to-date taxonomy but very different color plate style compared to previous two books (plates useful for some groups; less so for difficult groups like flycatchers); similar in size and almost as heavy as the Hilty book. It covers seven countries (over 7,000 images) which complicates field use because of the large number of illustrations. Maps are tiny and lack detail. All text is in a separate volume. Despite its large size and weight, a good reference.

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.

Mammals:

Emmons, L.H. & François Feer. *Neotropical Rainforest Mammals. A field guide*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. Paperback. The best resource for mammals occurring in 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. *The New Neotropical Companion*. 2017. Princeton University Press. An introduction to the animals, plants and ecosystems of the New World Tropics. Recommended as a general, broad-based introduction to plants and animals of Amazonia.

Forsyth, Adrian, and Ken Miyata. *Tropical Nature: Life & Death in the Rain Forests of Central and South America*. New York: Scribners Sons, 1984. Does not deal much with birds but is a fantastic introduction to all kinds of topics relating to tropical wildlife including bugs, frogs, plant strategies, bot flies, and much more. Extraordinarily well written. Excellent introductory reading on tropical natural history.

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.

History:

Rockefeller, J.D. *Pablo Escobar: Colombia's Greatest Hero or Villain? History of the Greatest Drug Lord*. 2015. A comprehensive lecture about the life of Pablo Escobar and the economic repercussions of his career. A must to understand Colombia's recent past.

Albinson, Henry. *Colombia History, and Pre-Columbian Era: The Spanish Conquest, The Founding of the Nation*. Sonit Education Academy.

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.

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 May 19, 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.

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