



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

ECUADOR: EASTERN SLOPE OF THE ANDES

JANUARY 19–29, 2025

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Please note that this tour may be taken in combination with *Ecuador: The Best of Amazonia*, January 12–21, 2025.



Gould's Jewelfront— One of dozens of extraordinary hummingbirds found on Ecuador's eastern Andean slope
© Brian Gibbons

From the lush Amazonian rainforests to the high Andean páramos, Ecuador is indeed a special place, boasting good access to birding habitat, unsurpassed scenic splendor, friendly people, and a stable government. Incredibly, over 1,736 species of birds have been recorded in the country, in an area smaller than the state of Colorado! Among them are many of the most spectacular and distinctive Neotropical species. “Ecuador: Eastern Slope of the Andes” is designed to sample this magnificent avifauna in three choice areas, representing very different ecosystems, and offering a full range of birding possibilities.

This trip explores the heart of the magnificent Ecuadorian Andes on its eastern slope. Within easy reach is an incredible transect of habitats, from stunted subalpine scrub and treeless páramo through cool temperate-zone forest that descends into lush subtropical and foothill cloud forest. Without a doubt, the Andes offer the world's most spectacular mountain birding.

The scenic Andes Mountains are just as complex as the Ecuadorian lowlands, and the forests of these slopes harbor the richest montane avifauna found anywhere. There are few places where birders have access to such an impressive cross-section of these slopes, and Northern Ecuador is perhaps foremost among them for easy access. Zonation is complex here, and many birds are restricted to narrow elevational bands, not occurring above or below, so we'll bird these spectacular mountains from the páramo to the foothills. Several roads traverse various elevations, offering a fantastic assortment of little-known birds, while trails at San Isidro and Wildsumaco give us access to the lush forest interior. Outstanding in the Andes are the tanagers and hummingbirds, two of the most colorful and entertaining families of birds in the Neotropics, and we will see



Crimson-backed Woodpecker © Andrew Whittaker

literally dozens of species of both groups. Among the long list of other possibilities are fabulous birds as Torrent Duck, Wattled and Sickle-winged guans, Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe, Andean Ibis, Andean Condor, Black-and-chestnut Eagle, Golden-headed and Crested quetzals, Coppery-chested Jacamar, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Andean Cock-of-the-rock, and a nice selection of mountain-tanagers. In addition, we will always be on the lookout for the Andes' two most sought-after mega-mammals—the iconic Spectacled Bear and the equally impressive Mountain Tapir—that show up occasionally at a few of the locations we will visit!

This tour is designed to show you a wide array of birds, but a few words of caution are prudent. In our many years of birding the tropics we have found that it is extremely important to get out early while the birds are singing and more active. Most days we will be up early, and some days we may be afield all day (especially in the cooler mountains). Accommodations are more than adequate, but some are of necessity relatively simple. This trip has been planned to show you some of the best of Ecuador, but may be too strenuous for those not in good health or not wishing to spend a good portion of their time in the field.

Those who wish to extend their stay in Ecuador and experience more of this remarkable country should consider joining our connecting tour: Ecuador: Best of Amazonia: Featuring Napo Wildlife Center, for an unparalleled northern Ecuador birding and natural history extravaganza. Participants

on that trip will be immersed in the splendid avifauna of the Amazonian lowlands, featuring the amazing Napo Wildlife Center lodge and the surrounding rainforest ecosystem found along the Rio Napo and the mega-biodiverse Yasuní National Park.



January 19, Day 1: Arrival in Quito. Participants not continuing from *Ecuador: The Best of Amazonia* should plan to arrive in Quito on or before January 19 (Mariscal Sucre International Airport; airport code UIO). Most flights from the United States arrive in the evening. Due to the late flight arrival time, dinner tonight will be on your own. Those wanting to avoid the risk of misconnecting (due to bad weather and flight delays) or who desire more rest time to acclimate prior to the tour are encouraged to consider arriving prior to January 19. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with these arrangements.

NIGHT: San José de Puenbo, Puenbo (near Quito airport)

January 20 Day 2: Flight to Coca and birding *en route* to Wildsumaco Lodge. Participants will be transferred to the airport for a mid-morning flight to Coca, where you will meet the leaders and participants continuing on from *Ecuador: The Best of Amazonia*. After lunch in Coca (or farther west at Loreto, depending on time) the group will travel up into the foothills of the east-slope to Wildsumaco Lodge. This lovely lodge has opened up another realm of possibilities for birding the upper tropical zone. We should arrive here with time to settle in and enjoy our first sampling of the hummingbird feeders and perhaps even catch the local toucans giving their late afternoon chorus, or a flight of Red-billed Parrots or Military Macaws en route to their evening roosts. And, by starting in the foothills “at the bottom” of our transect at 4,500 ft., we will be working our way up to the higher elevations through the course of the week.

NIGHT: Wildsumaco Lodge, Wildsumaco Wildlife Sanctuary

January 21 & 22, Days 3-4: Wildsumaco Area. With the opening of Wildsumaco Lodge we finally have a comfortable place to stay in the eastern foothills, off the highway and amidst great habitat at a site chosen and designed by birders. The foothill birds are a unique mix from both the Amazonian tropics and the cooler subtropical regions and this zone has the highest species diversity in the mountains. It is the heart of “the tanager zone,” where these colorful and entertaining birds reach their greatest diversity. Typically, they roam through the forest and edge in fast-moving mixed-flocks, their names only hinting at their beauty; how about Paradise, Golden-eared, Turquoise, Silver-beaked, Orange-eared and Golden, for just a few examples. Numerous other species tag along with these flocks, including Red-headed Barbet, Lafresnaye’s Piculet, foliage-gleaners and woodcreepers, and numerous small flycatchers. Here too are trails allowing access to the forest interior and some of its more secretive inhabitants. Hummingbird feeders attract a surprisingly large number of species, including such rarely-seen foothill specialties as Napo Sabrewing, Ecuadorian Piedtail, Rufous-vented Whitetip, Black-throated Brilliant and Gould’s Jewelfront. We also have a chance of spotting such spectacular birds as the Coppery-chested Jacamar, Black-streaked Puffbird, Golden-collared Toucanet, Black-mandibled Toucan and Scarlet-breasted Fruiteater here, among many others eastern foothill specialties.



Peruvian Racket-tail © Brian Gibbons

NIGHT: Wildsumaco Lodge, Wildsumaco Wildlife Sanctuary

January 23, Day 5: Wildsumaco Lodge to Cabañas San Isidro.

We depart from the Wildsumaco area shortly after breakfast this morning to head upslope to the upper subtropical and temperate zones, stopping as we go for any mixed-species foraging flocks encountered along the way; much of what we do will depend on time and weather conditions as this transect offers impressive diversity. We will begin by birding the lower part of the Wildsumaco entrance road and perhaps the Huacamayo Ridge or the Vinillos entrance road to Antisana National Park. Our goal today will be to find species we have not encountered up to this point, as we climb in elevation, and although deemed a travel day, we are bound to encounter some exciting specialties and perhaps a surprise or two. A sample of what we could encounter includes Andean and Sicklewinged guans, Fasciated Tiger-Heron, Golden-headed or Crested quetzals, Green-backed Trogon, Chestnut-tipped Toucanet, Smoky-brown & Golden-olive woodpeckers, Black or Yellow-headed caracaras, Speckle-faced/White-capped Parrot, Scaly-naped Amazon, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Black-and-white Tody-Flycatcher, Large-headed Flatbill, Lemon-browed Flycatcher, Dusky Piha, Inca (Green) Jay, Mountain Wren, Chestnut-bellied Thrush, Lacrimose Mountain-Tanager, and Vermilion, Yellow-throated, Grass-green, Blue-capped, Beryl-spangled and Flame-faced tanagers. We plan to



Paradise Tanager © Andrew Whittaker

arrive at Cabañas San Isidro with plenty of time to settle in and even do a little optional birding—which always produces more than one can imagine. After a delicious dinner (San Isidro has built a reputation for its cuisine) we may want to take a little time to seek out the lodge’s ‘mystery owl’ (if it doesn’t show up on its own at the dining room deck!) before turning in for the night.

NIGHT: Cabañas San Isidro, Cosanga

January 24-25, Days 6-7: Cabañas San Isidro and Surroundings. At 6,600 ft. in elevation, we find ourselves in the heart of the humid subtropical zone, in all its natural splendor, and we’ll have two full days to explore a wide range of habitats throughout the area. Here’s how Frank Chapman described this Andean ecosystem:

“Every available foot of ground is claimed by parasitic or epiphytic vegetation. This marvelous Subtropical Zone occupies the humid mountain slopes from the upper limit of the Tropical Zone to an altitude of from 8,000 to 9,500 feet and extends from Bolivia to Mexico. It is remarkable not alone for the richness of its life but for the high percentage of species found only within its boundaries. Protective coloration is at a discount in the Subtropical Zone. The density of vegetation protects and, among arboreal birds at least, color unchecked, runs riot. Every day brought beautiful creatures we had never seen before.”

Here at San Isidro and its surroundings, we find ourselves in one of the finest sites in the world to bird this rich zone and the possibilities seem endless. At the first hint of dawn, we will gather at the lodge’s dining room deck to enjoy the ‘show’ as sunrise lights-up the stage... thrushes and Andean Solitaires sing; soon, as it becomes brighter, the vegetation suddenly comes alive with birds attracted to the lodge moth light for insects. Typically Inca (Green) Jays, Russet-backed Oropendolas and Subtropical Caciques arrive first, but soon tanagers, woodcreepers, flowerpiercers, flycatchers, and other small birds arrive, yielding remarkably close looks as they forage close at hand.



As the morning progresses, clouds begin to blanket the mountain slopes, bathing the forest in mist. As the clouds appear, the mixed-species foraging flocks around the lodge seem to become most active. Amidst the seemingly endless array of tanagers are such gems as Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Green-and-black Fruiteater, Handsome and Cinnamon flycatchers, Barred Becard, Black-billed Peppershrike, Black-crested & Russet-crowned warblers, Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager and Bluish Flowerpiercer. To experience a big mixed-species foraging flock in the subtropics is one of the supreme joys—or utmost frustrations—of Neotropical birding. At times these flocks are hard to locate, or the light can be poor and the birds move off rapidly. At other times, however, they linger and forage deliberately, providing a spectacular visual feast as one species after another comes into view. Among the many additional special possibilities in this region are Black-and-chestnut Eagle, Wattled & Sickle-winged guans, Red-billed Parrot, Golden-headed & Crested quetzals, Masked Trogon, Andean Motmot, Powerful Woodpecker, Streak-headed Antbird, Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatcher (tiny!), and Andean Cock-of-the-rock. The diversity of hummingbirds here is high, and the different species can be spotted zipping around from the understory

to the canopy. With such a profusion of flowers to choose from, they are not concentrated and can be frustrating to see at times, but with the help of very active nectar feeders we should be able to secure excellent, even point-blank looks at many of the possible species, including Tawny-bellied Hermit, Lesser Violetear, Speckled Hummingbird, Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Bronzy Inca, Collared Inca, and Long-tailed Sylph. We will also take one afternoon to return to the nearby Vinillos entrance area, which always produces exciting surprises and more opportunities to encounter Barred Parakeet, Sickle-winged Guan, Crested Quetzal, White-throated (Southern Emerald-) Toucanet, Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Rusty-winged Barbtail, Sulphur-bellied Tyrannulet, Saffron-crowned Tanager and perhaps Red-breasted Meadowlark (Blackbird).

NIGHT: Cabañas San Isidro, Cosanga



Long-tailed Sylph © Paul J. Greenfield

January 26, Day 8: Cosanga to Papallacta.

After a final morning of birding in the Cabañas San Isidro area we will enjoy an early lunch and then take leave of the Cosanga area. After a short drive we will make a brief stop at La Brisa, a local ‘hummingbird garden’ and after enjoying more hummers, we’ll spend much of the early afternoon birding along the nearby ‘Borja Loop’ before we climb higher into the mountains, to the temperate zone. We will spend the remainder of the afternoon in this ecosystem, at Guango Lodge where we will find a new subset of higher elevation hummingbirds around the lodge’s feeders, perhaps as many as 10 or more species present (quite a few new ones, too), such as Tourmaline Sunangel, Glowing Puffleg, Collared Inca, Mountain Velvetbreast, Buff-tailed Coronet, White-bellied Woodstar, and the incredible Sword-billed Hummingbird. We will also bird the forest edge and perhaps a forest trail to seek out



Male Torrent Duck © David Ascanio

mixed-species foraging flocks in hopes of encountering Powerful Woodpecker, Strong-billed Woodcreeper, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Pearled Treerunner, Dusky Piha, White-banded Tyrannulet, Turquoise Jay, Slaty Brushfinch, Mountain Cacique, Spectacled Redstart (Whitestart), Black-capped Hemispingus, Hooded Mountain-Tanager, Grass-green Tanager, Blue-and-black Tanager, Blue-backed and Capped conebills, Masked Flowerpiercer, and Gray-hooded Bush Tanager. And, with all the stars in alignment, we could even encounter a Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan. Additively, there's always a chance to come across a Mountain Tapir here... Torrent Ducks and White-capped Dippers are found along the rushing, boulder-strewn rivers. In the late afternoon we will travel the short distance (15-20 minutes) to our lovely hotel, Las Termas de Papallacta, with its wooded gardens, and perhaps the most appreciated treat... their inviting private thermal baths.

NIGHT: Termas de Papallacta, Papallacta

January 27, Day 9: Las Termas de Papallacta and surroundings. Just above Las Termas and the quiet village

of Papallacta lie the great peaks and ridges of the eastern Andes. The elfin tree-line forest just above the lodge is home to special hummingbirds that include Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Viridian Metaltail, Shining Sunbeam, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, and a chance to find the spectacular Great Sapphirewing. Brilliant Scarlet-bellied and Buff-breasted mountain-tanagers tend to lead the sneaky mixed-species flocks of Pearled Treerunners, White-throated Tyrannulets, Agile Tit-Tyrants, Rufous Wrens, Pale-naped and Yellow-breasted brushfinches, Spectacled Redstarts (Whitestarts), Black-capped and Supercilliaried hemispinguses, Blue-backed Conebill, Black-backed Bush Tanagers, and other small passerines that forage through the shrubbery and stunted trees here. With patience and good fortune, we may even encounter the local and rare high-elevation Masked and Black-chested mountain-tanagers! Both Spectacled Bear and Mountain Tapir have been seen along the road and in these densely forested hills, so we'll be on the lookout for sure! We will also head over to the Papallacta Pass, located above timberline in the páramo zone, where strange plants bloom in the tundra-like bogs, and there are isolated stands of elfin *Polylepis* woodland on the protected slopes. Part of today will be spent birding this intriguing environment. With luck and decent weather, we might spot some additional specialties like the Tawny Antpitta, Red-crested Cotinga, and Giant Conebill, among other species that occur at this high elevation. At the highest point reached (14,000 feet), we will conduct a special search for the ptarmigan-like Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe, after which time we will head back for another night at Las Termas de Papallacta for a relaxing soak or down time before dinner.



Great Sapphirewing © Paul Greenfield

NIGHT: Termas Papallacta, Papallacta



Masked Mountain-Tanager © Remi Grefa

January 28, Day 10: Las Termas de Papallacta to Antisana National Park and Quito. Today will begin with an optional bout of early birding above the lodge, followed by breakfast and departure from Termas de Papallacta. We will head off to another area not far to the south and again ascend the eastern ridge of the Andes to Antisana National Park. Here we will explore rich páramo grassland, the La Mica lake, and visit Tambo Condor, with their often active hummingbird feeders, hoping to encounter Black-tailed Trainbearer, Tyrian Metaltail, and Giant Hummingbird. High elevation species we will also be on the lookout for today include Yellow-billed Pintail, Andean Teal, Andean Duck, Silvery Grebe, Black-winged Ground-Dove, Slate-colored Coot, Andean Lapwing, Andean Gull, the scarce and local Andean Ibis, the majestic Andean Condor, Variable Hawk, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Carunculated Caracara, Aplomado Falcon, Tawny Antpitta, Andean Tit-Spintail, Many-striped Canastero, and Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant among the many possibilities. If luck is with us, we might even catch a glance at Spectacled Bears that show up from time-to-time in the area.

We plan to arrive at our hotel with plenty of time to freshen up and meet for our final checklist and farewell dinner.

NOTE: A day-room will be reserved for participants departing on a late-night flight this evening, or a very early morning flight on January 29, for which Airport transfers will also be provided.

NIGHT: San Jose de Puenbo, Puenbo (near Quito Airport)



Antisana Volcano © Paul Greenfield

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



Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe © Remi Grefa

TOUR LEADERS: This tour will be led by **Paul Greenfield** and **Remy Grefa**.



Paul Greenfield grew up near New York City and became interested in birds as a child. He received his B.F.A. from Temple University, where he was a fine arts major at the Tyler School of Art. Since 1972, he has lived in Ecuador where his fascination for birds and art has culminated in the completion of 20 years of work illustrating *The Birds of Ecuador* (Cornell University Press, 2001), which he co-authored with Robert Ridgely. The Spanish version was published in 2006 and *The Birds of Ecuador App* was launched in 2018. Paul is also co-author of *Birds of Western Ecuador, a Photographic Guide* (Princeton University Press, 2016) with Nick Athanas. He has participated in the discovery of a number a new avian species to science and has painted several frontispiece illustrations of these newly described taxa. Paul is very involved in saving Ecuador’s avian diversity and important habitats through his involvement with various foundations, as well as working with and inspiring local governments and communities to get involved in the protection of

“their” biodiversity as a pioneer and promoter of birding tourism throughout Ecuador. He was the lead author of Ecuador’s *National Strategy of Bird Tourism* (2006), and its Update (2010). He has been showing visitors the birds of this fascinating country for nearly five decades and has led many Ecuador bird tours. Paul and his wife, Martha, live in Quito.



Remigio (Remi) Grefa was born and raised along the shores of the Napo River in the tiny indigenous Kichwa community of Añangu, in the upper Amazon Basin of Ecuador. As a child of the rainforest, he developed a close tie with the rich biodiversity of the Amazonian jungle, but became especially interested in birds as a young boy when he noticed foreign visiting birdwatchers arriving at a nearby nature lodge. It was then that he promised himself that when he grew up he would learn the names of the local birds, in English. . . and he eventually did! Throughout his formative years, his community had embarked on a groundbreaking nature tourism project of their own—the building and co-management (and eventually outright ownership) of the fabulous Napo Wildlife Center—and by the time Remi graduated from high school he was ready to join the ranks of this incredible endeavor. He began working at the lodge from

the ground up (odd jobs, dishwasher, laundry brigade, etc.); after a few months he was promoted to waiting tables, and after six months he became one of the lodge’s bartenders for a year-and-a-half. He then graduated to boatman, where he was the second canoe paddler for many, many birding groups, which gave him the perfect opportunity to receive hands-on apprenticeship in birding, as well as English. In 2009, he took a job as a waiter on the *Manatee Amazon Explorer*, a houseboat style vessel that cruises the country’s Napo and Aguarico rivers. He was eventually promoted again as an official birding and naturalist guide at Napo Wildlife Center by 2017 and continues to fill that role exceptionally to this day. Remi and his wife, Lola, along with their two daughters, Kayana and Wita, live in the parish of Dayuma, not far from the frontier town of Puerto Francisco de Orellana (more commonly known as “Coca”).

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 **\$4,395** per person in double occupancy from Quito. This includes all meals from breakfast on Day 2 to the farewell dinner on Day 10, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, internal air and ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leader. The tour fee does not include airfare from your home to Quito 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 **\$600**. 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 22, 2025) prior to the tour departure date.

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

the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

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

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.**

<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
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issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

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 **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 from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice**; comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, 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: <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/.

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.

BAGGAGE: We suggest that luggage be limited to *one* medium-sized duffel or other easy-to-manage piece of luggage weighing no more than **50 pounds (23 kls)** per person, plus *one* piece of hand luggage, limited to **22 pounds (10 kls)**. **Note to photographers:** you may include a separate bag for this purpose, but be aware that space in our vehicle will be limited so please carefully pack only essential equipment.

Passengers continuing on the **Eastern Slope of the Andes** tour from **The Best of Amazonia (Napo Wildlife Center)** segment may have turned over their luggage for this tour to our agent upon their original arrival in Ecuador, in which case said luggage will already be stored in our vehicle when you arrive at Quito's Mariscal Sucre International Airport from Coca; there will be time to switch and/or organize bags before we depart on our first day's journey. The Eastern slope of the Andes presents **somewhat varying climatic conditions** as we ascend in elevation and we advise you to be prepared to layer your clothing as temperature and weather conditions change (see CLIMATE and CLOTHING sections below). Please pack your travel documents, necessary medications, and basic toiletries in your hand bags. For those passengers continuing on from Coca, please remember that the same security regulations that apply in the United States apply on this flight. Also note that tripods are not allowed as carry-ons and must be packed in your checked baggage.

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.

As a precaution against lost luggage on both international and local air travel, as mentioned above, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medication, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag.

Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security, we recommend that you check the website of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for information pertaining to permissible carry-on items: <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

CLOTHING: The Eastern Slope of the Andes covers a constantly varying transect that ascends in altitude up the east Andean slope from the Amazonian foothills (warm to cool), through the subtropical- and temperate-zones (cool to cold) and higher to the tundra-like páramo zone (colder) just below snowline. Dress is casual or informal throughout and we suggest dark or dull-colored field pants and shirts for forest birding (especially) on both legs of the trip.

For this portion of the trip, think layering as we ascend the Andes. Warm or even a lightweight long-sleeved button shirt over a short-sleeve or long-sleeve undershirt will be the norm for most areas visited, along with a sweater or jacket for layering to provide extra warmth. If you are easily chilled, you may wish to use thermal underwear at higher elevations (i.e., Papallacta and Antisana) on our last field days. Good footwear is always essential, and for this, again, we strongly suggest waterproof hiking boots (see FOOTWEAR Section below).

To reiterate: In the Andes, especially on the final three days of the tour, at higher elevations, the temperatures can be in the low- to mid-40s on occasion and you should be prepared to layer for warmth, with thermal underwear and/or a warm long-sleeved shirt, plus a warm jacket or sweater. You can shed layers as the day warms up (or add them as it cools down). Consider bringing gloves and a warm hat if you know that you chill easily, along with thermal underwear or a flannel nightgown for warmth while sleeping. There is a strong likelihood that we will be out in at least some mist or light rain on the east-slope, so a sturdy umbrella or a rain jacket is essential. NOTE: You will not want to miss out on the thermal baths at Las Termas de Papallacta (either day or night), so do pack a bathing suit!

FOOTWEAR: For footwear, we recommend a good trail-walking shoe or a lightweight hiking boot when in the field, and a second, lighter pair to change into during downtime around the various lodges. Athletic shoes are acceptable but will not keep your feet dry and can become soiled from muddy conditions. Sandals or other open-toed shoes are appropriate around hotels and in towns. Mud boots will not be necessary, but at the very least footgear for the field should be rated “water-resistant,” as this is a damp climate and even the dew on the roadside grass will get your feet wet!

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry facilities are more limited at the various Eastern Slope lodges and may not be able to offer one-day service.

CLIMATE & WEATHER: In the Andes and its eastern slope, temperatures are generally pleasant during the day; cool in the early morning, to warm at midday (low 60s to 80s). However, at higher elevations (especially in the upper temperate and Paramo zones), the temperatures can be as low as the 40s on occasion (on the final three days of the tour, especially) and you should be prepared to layer for warmth, with thermal underwear and/or a warm long-sleeved shirt, plus a warm jacket or sweater. You can shed layers as the day warms up (or add them as it cools down). Consider bringing gloves and a warm hat if you know that you chill easily, along with thermal underwear or a flannel nightgown for warmth while sleeping, especially on our two nights at Las Termas de Papallacta. There is a strong likelihood that we will be out in at least some mist or light rain on the east-slope, so a good umbrella or rain jacket is essential.

Cloud cover, even fog and perhaps some drizzle or light rain, can be the norm in the Andes, and preferred for our birding purposes; birds in this region do not like sunny days!

EQUIPMENT: Note: As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

One of the most important aspects of having an enjoyable travel experience is being prepared with proper equipment. The following items will come in handy during your trip:

- **Daypack** – Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment during all land excursions
- **Binoculars in good repair** – you may wish to pack a second pair (see BINOCULARS & SPOTTING SCOPE section below)
- **Polarized sunglasses** with good UV protection
- **Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions**
- **An ample supply of all personal medication** – it is a good idea to bring copies of all prescriptions
- **Insect repellent** – see INSECT REPELLENT section below
- **Notebooks and pens**
- **Travel alarm clock**
- **Personal toiletries**
- **Collapsible walking stick** – A highly recommended item for those who have trouble walking
- **Tissue packs**
- **Lens cloth**
- **Flashlight or headlamp**
- **Water bottle** – Napo Wildlife Center usually supplies an aluminum water bottle for guests
- **Cameras, lenses, memory cards, and extra batteries**

BINOCULARS & SPOTTING SCOPES:

Binoculars – We strongly recommend good binoculars of at least 7x35, 8x42, 10x40, or 10x42 magnification. We recommend that you do NOT bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering capacity. Trying to find a bird in your binocular using minis is like trying to read a book through a keyhole. You will be very frustrated, and even if you do manage to get the bird in your binocular before it flies, you will have a poor view. You will find that 7x35 or 8x42 binoculars are compact and light enough.

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

CONDITIONS:

Accommodations:

Wildsumaco Lodge was designed by birders, specifically for birders. Rooms are ample with plenty of electrical outlets for charging equipment, a safe deposit box, and modern bathrooms with an excellent supply of hot water. The separate dining hall includes a small bar and sitting area with a large fireplace, a small library, and an ample outdoor deck with very active nectar feeders and an impressive view over a forested valley and nearby forest (great for midday and late afternoon R&R). Internet access is available around the dining area and in the rooms, and is usually adequate.

Cabañas San Isidro offers a variety of cabins in two areas near its separate dining hall, which includes an indoor sitting area and a terrace, which becomes a trip highlight at dawn (and even, if we're lucky, in the evening). Wifi is available at the dining area and in the cabins and is usually fairly reliable. Rooms vary in size and design, but all have a modern bathroom with flush toilets and hot water. The lodge also has a heated outdoor swimming pool that is available on demand.

Las Termas de Papallacta is a very popular hot-spring and spa located at an altitude of just under 11,000 feet above sea level. The gardens and natural thermal pools sit just outside our ample cabins (complete with modern bathrooms) and are available for a soothing soak day and/or night. The very ample restaurant, bar salon, and a series of sitting areas is situated close-by. Wifi is available throughout the complex as is normal phone service if guests have 'roaming' or a local cellphone plan. The spa is available to guests, at a discounted rate, depending on what type of massage or treatment is solicited.

The cloud forest and mountain forests (and other varied habitats) that cover the Andean slopes make up a fascinating meld of ecosystems that change in composition almost imperceptibly, except perhaps when comparing the bird communities, as one ascends or descends in altitude. Each location we visit will uncover new subsets of familiar and unfamiliar avian families along with subtle differences (to the untrained eye) in the local vegetation as we progress. At several sites we will enjoy incredible nectar feeders with new (and dizzying) varieties of hummingbird species. Much of our Andean birding will be done along forested roadsides, as access into such dense vegetation is few and far between throughout much of this mountainous terrain, though we will explore a few forest trails where available to experience the magic! As in the lowlands, bird activity is at its height in the early morning, although it is not uncommon, under the, often, cloudy (even foggy) conditions that tend to prevail in the Andes, for mixed-species foraging flocks to continue to move about throughout the day. Both Wildsumaco and Cabañas San Isidro offer moth-light set-ups that regularly attract a wide array of bird species, affording exceptional views... these are usually active early in the morning between 6:00–7:30 a.m.

This tour has been planned to show you a wide array of birds, but a few words of caution are prudent. In our many years of birding in the tropics, we have found that it is extremely important to get out early while the birds are singing and more active. Most days we will be up early and some days we will be afield much of the day. Accommodations are quite comfortable and far more than adequate (the best in the region), but in some cases are of necessity relatively simple. This trip has been planned to show you some of the best of Ecuador, but may be

too strenuous for those not in good health or not wishing to spend a good portion of their time in the field. There will be more relaxed options offered when possible, for those wishing to take things easier.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:

PASSPORTS - A passport is required for entry into Ecuador and should be valid for a **minimum of six months beyond the intended length of your stay**. If you need a passport, you should get it well in advance of your trip departure date. For additional fees, a passport can be issued on an expedited basis. In the United States this can be done at the nearest passport office, most post offices, or the county clerk's office. You may also visit <https://www.state.gov/travel/> for information on how to get or renew a passport.

As a safety measure, photocopy the first two pages of your passport. Keep the photocopies in a safe place, so if your passport is lost you will have proof of identification. Your passport should be signed and easily available at all times. You will need it for check-in at the airport on your first day of departure, so please do not pack it in your checked luggage.

VISAS - Citizens of the United States do not need to obtain a tourist visa to enter Ecuador. Rules and regulations pertaining to non-U.S. and Canadian citizens may vary; please check with the Ecuador consulate or embassy.

CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS: The official currency of Ecuador is the US Dollar. Your Eastern Slope of the Andes tour includes all necessary expenses. You may want to bring enough cash to cover personal expenses not included in the program, such as bar bills, laundry, souvenirs and gifts, extra gratuities, meals on your own, and other personal items. It is strongly advised that your money be in U.S. Dollars and in smaller denominations of cash, as many places we visit may be unable to provide change for large bills. Major credit cards (MasterCard, Visa, American Express, and Diner's Club) are widely accepted in and around Quito and at Las Termas de Papallacta. As of this writing (May 2023) credit cards are not accepted at Wildsumaco Lodge or Cabañas San Isidro. Note that traveler's checks are no longer accepted in Ecuador. ATM service is available in the Quito-Puembo area and (in a pinch) at local banks in Coca and in a few towns throughout. If your home currency differs from the US Dollar you can check the latest currency conversion rate by visiting "XE-The World's Favorite Currency Site" at: <http://www.xe.com/>

ELECTRICITY: 110 volts is the standard (the same as in the U.S.), as are all electrical outlets throughout Ecuador. If you have equipment that uses 220-240V you will need an adapter to plug in your appliances as well as an all-purpose transformer if your appliances are not suitable for lower voltage or if they use a different style plug. Most computers provide plugs that accept both 110-120V and 220-240V simultaneously, though you may need a plug adapter that fits the US outlet system.

INTERNET ACCESS: Free Internet and Wi-fi access is available as follows: Quito (San José de Puembo); Wildsumaco Lodge (generally available, at times sporadically); and Cabanas San Isidro and Termas de Papallacta (generally reliable).

LANGUAGE: Spanish is the primary language spoken in Ecuador. English is spoken at the lodges we will be staying at throughout Andes.

TIME: Ecuador is on Ecuador Time (ECT) and is 1 hour behind Eastern Daylight Time (EDT).

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

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

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

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).

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 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. We also recommend Andrew Isles books for the Asia-Pacific region at <http://www.andrewisles.com> for difficult to find and out of print books for Australia.

This list includes some basic field guides and reference volumes of use to the visitor. A great deal has been written about all aspects of Australia's natural history. You will find a variety of selections in any library. Browse around a little and you will discover many resources not listed here.

Field guides:

Ridgely, Robert S. and Greenfield, Paul J. *The Birds of Ecuador*. Cornell University Press, 2001.

This two-volume set is the “Bible” for anyone interested in Ecuador's birds. The **Field Guide**, with 96 color plates, include illustrations of basically all the species found in the country. The informative text, designed to help species identification, includes distribution maps for all 1,600 species of Ecuador's birds. The **Status, Distribution and Taxonomy** treats each of Ecuador's species with detailed information not included in the Field Guide.

Additional Reading:

Hilty, Steven. *Birds of Tropical America*. Shelburne, VT: Chapters Publishing Ltd, 1994. Subtitle: “A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity.” Highly recommended as the most readable and informative book on many different aspects of bird ecology (and birding!) in the Neotropics.

Ridgely, Robert S. and Guy Tudor. *The Birds of South America: Volume I, the Oscine Passerines*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1989. Excellent reference volumes, with text entries for all species and fantastic illustrations of many. This volume and the next together include all of the passerines.

Ridgely, Robert S. and Guy Tudor. *The Birds of South America: Volume II, the Suboscine Passerines*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1989.

Mammals:

Emmons, Louise H. *Neotropical Rainforest Mammals: A Field Guide*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997. Second edition.

Apps:

Ridgely, Robert S. and Greenfield, Paul J. *Birds of Ecuador–Field Guide*. Birds in the Hand LLC. This App is the updated version of *The Birds of Ecuador*, including nearly 1,700 species now recorded in this tiny South American country. It can be downloaded through the App Store or Google Play. For more information, connect to the following link:

<http://www.birdseyebirding.com/app-pages/birds-of-ecuador-field-guide/>

Or connect directly to: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/birds-of-ecuador-field-guide/id1194665890> for the App Store; https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.birdseyebirding.birdseye.ecuador&hl=en_US for Google Play.

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 1, 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 Airlines Reporting Corporation.

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4/20/2024- PG-PG
6/5/2024 – PS
11/8/24 - SB