



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

GRAND ALASKA PART II: ANCHORAGE, DENALI & KENAI PENINSULA

JUNE 16–25, 2025

GRAND ALASKA: NOME PRE-TRIP

JUNE 11–16, 2025

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Trail River Lake, Alaska © Barry Zimmer

Alaska is a land of unparalleled non-stop scenery, fabulous birding (including many species found nowhere else in the United States) and spectacular, large mammals. Known as the “Last Frontier” (and outposts such as Nome certainly live up to this), Alaska offers the visitor a chance to see true wilderness. This tour combines the vast expanses of tundra and taiga surrounding the Denali area with the moist spruce forests of the Kenai Peninsula and the magnificent glaciers and sea stacks of Kenai Fjords National Park. A pre-trip to Nome and the Seward Peninsula provides the perfect compliment. In Nome, we will seek out Siberian species such as Bar-tailed Godwit, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Aleutian Tern, Bluethroat, Arctic Warbler, and Eastern Yellow Wagtail that reach the United States only in western Alaska. Other northerly species with larger ranges such as Gyrfalcon, Rock and Willow ptarmigan,

Lapland Longspur, and Hoary Redpoll are more readily found here than elsewhere. In the Denali region we will search for such highly sought species as Spruce Grouse, Northern Hawk Owl, Northern Shrike, Bohemian Waxwing and White-winged Crossbill among others. Our quest for these hard-to-find species will frequently be upstaged by the spectacular scenery and mammals. Finally, in the Seward area we will scour the spruce forests for landbirds and venture out on an all-day boat trip into Kenai Fjords National Park. Seabird colonies along the coast, with literally thousands of puffins, murres, and kittiwakes, and smaller numbers of such specialties as Red-faced Cormorant, Parakeet Auklet, and Kittlitz's Murrelet, are worth the trip alone. The birds of Alaska have nothing on the mammals. Trip lists often reach twenty species (with the Nome pre-trip) including the likes of Grizzly Bear, Moose, Dall's Sheep, Mountain Goat, Musk Ox (Nome only), Killer Whale (Orca), Humpback Whale, and Dall's Porpoise among others. And then there is the constant, incredible scenery. Gorgeous snow-covered peaks loom around every corner (including Denali, North America's tallest peak at 20,310 feet), vast expanses of rolling tundra extend as far as the eye can see, and beautiful, fog-drenched spruce forests cover the southern coasts. Simply put, Alaska is a must destination for every birder and nature enthusiast.



GRAND ALASKA PART II: ANCHORAGE, DENALI & KENAI PENINSULA JUNE 16-25, 2025

June 16, Day 1: Arrival in Anchorage. Participants not continuing from Grand Alaska Part I or the Nome Pre-Trip will arrive in Anchorage today and take the complimentary shuttle to our hotel. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 6:30 p.m. for a get-acquainted session followed by dinner. We might opt for a very brief post dinner stop at a park near our hotel to look for roosting shorebirds.

NIGHT: The Coast Inn at Lake Hood, Anchorage

June 17, Day 2: Anchorage Area. We will begin with a full day of birding in the Anchorage area that will provide a good introduction to the Alaskan avifauna. This will likely include stops at nearby locales such as Westchester Lagoon and Kincaid Park, but we may also venture further afield if recent sightings warrant it.

Westchester Lagoon, located right in the middle of town, is a very birdy spot. A variety of water birds are likely here, including such possibilities as Greater and Lesser scaup, Red-necked Grebe, Short-billed Gull, Arctic Tern, and, perhaps some shorebirds, if the tide situation is favorable. Additionally, Bald Eagle, Alder Flycatcher, Black-billed Magpie and Violet-green Swallow may be found here as well. Not far away, Kincaid Park offers a series of nice trails that meander through a spruce bog and birch forests. Hairy, Downy and occasionally American Three-toed woodpeckers; Boreal Chickadee; Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned kinglets; Swainson's Thrush; and Lincoln's, Fox and Golden-crowned sparrows are among the many possibilities. Even the nearly mythical Spruce Grouse is sometimes seen in this area.

Other locations we might visit include Hillside Park and the Arctic Valley ski area. However, if there are recent sightings of Northern Hawk Owl to the north (such as along the Glenn Highway), we may abandon local birding completely and head out for this hard-to-find and highly sought species. Our plans today will certainly be flexible.

NIGHT: The Coast Inn at Lake Hood, Anchorage

June 18. Day 3: Anchorage to Denali. The entire morning will be spent driving to Denali National Park with some roadside birding en route. We will make frequent stops to break up the drive. Roadside lakes could harbor Barrow's or Common goldeneyes, Bufflehead, Common Loon and Bonaparte's Gull. The Sockeye Burn that occurred several years ago may still be productive for woodpeckers with both American Three-toed and Black-backed woodpeckers possible. Although generally elusive, Spruce Grouse could be stumbled upon almost anywhere.

After lunch, we may even have time for a brief foray out the Denali Highway, where the sporadic and highly-sought Northern Hawk Owl is a prime target. By late afternoon, we should arrive at our hotel for the next three nights, located just south of the park itself.

NIGHT: The Lodge at Denali Park Village, Denali National Park

June 19, Day 4: Denali National Park. No Alaska experience is complete without a visit to the huge national park centered on Denali (formerly Mount McKinley), the highest peak in North America. A shuttle bus tour

(lasting about eight to nine hours) will allow us to see much of this spectacular park. The birds are impressive, with Golden Eagle, Gyrfalcon, Willow Ptarmigan, and Northern Shrike all present, although sometimes elusive. However, even the most dedicated birder may be distracted by the grandeur of the surroundings and by the opportunity for encountering large mammals—Moose, Caribou, Grizzly Bear, Dall’s Sheep, Red Fox, and even Gray Wolf. On a clear day the view of Denali from Stoney Pass is one of the most spectacular sights in the world!



Denali, Alaska © Barry Zimmer

Important note: In the fall of 2021 an avalanche occurred within the park at mile 46 that completely blocked the road. At this time no traffic can go beyond mile 43, and work to correct the problem is not expected to be completed until 2026 or later. This means that the tour into the park is currently an abbreviated 43-mile (one way) version that lasts about five and a half hours. High tundra between mile 43 and the normal turnaround point at mile 63 is the best area in the park for Brown Bears, as well as Caribou and Dall’s Sheep. Therefore, our chances of seeing some of these mammals is reduced until the road is fully repaired. Additionally, some of the birds possible within the park are also best found beyond mile 43. We still believe there is value in the park tour, and we plan to continue to take the abbreviated version as part of our trip.

In the late afternoon, we will likely visit Otto Lake to the north and the surrounding spruce forests. In addition to a variety of waterfowl, we might find the localized Boreal Chickadee and possibly Bohemian Waxwing.

NIGHT: The Lodge at Denali Park Village, Denali National Park

June 20, Day 5: Denali Highway. We have added in a full day to our tour in order to have adequate time to explore the Denali Highway. Spruce forests along this road may harbor Merlin, Canada Jay, Boreal

Chickadee, Bohemian Waxwing and Blackpoll Warbler among others. Nearby ponds are home to majestic Trumpeter Swans and stunning Barrow's Goldeneyes. Our real target here, however, is the localized Northern Hawk Owl. A pair or two of these wonderful owls often nest somewhere along the first 30 miles or so of this road (though they were absent in 2012, 2013, 2016, 2019 and 2023). Finding the hawk owl will likely require some combination of late evening drives and early morning drives to maximize our chances. Our search for the often-elusive hawk owl may yield other finds such as Northern Flicker, Arctic Warbler, Fox Sparrow (Red), American Tree Sparrow, and Common Redpoll. Moose, Red Fox and Porcupine are seen along this road with some frequency.

NIGHT: The Lodge at Denali Park Village, Denali National Park

June 21, Day 6: Denali to Anchorage. After leaving Denali this morning, we'll likely make another detour on the Denali Highway to search for species that may have previously eluded us. After lunch we'll continue south on the Parks Highway to Anchorage. We will likely devote more time to searching for two of the phantoms of the north, Spruce Grouse and American Three-toed Woodpecker. Both are low density species that can be devilishly hard to find, but forest along the Parks Highway could harbor either species.

We will arrive back in Anchorage in time for dinner.



American Three-toed Woodpecker © Barry Zimmer

NIGHT: Coast Inn at Lake Hood, Anchorage

June 22, Day 7: Anchorage to Seward. Today we bird our way to Seward, enjoying fabulous scenery en route. With special permission from the Seward Ranger District, we'll have access to a variety of areas in the Chugach National Forest. Our first stop will be at Potter Marsh on the south edge of Anchorage. Here Arctic Tern, Short-billed Gull, and Red-necked Grebe are among the very common species. Less numerous but possible species include the stunning Horned Grebe and the locally uncommon Rusty Blackbird. As we leave Anchorage and wind along the east side of Turnagain Arm, we will keep a close eye out for Dall's Sheep, which often come down near the highway to visit mineral licks. Occasionally, Beluga Whales are seen in the murky water of the Arm itself. Depending on how many stops we make, it is only about an hour and a half to the beginning of the Kenai Peninsula, where our birding will begin in earnest. The Kenai Peninsula has much to offer; perhaps an American Dipper bobbing along a rushing, glacier-fed stream; a Barrow's Goldeneye in the reflection of a snow-capped peak on a glass-smooth lake; a Spruce Grouse nervously leading her downy charges safely through the forest; or an American Three-toed Woodpecker quietly flaking bark from a dead spruce. Frequent stops are inevitable, whether to appreciate the majesty of a close Bald Eagle, to scope a distant slope for Mountain Goats, or simply to snap a picture of some dazzling alpine backdrop.



Dall's Sheep © Barry Zimmer

NIGHT: Harbor 360 Hotel, Seward

June 23, Day 8: Boat Trip to Kenai Fjords National Park. This will be a day of great adventure, as we embark on an all-day boat trip through protected waters to Kenai Fjords National Park & the Alaska Maritimes National Wildlife Refuge. The breathtaking scenery alone would justify the trip. Our boat navigates past massive headlands, fog-drenched spruce forest, icy fjords, and scores of snow-covered mountains. It will be the birds and mammals that will steal the show, however. As we depart Resurrection Bay, we'll keep a close eye out for comical Sea Otters, whales (both Humpback and Killer are regular here), and Marbled Murrelets dotting the water's surface. En route to Northwestern Glacier, a calving tidewater glacier, our boat will slowly cruise along the coast. Harbor Seals and Black Oystercatchers adorn the low rocks. Pelagic Cormorants and Pigeon Guillemots forage in the near shore waters. We should arrive at the glacier by late morning, hoping it will be actively calving during our visit—a sight and sound extravaganza never to be forgotten! We will carefully scan the waters at the base of the glacier for the uncommon and local Kittlitz's Murrelet, which occurs here in small numbers. We have about a 50% success rate in locating this special bird.

Next, we encounter the Chiswell Islands, a naturalists' paradise. Craggy sea-stacks are draped in white by thousands of nesting Black-legged Kittiwakes. Hundreds of Horned and Tufted puffins buzz in and out of the grassy tussocks like so many bees. Very small numbers of the highly sought and declining Red-faced Cormorant nest in this area as well and are found on about half of our trips. The rocky shores below may yield the huge, brown forms of Steller's Sea Lions, and the waters about the boat are liberally sprinkled with rafts of Common and Thick-billed (scarce) murrets and Rhinoceros Auklets. Some years, small numbers of Parakeet Auklets and Ancient Murrelets nest here. Our return trip takes us through slightly more offshore waters, with at least the possibility of such truly pelagic species as Short-tailed and Sooty shearwaters and Northern Fulmar.

NIGHT: Harbor 360 Hotel, Seward

June 24, Day 9: Seward Area and Return to Anchorage. The moist Sitka spruce forest that hugs the coast near Seward shelters birds like Spruce Grouse, Rufous Hummingbird, Steller's Jay, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Varied and Hermit thrushes, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Townsend's Warbler, Pine Grosbeak, and the sporadic White-winged Crossbill. Nearby coastlines may yield Harlequin Duck, the Northwestern subspecies of American Crow, and numerous Bald Eagles. Marshy swales and willow thickets could produce Trumpeter Swan, Violet-green Swallow, Wilson's Warbler, Lincoln's Sparrow, Fox Sparrow (the "Sooty" subspecies), and the unusual kenaiensis race of Song Sparrow. We'll spend some time searching for these species before returning through the scenic coastal mountains to Anchorage, arriving in time for a final checklist session followed by dinner.



Townsend's Warbler, Seward, Alaska © Barry Zimmer

NIGHT: The Coast Inn at Lake Hood, Anchorage

June 25, Day 10: Departure for Home. Participants may depart Anchorage any time on June 25 or, depending on flight schedules, on overnight flights departing after our farewell dinner on June 24.

GRAND ALASKA: NOME PRE-TRIP

JUNE 11-16, 2024



Bluethroat, Nome, Alaska © Barry Zimmer

June 11, Day 1: Arrival in Anchorage. Participants on the pre-trip will arrive in Anchorage today and take the complementary shuttle to our hotel. We'll meet in the hotel lobby at 6:30 p.m. for a brief orientation session, followed by dinner. We will likely stop by a city park after dinner for a very brief taste of Anchorage birding. Greater Scaup, Red-necked Grebe, Short-billed Gull and Arctic Tern are among the many possibilities.

NIGHT: The Coast Inn at Lake Hood, Anchorage

June 12-15, Days 2-5: Anchorage to Nome; Nome Area. After a morning flight to Nome (subject to change), we will "hit the ground running" to take full advantage of our four days in this bird-rich and historic area. Nome is the ivory capital of Alaska and was its gold capital in years gone by. Today the town is a major center for the natives of the region. Once a part of the Bering land bridge, the Seward Peninsula has been colonized by several Old-World species: Eastern Yellow Wagtails hover above the tundra, White Wagtails (rare, irregular, and local) lurk around decaying old gold dredges, vociferous Bar-tailed Godwits feed in the shallow lagoons and river mouths, and Arctic Warblers trill from the willow thickets. Remarkably, in 1987, a VENT tour discovered the highly sought and spectacular Bluethroat nesting near Nome. These gorgeous little thrushes have been found on each of our tours since then (including another nest in 1990) and have become one of the trip's true highlights.



Musk Ox, Nome, Alaska © Barry Zimmer

In addition to its Old-World specialties, Nome is teeming with other birdlife. Safety Lagoon and the surrounding coastline harbor a wide variety of nesting and migrant waterbirds. Among the many possibilities are Pacific, Arctic (rare) and Red-throated loons; Tundra Swan; Brant (the western race *nigricans*); Common Eider; Black Scoter; Harlequin Duck; Whimbrel; Red-necked Phalarope; Semipalmated and Western sandpipers; Long-tailed (common!) and Parasitic jaegers; and Arctic and Aleutian terns. Even such rarities as Eurasian Wigeon, Red-necked Stint, and Slaty-backed Gull have been found here with some regularity on past tours. Some years we encounter late lingering migrants such as Emperor Goose, Spectacled and King eiders, Red Phalarope, Sabine's Gull, and Pomarine Jaeger, although these would all be considered unexpected bonuses. Willow thickets along the Nome River may yield Gray-cheeked Thrush; Northern Shrike (uncommon); Orange-crowned, Yellow, and Wilson's warblers; Northern Waterthrush; American Tree, Golden-crowned, and Fox sparrows; and Hoary and Common redpolls. The river itself is home to Harlequin Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, and Wandering Tattler. The extensive tundra and rocky slopes could yield Willow and Rock ptarmigan, American and Pacific golden-plovers (split by the AOS in 1993), Rock Sandpiper (rare & irregular), Northern Wheatear, Snow Bunting, and Lapland Longspur. Although occurring in rather low densities, several species of raptors can be found here as well, so we will want to keep a constant watch on the skies for Rough-legged Hawk, Gyrfalcon, Merlin, Golden Eagle, and Short-eared Owl. Additionally, we will also offer an optional (not to mention rugged) hike in pursuit of the elusive and nearly-mythical Bristle-thighed Curlew, which nests in very small numbers on the peninsula. On our final afternoon and evening in Nome, we'll search for any species previously missed or attempt to ferret out some accidental or stray. Such spectacular vagrants as Whooper Swan, Siberian Sand Plover, Gray-tailed Tattler, Great Knot, and Ross's

and Ivory gulls have been found here by previous VENT groups over the years. While the chances of spotting any of these species are very remote, the mere possibility of an Asian stray adds to the excitement of birding Nome.

NIGHTS: Aurora Inn or Dredge No. 7 Inn, Nome

June 16, Day 6: Nome to Anchorage. Depending on current flight schedules, we may have an hour or so to bird close to Nome before our departure. We will depart for Anchorage around mid-morning (subject to change) and arrive in Anchorage in the mid-afternoon. Those not continuing on Grand Alaska Part II should schedule outgoing flights departing no earlier than 7:00 p.m.

TOUR LEADERS: Barry Zimmer and Erik Bruhnke



Barry Zimmer has been birding since the age of eight. His main areas of expertise lie in North and Central America, but his travels have taken him throughout much of the world, including such exotic locales as Japan, Russia, Madagascar, Africa, and New Zealand. Barry is a longtime member of the New Mexico Bird Records Committee, and served on the Texas Bird Records Committee for 12 years. He has co-authored three books: *Birds of the Trans-Pecos*, *A Birder's Guide to the Rio Grande Valley*, and *Birds and Birdfinding in the El Paso Area*. Barry has a keen interest in nature photography, having captured over 1,000 species of birds on film. His other interests include sports (a diehard Red Sox fan), cooking, and movies. He received his degree in psychology at the University of Texas in El Paso. Barry resides in El Paso with his wife, Yvonne, and their daughter, Alexandra.



Erik Bruhnke has had a love for birds since he was a child. He graduated from Northland College in Wisconsin with a Natural Resources degree in 2008 and taught field ornithology for various semesters while there. As a devoted raptor nerd, Erik is drawn to hawkwatches. He worked as an interpreter for six seasons at Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory in Duluth, Minnesota; has counted migrating raptors at the Corpus Christi HawkWatch in Texas; and is the 2016 hawk counter at the Cape May Hawkwatch in New Jersey. Erik's avian field experiences have taken him throughout Oregon, Washington, Montana, Idaho, North and South Dakota, Maine, California, New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, and western Canada. Erik's wildlife photography has won national awards, and his writings have been featured in *Birder's Guide* via the American Birding Association, *BirdWatching*, and *Birdwatcher's Digest*. When not traveling the country leading field trips and speaking at various birding festivals, Erik splits his time between the tropics of South Texas and the Northwoods of Minnesota. He loves to cook and bake in his free time.

TOUR SIZE: Each section will be limited to 12 participants.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for **Grand Alaska Part II** is **\$8,595** per person in double occupancy from Anchorage, Alaska. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to dinner on Day 9, all lodging as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation and guide services provided by your tour leaders. This fee

does not include airfare from your home to Anchorage and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for **Grand Alaska Part II** is **\$1,810**. 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.

The fee for the **Grand Alaska: Nome Pre-Trip** is **\$4,995** per person in double occupancy from Anchorage, Alaska. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 6, all lodging as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation, flights between Anchorage and Nome, and guide services provided by your tour leaders. This fee does not include airfare from your home to Anchorage and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for the **Grand Alaska: Nome Pre-Trip** is **\$940**. 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 per section. 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 prior to the tour departure dates (January 12, 2025 for the Nome Pre-Trip; January 17, 2025 for Grand Alaska Part II).

BAD WEATHER/ADDITIONAL EXPENSE RESPONSIBILITY: Our Alaska tours operate in the late spring/early summer period. The weather is highly changeable at this time of year and our tours typically experience a range of conditions, from sunny and clear to overcast and rainy. From time to time, dense fog is a problem at the coastal outpost locations of St. Paul (Pribilof Islands), Nome, and Gambell (St. Lawrence Island), all places visited by our tours. Exceedingly foggy conditions occasionally lead to flight cancellations. Under such circumstances, tour participants will be responsible for any additional expenses that result, principally additional hotel nights. If a flight is cancelled due to bad weather, there will be no refund available for the unused rooms at the intended destination. Most hotels used on this tour have a 30-day cancellation policy for group bookings during the high season. In case of flight cancellation, the VENT office or your tour leaders will make arrangements for additional room nights at the location at which your departure is delayed. Tour participants will either need to pay for the additional nights directly, at the time reservations are made, or, depending on the location, upon receipt of invoice from our office after the tour. VENT cannot be responsible for delays or changes in the itinerary due to weather-related problems.

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, 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, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

Cancellation by VENT:

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

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

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

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

TRAVEL INSURANCE: 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, primary 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.

NOME LODGING: Due to a shortage of rooms, there is a chance the group will be spread out to various locations in central Nome. Specific details will be provided to each participant closer to departure.

INTERNET ACCESS: Expect Wi-Fi to be available in all hotels and lodges.

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. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security, we recommend that you check the website of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for the most updated information: <http://www.tsa.gov/>.

In case your checked luggage is delayed, it's recommended that you pack all documents, medications, a change of clothes, your binoculars, and toiletry items in a carry-on bag. Since we use the same hotel each time we return to Anchorage throughout the trip, one can store luggage there on each leg if desired. By packing an empty medium-sized duffel in your checked luggage, you can use that to carry smaller amounts of luggage on the legs to Nome, Denali, and Seward if desired.

CLOTHING: The weather in Alaska in June is notoriously unpredictable and can still be quite cold. The "layered" technique is your best defense against the variable weather. We suggest you combine a thermal undershirt, shirt, sweater, and coat or jacket. Medium-weight wool or synthetic equivalent for shirts, pants, and sweaters is ideal. Cold-weather gear is essential and should include a warm coat or down jacket, warm hat, gloves, long underwear, wool or synthetic equivalent socks, and warm shirts. A rain jacket or poncho is also essential for times when the weather turns misty. Since it can be surprisingly warm too (sometimes in the mid-70s or higher), you should bring some lighter field clothing as well. Temperatures around Anchorage will likely be in the 50s or 60s, while at Nome something in the 40s or 50s would be more likely. (However, in 2013, our group experienced temperatures in the low 80s in Nome, while in 2023 the temps barely surpassed 45 degrees at any point!) Regardless of the temperature in Seward, the boat trip will be quite cold.

FOOTWEAR: Much of our birding will be done roadside with any comfortable shoe (tennis shoes or hiking shoes) appropriate. In wet years, insulated waterproof boots or N.E.O.S. Overshoes may be needed for the hike for the Bristle-thighed Curlew (sometimes the mud is more than ankle deep). Shoes with good ankle support are always needed for the curlew hike. Waterproof footwear is generally not necessary for the Grand Alaska Part II portion, although some may opt to wear them on our boat trip.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good condition, along with a belt pack or day pack (for carrying books, sunscreen, camera, etc.). 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.

OTHER ITEMS: We recommend that you bring insect repellent, an alarm clock, sunglasses, sunscreen, and water bottle. Your leader will have a spotting scope and reference books, but you may wish to bring your own. You may also wish to bring seasickness medication for our boat trip to Kenai Fjords.

LAUNDRY: Self-serve laundry is available in Nome, Anchorage, Seward and at our hotel in Denali.

SCHEDULE: Most breakfasts will be around 6:00 a.m. On some days, it could be a little earlier or a little later. In Nome, the schedule often calls for somewhat longer days with less down time and even the likelihood of post-dinner birding options. Lunches in Nome will likely all be courtesy of Subway, as we are unable to return back to town for lunch due to the length and condition of the roads. Outside of Nome, we try to get people back to the hotel with 45 minutes to an hour to freshen up before dinner.

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.

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).

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.

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.

Field Guides—Birds:

Armstrong, Robert H. *Guide to the Birds of Alaska*. 4th edition. Bothwell, WA: Alaska Northwest Books, 1995.

Dunn, Jon L. and Jonathan Alderfer. *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Seventh edition. Washington, D. C.: National Geographic Society, 2017. The recommended field guide.

Peterson, Roger Tory. *A Field Guide to Western Birds*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1998.

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. 2nd edition New York: Alfred a. Knopf, 2014. This classic field guide has been greatly expanded to cover many of the Eurasian vagrants that we could encounter.

Wild Bird Society of Japan. *A Field Guide to the Birds of Japan*. Japan: Kodansha International, 1991. Offers additional illustrations of the Asian strays. Difficult book to find, however!

Reference—Birds:

Gabrielson, I. N. & F. E. Lincoln. *The Birds of Alaska*. Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole, 1959. Outdated now, but has a lot of information on the life histories of Alaskan birds. Try www.abebooks.com.

Grant, Peter J. *Gulls: A Guide to Identification*. Academic Press, 1997.

Harrison, Peter. *Seabirds: An Identification Guide*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1991 (reprint).

Hayman, Peter, John Marchant & Tony Prater. *Shorebirds: An Identification Guide to the Waders of the World*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1991 (reprint).

Kessel, Brina. *Birds of the Seward Peninsula, Alaska: Their Biogeography, Seasonality and Natural History*. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1996.

Kessel, Brina & Daniel D. Gibson. *Status and Distribution of Alaska Birds*. Studies in Avian Biology No. 1, 1978. Try www.abebooks.com.

Zimmer, K. J. *Birding in the American West: A Handbook*. Cornell University Press, 2000.

General Background Reading:

Freuchen, Peter. *Book of the Eskimos*. Fawcett Books, 1981. An easy-to-read classic account of Eskimo life, written in 1931. Out of Print, but appears on www.amazon.com. Other Freuchen titles are available as well: *Arctic Adventure* (AMS Press, 1995) and *Ivalu, the Eskimo Wife* (AMS Press, 1935).

Lopez, Barry. *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape*. Vintage Books, 2001.

McGinniss, Joe. *Going to Extremes*. Plume, 1989 (reissue edition). Raw non-fiction about the people and places of America's last frontier.

McPhee, John. *Coming into the Country*. Noonday Press, 1991 (reissue). Published in 1976, this chronicles a remarkable journey by kayak into the last frontier.

Audubon (May 1988). The entire issue is devoted to Alaska. Especially worthwhile is "Exploring Literature of the Far North," a great bibliography of interesting books on the region.

National Geographic (October 1982). "A New Day for Alaska's Pribilofs."

Alaska Guidebooks:

Rennick, Penny (ed.) *Mammals of Alaska*. Alaska Geographic Guides. Alaska Geographic Society, 1996.

A variety of books on Alaska are available through the Alaska Geographic Society: (907) 274-0521. Alaska Geographic Online is found at www.akgeo.com. Some of these resources include *Alaskan Native Peoples*, *Mammals of Alaska*, and *National Parks and Monuments of Alaska*. On the tour a number of local guide books and pamphlets can be picked up at local gift shops, including: Louise Potter's *Wild Flowers Along Mt. McKinley Park Road* (Camp Denali Publishers, n.d.). Although out of print, Potter's book is possibly available in Denali National Park; it is also found on www.amazon.com.

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

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

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

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

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure. 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. Notwithstanding the foregoing, VENT will not provide any participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to any 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, when and to the extent such failure or delay is caused by or results from acts beyond VENT’s control, including, without limitation, the following force majeure events: (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 in effect on or after the date of the scheduled tour; (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.

If a participant cancels any tour or any portion of a tour, VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by any participant (see VENT Registration & Deposit policy and Cancellation & Refunds policy contained in the itinerary). Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on October 21, 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. If a participant is removed

from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed 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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