



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

GRAND NORTH DAKOTA FROM PRAIRIES TO BADLANDS JUNE 1–12, 2025

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Bobolink © Michael O'Brien

The most comprehensive North Dakota tour we've ever offered focuses exclusively on the birds and other natural wonders of this surprisingly diverse state. North Dakota is a land of wide-open spaces and broad vistas. While things have changed with energy extraction, North Dakota remains a landscape of prairies, badlands, marshes, and croplands, and still supports the highest nesting density of waterfowl and grassland species in North America.

We will begin with a short journey to the Sheyenne National Grasslands. Here we will search for eastern woodland birds and have our first encounters with the many grassland species of the Plains. Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Yellow-throated Vireos, and Scarlet Tanagers nest near Grasshopper, Lark, and Clay-colored sparrows. Dickcissels might be singing on the fence lines. We will spend part of a day in the Fargo area, where riparian woodlands along the Red River of the North are home to many eastern woodland birds at the western edge of their ranges. Pileated Woodpecker, Great Crested Flycatcher, and American Redstart are some of the many species that nest here.

Moving west, we will sample the acclaimed Kidder County in the central part of the state. Here, we will see a fine example of the prairie pothole region, famously known as the waterfowl factory of North America. Along with innumerable ducks, the area lakes and wetlands harbor six species of grebes, numerous gulls and terns, a good selection of waders, and prairie nesting shorebirds. One may encounter Chestnut-collared Longspur or Nelson's, LeConte's, or Swamp sparrows here. Sharp-tailed Grouse and Ferruginous Hawk inhabit the prairies around the lakes.



Franklin's Gull © Michael O'Brien

We continue west to the North Dakota Badlands, along the Little Missouri River, and to Theodore Roosevelt National Park. The 26th president of the United States acquired a ranch in this area in the late nineteenth century. We will spend two days in the historic Medora area and a day south of Medora at and around a working cattle ranch. Western avifauna dominates here, with Black-headed Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, and Rock Wren singing in the

area. Golden Eagles hunt Black-tailed Prairie Dogs in the national park. Night birding might produce Common Poorwill and Northern Saw-whet Owl. American Bison, Elk, and Pronghorn are some of the large mammals that make a home in the area.

Finishing our western tour, we travel northeast to the Minot area. This will be our base for two days in the northern reaches of the state. A day-trip to the Turtle Mountains on the Canadian border should produce a number of species with a more northern affiliation. Dotted with hundreds of glacial lakes, this area might produce Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Red-necked Grebe, and Common Loon. Ten species of warblers nest in the oak-aspen habitat here. Ruffed Grouse and Common Raven are sometimes noted. Another day will be spent in the prairie pothole grasslands around Minot, with Sprague's Pipit and Baird's Sparrow as our targets.



Baird's Sparrow © Michael O'Brien

As we head south toward Bismarck, we'll stop at Garrison Dam for various terns and gulls, with some birding along the Missouri River to search for Piping Plover and interior Least Tern. We will also make stops to review some Lewis and Clark and Native American history.

In addition to VENT tour leaders Michael O'Brien and Louise Zemaitis, this trip will be co-led by Ron Martin, a lifelong North Dakota resident and birder. In addition to his command of the state's birdlife, Ron knows a great deal about all things North Dakota. His knowledge of the state and its people will greatly enrich your birding experiences.

June 1, Day 1: Arrival in Fargo. Participants should arrive in Fargo, North Dakota today at Hector International Airport (airport code FAR). Upon arrival, please collect your bags and head outside and take the shuttle to **Hampton Inn & Suites Fargo Medical Center**, where a room has been reserved in your name. After check-in, you will have the afternoon on your own. We will gather as a group in the hotel lobby at 5:30 p.m. for a tour welcome and orientation and the chance to meet with your fellow travelers and trip leaders, followed by dinner.

More detailed information regarding arrival in Fargo and our meeting place will be provided in the Departure Memo sent to you a couple of weeks before the start of the trip.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn & Suites Fargo Medical Center, Fargo

June 2, Day 2: Sheyenne National Grasslands. We will kick off our day early in the morning with a drive to the Sheyenne National Grasslands. This important site features 70,000 acres of tallgrass prairie, wetlands, oak savanna, and eastern deciduous forest. It is the largest publicly owned tallgrass prairie preserve in the United States. Avian diversity and density are high, with over 270 species recorded.

The grassland is characterized by sandy soils, deposited as the delta of an ancient river emptied into Glacial Lake Agassiz. The Sheyenne River cuts through the grasslands, and this valley will be our main focus along with the grasslands and oak savanna. The valley contains the largest remaining tracts of riparian eastern deciduous forest in North Dakota.



Scarlet Tanager © Michael O'Brien

We will search for eastern forest species at the Pigeon Point Preserve of the Nature Conservancy and at Mirror Pool Game Management Area. Great Crested Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Veery, Scarlet Tanager, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak should be encountered, along with other species characteristic of this biome. Yellow Warbler is common here, and American Redstart and Black-and-white Warbler breed

in the valley. We will be on the lookout for Black-billed and Yellow-billed cuckoos. Barred Owls are sometimes encountered in this area as well.

In the oak savanna and grasslands, a variety of sparrows, including Clay-colored, Field, Vesper, Lark, Savanna, Grasshopper, and Song will be encountered. Bobolink is a regular nester. Perhaps we will flush a Sharp-tailed Grouse. We will sample a few wetlands to get our first taste of the ducks and waterbirds that have made North Dakota a birding destination.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn & Suites Fargo Medical Center, Fargo

June 3, Day 3: Birding Fargo in the morning; afternoon drive to Steele. Fargo lies in the valley of the Red River of the North, flowing north into Lake Winnipeg and eventually to Hudson Bay. The river bisects the south bay of ancient Glacial Lake Agassiz, named after the father of glacial geology, Louis Agassiz. The valley is more accurately the old lake bottom with flat, deep, rich soils that comprise some of the best farmland in the nation. It was here in the late nineteenth century that the large Bonanza Farms were located. Growing mostly wheat, these farms came about with the arrival of the railroads and the new farming technology of the period.



Red-bellied Woodpecker © Michael O'Brien

Prone to flooding, some lands and homes along the river in the Fargo area have recently been purchased to make way for a large greenway and flood dikes. We will sample the birds in some of these new parks during our morning outing. Forest River, Orchard Glen, and Heritage Hills offer remnants of riparian forest along the Red River in south Fargo. Eastern forest birds predominate here, with nesting Pileated and Red-bellied woodpeckers, Northern Cardinal, and a variety of flycatchers, swallows, wrens, and sparrows. Orchard and Baltimore orioles are regular in the valley.

After lunch in Fargo, we travel on I-94 to the small town of Steele in Kidder County. Heading west, we will leave the Red River Valley and climb just a little to the Missouri Coteau. The coteau is the classic prairie pothole region of North Dakota. Geologically it is a “dead ice moraine” or end moraine. It was formed from

the debris at the leading edge of the last Wisconsin age glacier. The large chunks of ice, mixed with the gravel and rocks, melted and created depressions on the landscape that are now known as potholes. Numerous waterfowl, shorebirds, and raptors might be seen along the way.

NIGHT: Cobblestone Inn & Suites, Steele

June 4, Day 4: Horsehead Lake and Kidder County. One of the premier birding spots in the nation, Kidder County retains a fine example of the famous prairie-pothole region. No single spot demonstrates this better than the Horsehead Lake area. Here, birders encounter an amazing diversity and density of breeding grassland and wetland species.

The wetlands support American Bittern; Franklin's, Ring-billed, and California gulls; Forster's, Common, and Black terns; and Sedge and Marsh wrens. Sora and Virginia Rail are common, as well as uncountable numbers of blackbirds of various species. It is here that we will search for LeConte's and Nelson's sparrows. Nesting shorebirds encountered include Marbled Godwit, Willet, Wilson's Phalarope, Upland Sandpiper, American Avocet, and Wilson's Snipe. We might even catch a few late migrant shorebirds like Semipalmated and White-rumped sandpipers.



Nelson's Sparrow © Michael O'Brien

Six species of grebes nest in the area, including the elegant Western Grebe. We should encounter up to fifteen species of nesting ducks, all in their finest breeding dress. We will also watch for White-faced Ibis and Black-crowned Night Heron.

In the drier grasslands we will look for Sprague's Pipit, Grasshopper and Baird's sparrows, and the lovely Chestnut-collared Longspur. Hopefully we will encounter some Sharp-tailed Grouse. Ferruginous, Red-tailed, and Swainson's hawks roam the skies here, and Northern Harriers patrol the marshes and grasslands.

NIGHT: Cobblestone Inn & Suites, Steele

June 5, Day 5: Morning birding south of Dawson; afternoon transfer to Medora. We continue our sampling of Kidder County with a trip to Lake Isabel and Dewald Slough. This area contains many of the species we hopefully will have noted the previous day, plus a good chance of encountering Western Cattle Egret, Great and Snowy egrets, and White-faced Ibis. Small numbers of Clark's Grebe are sometimes encountered on Dewald Slough.



Clark's Grebe © Michael O'Brien

The grasslands and meadows around the lakes will again offer a chance for various sparrows and nesting shorebirds, and the cottonwoods along the roads harbor numerous Western and Eastern kingbirds and Orchard Oriole. We may include a stop at Dawson Wildlife Management Area to look for woodland birds.

Around midday we will leave the coteau and again travel on I-94, to Bismarck for lunch. Bismarck, the capital city of North Dakota, is located on the Missouri River. It is said that when you cross the Missouri River you are entering the West. Our afternoon drive passes through the unglaciated lands of western North Dakota to the historic cow town of Medora. More grassland awaits us and the first small buttes of the western plains will appear. Watch for Pronghorn and Mule Deer as we travel along. As we approach Medora, we will get our first taste of the scenic badlands of North Dakota and Theodore Roosevelt National Park. We will make a short stop at the Painted Canyon Overlook close to Medora.

Medora is an old cow town established in 1883 by the Marquis de Mores. Named after his wife, Medora is the county seat of Billings County and the only incorporated town in Billings County. The 2020 census revealed a population of 121 people. However, summer traffic is high, with the national park logging 750,000 visitors per year. The Marquis had dreams of a hunting, business and cattle empire, but by 1886 his business ventures had failed, and he returned to France. The Chateau de Mores, his residence in Medora, has been restored and is open for tours. Medora also hosts the Cowboy Hall of Fame and is the future home of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library. The library will open in the summer of 2026.

NIGHT: Rough Riders Hotel, Medora

June 6, Day 6: Logging Camp Ranch, Ponderosa Pine area, and the Little Missouri National Grasslands; evening at Medora Musical. We will start early and head south through the badlands on the East River Road. Stunning views of the badlands landscape will be combined with our search for birds with a decidedly western affinity. Along the way we should encounter Black-billed Magpie, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Lazuli Bunting. Lark and Vesper sparrows are common here, and, searching the skies, we might spot a Golden Eagle or Prairie Falcon.



Golden Eagle © Michael O'Brien

The Ponderosa Pine area south of Medora is the only large area of pines in the state. A stop in this area can yield Red-breasted Nuthatch, Mountain Bluebird, "Audubon's" Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Red Crossbill. A walk at the Logging Camp Ranch should produce Say's Phoebe and more stunning views of the badlands. Here, we will also watch and listen for Violet-green Swallow, Western Wood- Pewee, Ovenbird, and Yellow-breasted Chat.

Continuing south into the Little Missouri Grasslands, we will search for Long-billed Curlew, Burrowing Owl, and Lark Bunting. Common Nighthawks are sometimes seen roosting on fence posts during the day. Loggerhead Shrike, Sprague's Pipit, and Baird's and Grasshopper sparrows are possible in the grasslands. We will return to Medora in the late afternoon. Our dinner this evening will be at the Pitchfork Steak Fondue, followed later by a rousing time at the famed Medora Musical, an outdoor event in an amphitheater overlooking the badlands.

NIGHT: Rough Riders Hotel, Medora



Sprague's Pipit © Michael O'Brien

June 7, Day 7: All day at Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Located in the badlands of western North Dakota, Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park was inaugurated in 1947 to honor the 26th president of the United States. The North Unit was added in 1948, and in 1978 the name was changed to Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Today the park consists of three units totaling 70,000 acres. It is the only national park named after a single person. Theodore Roosevelt came to Dakota Territory in 1883 on a hunting trip, and later bought two ranches in the area. The rugged life he experienced in the badlands helped shape the conservation policy we benefit from today.

Visitors have the chance to see Bison, Elk, wild horses, Pronghorn, and Bighorn Sheep. Several Black-tailed Prairie Dog towns occur along the park roads, and one might encounter Badger, White-tailed Jackrabbit, and Coyote. Mule Deer are regularly encountered. We might even see a Prairie Rattlesnake. Nearly 200 species of birds have been seen in the park.

We will start our day along the park road with stops at a prairie dog town, Cottonwood Campground, and the Peaceful Valley Ranch. We will continue our quest for western birds. Western Wood-Pewee, Spotted Towhee, Bullock's Oriole, and Brewer's Blackbird reside here. A few Golden Eagle nests are along the route and with luck one will be occupied this year.

Around noon we will return to Medora for lunch. Afterward, we will check the large cliff in town for Rock Wren and Violet-green Swallow, followed by a stop at the park visitor center. Here, we will have a chance to visit Roosevelt's Maltese Cross Cabin. In the afternoon we will return to the park and drive the scenic loop, stopping at overlooks to watch for birds and large mammals.



Badger © Michael O'Brien

After our evening meal and some relaxation, those interested can join a late evening drive in the park to search for Common Poorwill and perhaps an owl or two.

NIGHT: Rough Riders Hotel, Medora

June 8, Day 8: Morning at Talkington Dam; afternoon transfer to Minot. This morning, we will pack our gear and say goodbye to the badlands and Medora. We will bird around the Talkington Dam area northeast of Medora, continuing our search for Burrowing Owl and other grassland birds. After lunch in Belfield, we will make our way to Minot, our base for the next two days. We will make a brief stop at Garrison Dam en route to look for gulls and terns in the tailrace. The view from the dam offers a majestic panorama of the Missouri Valley.

Garrison Dam, constructed from 1947–1953, is one of six mainstem dams on the Missouri River. Built for flood control and hydropower production, it is 210 feet high and two miles long, the fifth largest earth-filled dam in the world. The dam forms Lake Sakakawea which extends 178 miles northwest to the Montana border. It is known as the finest Walleye fishery in the nation. Part of the Pick-Sloan Project, the reservoir flooded 25 percent of the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. The Three Affiliated Tribes lost 94 percent of their agricultural land and the inundation essentially destroyed their traditional way of life. The tribes received 7.5 million dollars for their lost land.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn & Suites, Minot

June 9, Day 9: All day in the Turtle Mountains. Leaving Minot early, we will travel north to the Turtle Mountains. A wonderful contrast to the surrounding prairie, this relatively small, unique region is an old plateau rising from the plains at about 2,000 feet in elevation. The bedrock is capped by typical knob-and-

kettle topography from the dead ice moraine of the last glaciation. Straddling the North Dakota-Manitoba border, the plateau rises about 400 feet above the surrounding plain and covers an area of 20 miles by 40 miles. The mountains were the traditional territory of the Plains Ojibwe.



Veery © Michael O'Brien

This amazingly diverse area is dotted with lakes and wetlands and, where not cleared, sports a cover of deciduous forest composed mainly of Quaking Aspen, Burr Oak, Paper Birch, and Balsam Poplar. A thick understory includes Beaked Hazel, Dogwood, Highbush Cranberry, Chokecherry, Saskatoon Berry, and Pin Cherry. Breeding birds of this area feature a mix of Eastern, North-central, and Northern avifaunas. The Breeding Bird Survey route in this area regularly records nearly 100 species. Ten species of warblers nest in the Turtle Mountains.

Starting at the western edge of the mountains, a stop at Mystical Horizons, a modern Stonehenge, offers a memorable view of the plains to the south and west. After the last glaciation, the plains in this area were part of glacial Lake Souris. In the stunted oak and aspen in this area, we will look and listen for Ruffed Grouse, Broad-winged Hawk, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Veery, Eastern Towhee, Northern Waterthrush, and Chestnut-sided, Mourning, and Orange-crowned warblers. Continuing east into the mountains, we will sample various lakes for Common Loon and Red-necked Grebe. One of five species of grebes that nest in the mountains, Red-necked Grebe is particularly common here, and we should see several nests.

Further east, stops at several wooded areas around Lake Metigoshe should yield "Myrtle" Yellow-rumped Warbler and other woodland species and waterbirds. Ruby-throated Hummingbird and Alder Flycatcher also make this area home. Willow Lake National Wildlife Refuge has nesting colonies of American White Pelican and Double-crested Cormorant and a good variety of grebes and ducks. Perhaps in the woodlands we will find a Philadelphia Vireo, a rare nester here.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird © Michael O'Brien

After lunch we will continue further east to Wakopa Wildlife Management Area near the eastern edge of the mountains. Target species in this area include Common Loon, Trumpeter Swan, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, and Purple Finch. By mid-afternoon we will head back to Minot.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn & Suites, Minot

June 10, Day 10: All day around Minot: McHenry County or Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge and Salyer National Wildlife Refuge. On this last day in the Minot area, we will take stock of our success so far on the tour and choose the best area to find any of the special birds we might have missed in our travels, or species we would like to enjoy again.

McHenry County is located east of Minot and rivals Kidder County as the top birding destination in the state. East of Granville is a flat, sandy area that is a former outwash plain of glacial Lake Souris. Here, we again find a good mix of wetland, grassland, and woodland species in a relatively small area. A large fen here is home to American Bittern, various rails, Wilson's Snipe, Willow Flycatcher, Sedge Wren, and LeConte's and Nelson's sparrows. Chestnut-collared Longspur can be seen on the fence lines, and there is a Sharp-tailed Grouse lek nearby. Sprague's Pipit nests in the grasslands in this area. Marbled Godwit, Willet, and Upland Sandpiper scold birders that get too close to their young.

We will have lunch at Denbigh Experimental Forest while listening for various forest species in this area of planted conifers amid the grasslands. Denbigh was established during the Great Depression era to test the hardiness of various tree species for future use as farm windbreaks. Over the years, some interesting species have nested here, including Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Red Crossbill, and White-winged Crossbill. Regular nesters include Least Flycatcher, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Warbling and Red-eyed vireos, Veery, Northern Waterthrush, Ovenbird, and Purple Finch.



Chestnut-collared Longspur © Michael O'Brien

In the afternoon we will drive the famous marshes of J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge. Stretching 45 miles along the Souris River from the Canadian border to the town of Upham, the refuge offers 58,000 acres of marshland, grassland, and Aspen parkland. The refuge is named for J. Clark Salyer II, former Chief of Refuges for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The refuge lies in the lakebed of ancient Glacial Lake Souris. After failed attempts to drain the marshes, the area along the Souris River was purchased by the government in 1935 for a waterfowl refuge. The refuge is a vital stop for birds along the central flyway. This area features large colonies of nesting Franklin's and Ring-billed gulls, with Forster's and Black terns also common in the marshes. White-faced Ibis are common, as are numerous other waterfowl and marsh birds.

Alternatively, we may head northwest from Minot to Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge and the surrounding grasslands. Founded in 1935, Lostwood NWR covers nearly 27,000 acres of grasslands, wetlands, and aspen parkland in northwest North Dakota. Located on the Missouri Coteau, it features the knob-and-kettle topography of that glacial landform. The largest contiguous block of mixed-grass prairie and restored grassland in federal ownership, it has been designated one of America's 500 Globally Important Bird Areas. Waterfowl, grassland sparrows, and Sharp-tailed Grouse are common residents. Sprague's Pipit and Baird's Sparrow nest in the vicinity, along with a few Ferruginous Hawks.

Making our way back to Minot, we will make stops at Des Lacs National Wildlife Refuge, a river refuge located in the Des Lacs (pronounced deh-lack) River Valley. Stretching from the Canadian border to eight miles south of Kenmare, this 20,000-acre refuge is a haven for nesting and migrating waterbirds. Here, Western Grebes can be seen in their courtship displays, and American White Pelicans loaf next to marshes and meadows with Marsh and Sedge wrens. Waterfowl are common, and the wooded slopes of the valley add a variety of edge and woodland species.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn & Suites, Minot



Wilson's Phalarope © Michael O'Brien

June 11, Day 11: Transfer to Bismarck with birding along the Missouri River. Our last day in the field, we will make our way south to Bismarck, with several stops along the Missouri River. Near Washburn the Fort Mandan Historic Site offers an opportunity to scan the Missouri for the threatened Piping Plover and interior Least Tern. The cottonwood river bottom harbors an interesting mix of eastern and western woodland species. Eastern Wood Pewee and Baltimore Oriole sing next to Black-headed Grosbeak and Lazuli Bunting. Fort Mandan is a replica of the fort built by Lewis and Clark for the winter of 1804–1805. It is here that they met Sakakawea for the first time.

A short drive south from Fort Mandan is the Cross Ranch, a 5,600-acre Nature Conservancy property. The ranch consists of large areas of mixed-grass prairie and cottonwood riparian habitat along the Missouri River. Like the Fort Mandan stop, this area has Piping Plover, Least Tern, and mixed woodland species.

After lunch in Washburn, a stop at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center will complete our agenda in the Washburn area. Continuing toward Bismarck we explore the Double Ditch State Historic Site. The area is a former village of Mandan lodges active from about 1450–1785. Abandoned after the smallpox epidemic, the village is thought to have had a peak population of about 2,000 people in the year 1500. The dome-shaped lodges were typical of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara tribes native to this area.

Upon arrival in Bismarck, we will check in to our hotel. We will have time for a break before gathering for our final field checklist session and group dinner.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn & Suites, Bismarck



Piping Plover © Michael O'Brien

June 12, Day 12: Departure from either Bismarck or Fargo. The tour ends this morning with departure from Bismarck. Alternatively, the tour leaders will be returning to Fargo, and participants have the option to return to Fargo with them. Please note the drive to Fargo will take about three hours and will not include any stops for birding. We will arrive at the airport around noon.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 13 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: This tour will be led by **Michael O'Brien, Louise Zemaitis, and Ron Martin.**



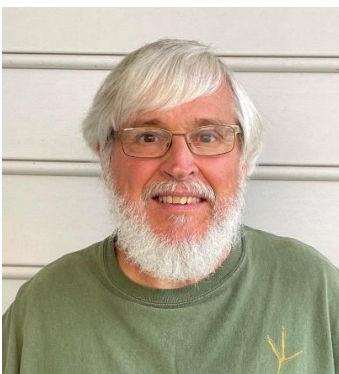
Michael O'Brien is a freelance artist, author, and environmental consultant living in Cape May, New Jersey. He has a passionate interest in bird vocalizations and field identification, and a serious addiction to migration and nocturnal birding. His travels have taken him throughout North and Central America and beyond. At home in Cape May, Michael serves as an Associate Naturalist with Cape May Bird Observatory for whom he conducts numerous workshops, and, for many years, conducted a fall songbird migration count. He is co-author of *The Shorebird Guide*, *Flight Calls of Migratory Birds*, and *America's 100 Most Wanted Birds*, and is primary author of *Larkwire*, an online and handheld application for learning bird sounds. His illustrations have been widely published in books and field guides, including the *National*

Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America and the new Peterson field guides. Michael also has an intense interest in butterflies, leads several "Birds & Butterflies" tours with his wife, Louise Zemaitis, and is coordinator of the Cape May Butterfly Count.



Louise Zemaitis is an artist and naturalist living in Cape May, New Jersey where she is a popular field trip leader teaching birding workshops as an Associate Naturalist with New Jersey Audubon's Cape May Bird Observatory. She also enjoys leading birding groups and lecturing at birding festivals and is known for her enthusiasm for all natural history subjects. Louise and her husband, Michael O'Brien, have been guiding young birders at birding events and conferences for many years. In addition to leading, Louise worked as field coordinator of the Monarch Monitoring Project in Cape May and served as compiler of the Cape May Christmas Bird Count for many years. An honors graduate of Temple University's Tyler School of Art (owner of Swallowtail Studio), she enjoys working as a freelance artist, and her illustrations have

been widely published. Her proudest accomplishment has been the raising of her two sons: Bradley, a conservation educator and artist, and Alec, a library scientist and musician.



Ron Martin grew up on a grain and cattle farm on the plains of North Dakota, and bought his first field guide as a young boy. While studying for his B. A. in Music Performance at Goshen College in Indiana, he began birding seriously after a college trip to Honduras. Returning to North Dakota after his studies, he began a career in manufacturing, spending most of his free time birding the Northern Plains and guiding individuals and small groups when time allowed. Ron's other interests include music, competitive powerlifting, and politics. He has birded across the United States and also in Mexico, Central America, Africa, and the Philippines. Ron is a former chair and longtime member of the North Dakota Bird Records Committee and has co-authored several papers and publications on North Dakota birds, including *Birding North Dakota*. He

was the Northern Great Plains Editor for *North American Birds* for over 30 years. Ron is a past president of the North Dakota Birding Society and a former board member of the South Dakota Ornithologists' Union. He has had a keen interest in the Breeding Bird Survey, conducting nearly 200 routes while coordinating the Survey for North Dakota. Ron's special interests are regional variation in bird vocalizations and North American bird distribution. He has contributed range information for numerous North American field guides over the years. After many years on the Northern Plains, Ron is now retired and recently moved to North Carolina.

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 the tour is **\$6,895** per person in double occupancy from Fargo ND. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1, to breakfast on Day 12, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Fargo or the return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$1,500**. 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 **\$500** 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 January 2, 2025 - 150 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:

Cancellation by Participant:

Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 180 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$250** 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 151 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 \$250*
179 to 151 days before departure date	No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance of the tour fee will be refunded
150 days or less before departure date	No refund available

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

Cancellation by VENT:

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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

BAGGAGE: Please limit your luggage to one medium-sized bag and one carry-on bag. Soft-sided bags are easier to pack and handle than hard-shell suitcases.

The airlines strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag.

Check the websites of your airline and of the Transportation Security Administration (tsa.gov) for the most up-to-date information about checked baggage and carry-on items.

CLIMATE & WEATHER: Early Summer weather on the Northern Great Plains is unpredictable, but temperatures typically rise to the mid-70s (°F) in the day and fall into the low 50s at night. If it is especially warm, temperatures in the 80s are possible. Remember that it will feel colder in the mornings if there is persistent wind.

Rain, sometimes in the form of thunderstorms, is possible at any time. Cold rains with sleet are rare in early June, but possible.

Wind is nearly a constant on the prairies. It is usually light in the mornings, with 15 mph winds common in the afternoons. Strong winds can force us to change our birding plans and seek more sheltered sites.

CLOTHING: Casual clothing is suitable for all of our activities, while birding and at meals.

We recommend packing lightweight field clothing, along with a sweater, a warm jacket, a hat, and light gloves. Because temperatures can vary widely over the course of a day, it is best to have clothing items that you can wear—and shed—in layers. Among the items to bring:

- **Pants:** A couple pairs of pants are recommended. Many people prefer lightweight pants made of cotton or other material, but denim, though not as comfortable, is certainly acceptable.
- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI carry field clothing that many travelers find appealing. Pants and shirts made of lightweight, yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular and more reasonably priced than in the past.
- **Shirts:** Long-sleeved shirts (t-shirts and button-downs), in addition to other comfortable styles suitable for cool weather.
- **Hat:** A hat for protection from the sun is essential. A wide-brimmed hat is best, but participants should bring a baseball cap at the very least.
- **Outerwear and cold weather gear:** A warm jacket or coat is strongly recommended in the event of a cold front or strong wind. We also recommend bringing gloves and a knit hat, particularly for the morning hours.

FOOTWEAR: Most of our birding will be near the vans, on level trails or roadsides. A pair of good trail shoes or walking shoes is recommended, while you may be more comfortable wearing lighter shoes in the evenings. Please do not wear open-toed shoes or sandals in the field; if there is a sandbur or sharp rock anywhere in the neighborhood, it will find you.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is generally unavailable on our route, though it may be possible to visit a laundromat if it is absolutely necessary. You should pack enough clothing to see you comfortably through the tour.

CONDITIONS: Our days will typically begin early with breakfast in the hotel or perhaps in the field if we need a particularly early start. Sunrise is usually before 6:00 am and birding activity starts very early. This is the prime birding time on the prairie before the winds begin to blow in the afternoon. We will bird through the morning, with lunch in a local café or restaurant, or perhaps in the field if we are not close to other options. On most days, we expect to be able to return to the hotel in mid to late afternoon.

We plan to gather each evening for a relaxed hour of drinks and conversation, followed by dinner together. Dinner may be held in a hotel or nearby restaurant. Sunset comes around 10:00 pm, making our evenings pleasantly long.

We will be traveling in two large touring vans. North Dakota is a large state, and we will have two drives in the four-hour range. These will be the Steele to Medora drive and the Medora to Minot drive. Other drives will usually be one to two hours. At the end of the tour the Bismarck to Fargo commute will be three hours. Of course, none of our drives will necessarily be straight through; our time is our own, and we can stop more or less as we please for a break, a snack, or, especially, some birding along the way.

Much of our time will be spent in roadside birding, from the vehicle or very close to it. There will be prairie

areas where we may take hikes of up to a mile, but usually on level or gently rolling terrain. Some birding areas may involve walking on trails and old road beds. Heavy dew is typical on calm mornings, and some of our walking will be in these wet areas.

Natural hazards are few at this season in this part of North Dakota. Ticks are common and may carry a range of diseases; keeping to paths and staying out of tall grass is the best way to avoid them. Mosquitos and some biting flies will surely be present. Prairie Rattlesnakes are present in the Medora area in southwest North Dakota, but rarely encountered. Top-level mammalian predators are not expected anywhere on our route. In Theodore Roosevelt National Park it is recommended that you give Bison a wide berth. Despite their usual indifference to the crowds, these are wild animals and can be very unpredictable.

EQUIPMENT: 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 to North Dakota.

- Belt pack or day pack: Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment during all excursions.
- Notebooks and pens
- Travel alarm
- Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection
- High-SPF sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions
- Personal toiletries
- Cameras, lenses, memory cards, and extra batteries: Grassland birds sometimes offer good photo opportunities; especially fine images can be captured from the blind while we are watching prairie chickens display.
- Collapsible walking stick
- Folding stool – recommended especially for those who have trouble standing for more than ten or fifteen minutes at a time.
- Tissue packs
- Water bottle – There will be large containers of water in the vehicle at all times from which you can refill a small water bottle for walks.
- Insect repellent – Though it is early in the season, mosquitoes are possible at some of our locations. Please see the HEALTH section below for more information about insects and insect bites.

BINOCULARS & SPOTTING SCOPES:

Binoculars – Pack a pair of binoculars in good condition. Do not bring “mini” binoculars of any kind; their limited field of view and generally inferior light-gathering capacities will keep you from enjoying many of the birds as much as you would with modern standard 8x or 10x models, which are compact and light enough for travel.

Spotting Scopes – Your trip leader and hosts will have spotting scopes for group use, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so; scopes are useful not just for waterfowl and shorebirds but for grassland passerines, too, as they may perch conspicuously but at a distance.

INTERNET: Wi-Fi should be available at all hotels on this tour.

TIME: Most of North Dakota is on Central Daylight Time. During our time in the Medora area we will be on Mountain Daylight time.

HEALTH: VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which include 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 on Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations.

If you are taking medication, by 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 medications in your carry-on baggage, preferably in their original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without notice, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

COVID-19: 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.

Sun Exposure – The sun can be strong in June. Severe sunburn is very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Anytime you are outdoors, you should protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. Bring an ample supply of high-SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We also strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

Biting Flies – These insects might be encountered near saline lakes and around animal concentrations.

Ticks – It is almost a certainty that you will encounter ticks in North Dakota. Like mosquitos, they are more numerous some years than others. That being said, be prepared to check yourself for them regularly. In some areas they are numerous. Fortunately, most are quite large and visible. Like chiggers, ticks “ambush” passing vertebrates from a perch in tall grass or other vegetation. Unlike chiggers, they suck the blood of their hosts, and if not removed promptly, they may pass on a variety of serious diseases. DEET and permethrin-based repellents (see below) are generally effective in discouraging ticks. You are unlikely to encounter ticks if you stay on cleared paths and avoid grass and brush. However, some of our birding will involve walking in these areas. On returning from an area that has ticks, you should check your skin and remove any ticks found immediately. Fortunately, ticks usually begin the biting process quite slowly, so most are removed before the biting process begins. Also, those removed within a couple of hours of biting are unlikely to transmit pathogens to their human host.

Rattlesnakes – Prairie Rattlesnakes are present in southwest North Dakota. While rarely encountered, be aware that they can be present.

American Bison – Do not approach Bison while in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. While accustomed to humans they are still wild animals and can be unpredictable.

Repellents – Certain repellents can be used directly on the skin, but there is one that can be used to treat clothing but must not be applied to the skin.

Repellents for the skin are commonly available in three forms:

- DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide): A chemical compound marketed under various names (OFF!®,

Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered as sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The packaging indicates the percentage of the active ingredient DEET. DEET may be applied to exposed skin directly or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET, as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.

- Picaridin: A synthetic formulation derived from piperine, a substance found in the plant that produces black pepper.
- Herbal repellents: Mixtures of organic ingredients such as oils from eucalyptus, citronella, cedar, or other herbs. Ingredients differ widely from one brand to another. Similarly, there is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

An invertebrate repellent for use on clothing only, and **not** for direct application to the skin, is marketed in one approved formulation:

- Permanone® (Permethrin) is an odorless spray-on repellent that can be used for **pretreatment** of clothing, gear, and tents. It should **not** be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pretreatment process requires some hours to complete and must be carried out outdoors, so is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pretreatment 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 pretreated 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 has an online tool to help choose the most effective repellent for a given situation. For example, some repellents work against mosquitoes, but not against ticks. Visit <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 US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Traveler Information Line at (800) CDC-INFO (232-4636). The CDC website is cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens can consult the Public Health Agency of Canada at canada.ca/en/public-health.html (click on Travel Health).

SUGGESTED READING: The field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour are available in many bookstores and at amazon.com, which has a wide selection. Buteo Books (buteobooks.com) and the Natural History Book Service (nhbs.com) are important dealers in ornithological and natural historical titles; Buteo also carries an extensive inventory of hard-to-find and out-of-print used and collectible books, as does AbeBooks (abebooks.com).

Birds: The National Geographic guide and the Sibley guide are both excellent resources; either is an excellent choice for this trip.

Dunn, Jon and Jonathan Alderfer. *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Seventh Edition. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2017.

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. Second edition. New York: Knopf, 2014.

Other birding resources:

O'Brien, Michael, Richard Crossley and Kevin Karlson. *The Shorebird Guide*. Collins reference publishing, 2006.

Mammals:

Kays, Roland W., and Don E. Wilson. *Mammals of North America*. 2nd edition. Princeton University Press: 2009.

Butterflies:

Brock, Jim P. and Kenn Kaufman. *Butterflies of North America (Kaufman Focus Guides)*. Houghton Mifflin Co, 2003.

Apps and Online Resources from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

The Lab's **eBird** is one of the largest and most successful citizen science projects in existence, an essential tool for the promotion of bird study and conservation. eBird allows users to keep a variety of lists in a single application. When taxonomic splits are incorporated, lists are automatically updated. Trip leaders can share daily lists with you, which are automatically uploaded to your account. For this trip load the North Dakota pack. **Highly recommended.**

Merlin Bird ID is an app intended as a birding coach for beginning and intermediate birders. Excellent for use in the field, Merlin asks observers a series of questions about the date and location of a sighting and the color, size, and behavior of the bird in question. Merlin processes the responses to present a shortlist of possible identifications, from which the user can choose the likely species. Species profiles include a brief physical description, photographs, and sound samples. The **Photo ID** feature allows anyone with a camera to snap a photo and obtain a list of suggestions. Merlin's **Sound ID** feature allows identification of birds by audible recognition. To use Merlin, download the app, followed by the appropriate regional "pack." For this trip, please download the pack for **US and Canada: Continental** or for **US: Midwest**. **Highly recommended.**

Discover the world of birds with the Lab's **Birds of the World** online resource, offering comprehensive life histories of all bird species and families. Visit the [Birds of the World website](#), where you can learn about the appearance, distribution, diet, and behavior of any bird in the world. Free samples are available at the home page, and full subscriptions are available at monthly, annual, and three-year levels. **Highly recommended.**

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 October 28, 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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