

**GUYANA
A SPECIAL TOUR SUPPORTING
THE RED SISKIN INITIATIVE
OCTOBER 22-30, 2023**

**IWOKRAMA RAINFOREST PRE-TRIP
OCTOBER 16-25, 2023**

©2022

*"Travel stripped of adventure is almost
inevitably an exercise imbedded in monotony."*
Caskie Stinnett



Male Red Siskin, *Spinus cucullatus* © Jhonathan Miranda

Sometimes it seems as if there is no place on Earth that has escaped the tentacles of technology, the embrace of globalization or the prying eyes of intrepid travelers. There are such places, of course, but they lack the attention or accolades of the mass media. Guyana is one of those places—a sultry little tropical nation, sandwiched between larger and better-known neighbors, overlooked, almost forgotten, and largely removed from the world’s public and political eye. It is just these attributes, however, this lack of éclat and cachet that make it an enticing location to support the conservation of a glamorous bird, the Red Siskin.

On this special tour, in support of the Red Siskin Initiative (RSI), we will travel to the expansive savannas, pristine forests and rugged hills of southern Guyana, a little-known region with amazing biodiversity. A highlight of the trip will be a visit to the last stronghold of the Red Siskin, a gorgeous red and black finch that has been extirpated over most of its former range by intensive trapping for the pet trade. You will have the opportunity



to look for Red Siskins in the wild, as well as other species heavily impacted by the pet trade, including the beautiful Sun Parakeet and two species of seed-finch that are in demand for the remarkable sport of “bird racing.”



RSI is a multi-national consortium working to recover these iconic species across their former ranges. It includes expert scientists, conservationists, aviculturists and community organizers at the Smithsonian Institution and numerous partner organizations in Guyana, Venezuela, Australia, the US and elsewhere. The goal of RSI is to recover sustainable populations of Red Siskins and other species impacted by unsustainable harvest for the pet trade through threat reduction, captive breeding, reintroduction in bird-friendly agroecosystems and involvement of local and international stakeholders who will benefit directly from these activities. You can read more about the work of RSI in articles by [The Atlantic](#) and the [Associated Press](#).

Guiding the trip will be David Ascanio, one of the premier birding guides in South America, a veteran tour leader for Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, and lead author of

the recent Helm Field Guide to the Birds of Venezuela. David will be joined by Michael Braun, a scientist at the Smithsonian Institution and co-founder of RSI. Ron Allicock, one of the most experienced and knowledgeable birding guides in Guyana, will join us as well and will oversee our itinerary and logistics. You’ll also meet officers of the South Rupununi Conservation Society, a local

NGO that has been instrumental in safeguarding the last healthy population of Red Siskins in the wild, and will probably have the opportunity to meet staff of the Guyana Tourism Authority.

Guyana is a pleasure, an antidote to the tumultuous imbroglio of modern, comfortable urban life. Accommodations and transportation on this itinerary range from comfortable to basic. Most of all, this trip offers a wilderness experience, featuring vast expanses of virgin forest and savanna, doubtless with an occasional rough edge or unexpected adventure, but well-suited for those with youthful hearts and a willingness to overlook an occasional discomfort.



Blue-and-yellow Macaws, *Ara ararauna* © Andrew Whittaker

As we go birding in the open scrubby vegetation of the Rupununi Savanna, we will have a chance of seeing a remarkable tableau of wildlife, such as the Giant Anteater; Jabiru; Pearl Kite; Aplomado Falcon; White-tailed, Savanna, and Crane hawks; Sunbittern; Double-striped Thick-knee; Blue-and-yellow, Red-bellied and Red-shouldered macaws; Least Nighthawk; Toco Toucan; White-fringed Antwren; Blue-backed Manakin; Flavescent Warbler; and much more. The Rupununi region is well known to ornithologists because of an array of scientific research carried out here in the past, among them studies of the Harpy Eagle, Capuchinbird, and Guianan Cock-of-the-rock. We may not be able to reach all of the research sites, but we are sure there will be some surprises that you won't want to miss. For that reason, be ready to say goodbye to air-conditioned hotel rooms and open your arms to welcome the fresh breeze of the mornings as you breathe the clean air of the Rupununi region and enjoy the wonderful birds of Southern Guyana!

Please note that although this departure is regarded as a wilderness trip, because of simple (but clean!) accommodations and 4x4 transportation, there are no high elevations or unusually strenuous activities scheduled.

For participants wanting to enjoy a wider sampling of Guyana's avifauna, we offer a pre-trip that will visit one of the most pristine rain forests in the world: the Iwokrama Reserve. From the treetop canopy walkway at Atta Lodge, we'll have the rare opportunity to see birds of the forest canopy at eye-level.

We will likely experience flocks of Red-bellied, Blue-and-yellow and Scarlet macaws, as well as Red-throated Caracaras, all issuing their distinctive loud calls. In addition, we may encounter astonishing troops of Gray-winged Trumpeters, the gorgeous Purple-breasted Cotinga, bizarre potoos and the amazing Guianan Cock-of-the-rock, a species that would be a highlight of any Neotropical birding adventure.

An added bonus on both the main tour and pre-trip is the opportunity to view the incomparable Kaieteur Falls, the world's largest single-drop waterfall by volume.

October 22, Day 1: Travel to Georgetown, Guyana. Participants not continuing from the Iwokrama Rainforest Pre-trip will arrive into Georgetown's Cheddi Jagan International Airport (airport code GEO) and will be met outside the baggage claim area by a representative of our ground agent and transferred to the Cara Lodge Hotel, close to the Demerara River, where a room has been reserved in your name. Dinner tonight is on your own; the Cara dining room offers a delicious selection of both Guyanese and international favorite foods.

Both American Airlines and Caribbean Airlines offer non-stop service to Georgetown out of Miami while Caribbean Airlines offers non-stop service from New York Kennedy. There is also non-stop service from Panama City, Panama on COPA Airlines which will connect with flights to and from various airports in the USA. All flight information is subject to change.

Participants wanting to avoid the risk of misconnecting with the group should consider arriving into Georgetown prior to October 22. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with any additional lodging arrangements.

Participants continuing from the Iwokrama Rainforest Pre-trip will meet up with incoming participants on Day 3.

NIGHT: Cara Lodge Hotel, Georgetown



Hoatzin, *Opisthocomus hoazin* © David Ascanio

October 23, Day 2: Full Day Around Georgetown. Our trip will begin in casual fashion with a 6:00 a.m. meeting for a trip welcome and orientation followed by breakfast. At this time, you will have a chance to meet your fellow travelers and trip leaders. After breakfast we will spend an easy day around Georgetown visiting several bird-rich areas, which together offer a superb introduction to the birdlife of Guyana, not to mention a look at Guyana's capital city. Our intended itinerary includes a visit to some coastal wetlands, a short boat trip on the Mahaica River and a visit to the Botanical Gardens in Georgetown. Our ability to visit all of these sites will be determined by weather conditions and timing, and our schedule will remain flexible.

Located in the far north of the country, Georgetown sits on the coast, where a mosaic of aquatic and forest habitats supports a mix of common and widespread birds and also species restricted to the swamp forest and mangrove stands that once blanketed the Atlantic coast of the Guianas. We will sample these habitats.

Our day may begin with a visit to the Georgetown coastal mudflats where the restricted distribution Rufous Crab Hawk occurs. Here, we also may be delighted by the brightly-colored Scarlet Ibis, a vocal Mangrove Rail (split from Clapper Rail), the diminutive White-bellied Piculet or the Plain-bellied Emerald, a hummingbird found close to mangrove stands. At some point we will take a boat trip on the Mahaica River, where we will look for the bizarre and largely vegetarian Hoatzin. We might come across Snail Kite, Epaulet Oriole, Green-tailed Jacamar,

Great Black-Hawk, Wing-barred Seedeater and probably a roost of Boat-billed Heron (usually crepuscular and nocturnal). Also, we might find pairs or trios of the entertaining Black-capped Donacobius, displaying their unique choreography.

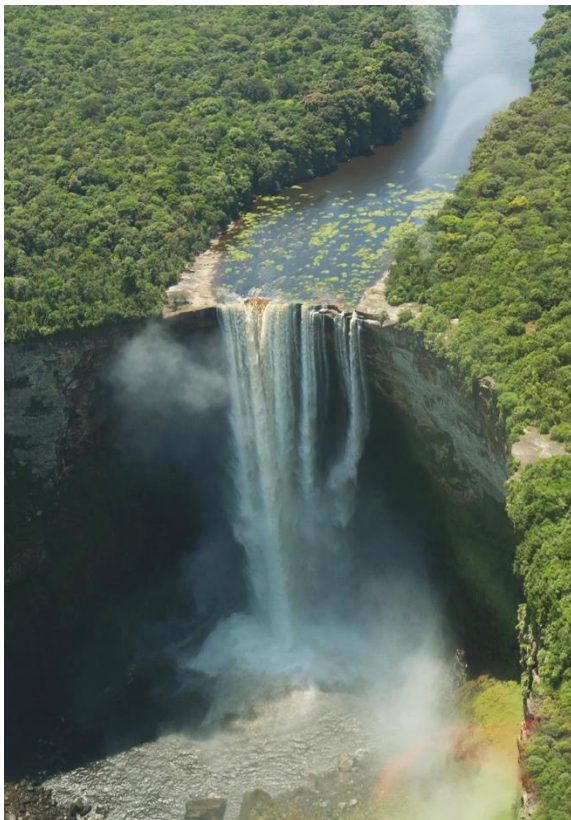
We will also include a visit to the Botanical Gardens in Georgetown. Within the lovely grounds of the gardens are fine examples of well-known neotropical plants such as Copernicus Palm (*Copernicia* sp.), Sand-box tree (*Hura crepitans*), Silk-cotton tree (*Ceiba pentandra*), and the lovely flowering Cannonball tree (*Couroupita* spp.). Among the bird specialties, we will focus on finding the gorgeous and range restricted Blood-colored Woodpecker. We may also see Striated Heron in some of the ponds, Gray-lined and Roadside hawks, Wattled Jacana, Pale-vented Pigeon, Red-shouldered Macaw, Orange-winged and Yellow-crowned

parrots, Rufous-breasted Hermit, Plain-bellied Emerald, Green Kingfisher, Black-crested Antshrike, White-winged Becard, Silver-beaked and Hooded tanagers, Yellow-rumped Cacique and much more.



Scarlet Ibis, *Eudocimus ruber* © David Ascanio

NIGHT: Cara Lodge Hotel, Georgetown



Kaieteur Falls © David Ascanio

October 24, Day 3: Flight to Lethem or Rock View via Kaieteur Falls.

After breakfast, we will transfer to the airport to take a one-hour flight to visit one of the most spectacular waterfalls in the world: Kaieteur Falls. Plunging a heart-stopping 741 feet into a deep gorge, the falls, without question, are the scenic highlight of the trip. Kaieteur National Park is remarkably pristine and little visited; no roads link it to the outside world. Perhaps this is part of the lure of this magnificent region. The falls are situated where the Potaro River drops off the eastern edge of an ancient uplifted plateau, which forms the Pan-Tepui or Guianan Highlands region of western Guyana, southern Venezuela and northern Brazil. The spectacular mesas (tepui) carved by millions of years of erosion of this plateau are the home of many endemic plants and animals. The vertical cliffs and inaccessible tops of these tepuis inspired the famous novel *The Lost World* by Arthur Conan Doyle. At about 1,320 ft. (400 meters), Kaieteur is the only region on the trip where we are high enough to encounter a few of the higher elevation species. Although our stop will be brief, we will look for Red-and-green Macaw, Blue-cheeked Parrot, White-chinned Swift (notably local elsewhere), White-tipped Swift, Black-eared Fairy, Swallow-winged Puffbird, Cliff Flycatcher, Pompadour and Spangled cotingas, Orange-bellied Manakin, Blue Dacnis, Red-legged and Purple honeycreepers, and Fulvous Shrike-Tanager. Following the

visit to the falls, we will continue our journey with a second flight to Lethem, the capital city of the Rupununi Savanna. There, we will rendezvous with those who participated on the pre-trip, have refreshments as evening breezes freshen the savanna and have the option of taking a short birding outing around the ranch property.

TRAVEL NOTE: For domestic flights, the weight restriction for hand-luggage is 20 pounds per person. Your main luggage will be taken by road from Georgetown to Lethem.

NIGHT: Manari Ranch, near Lethem

October 25, Day 4: Across the Savanna to Karasabai in Search of the Sun Parakeet.

The day will begin with enjoying a very early breakfast ahead of a morning drive to Karasabai, an Amerindian village in the foothills of the Pacaraima Mountains where the astonishingly beautiful Sun Parakeet is found. This area is a good example of a bird conservation project hosted by a local community. Once almost wiped-out of the region by intense trapping for the pet trade, the population of the parakeet has begun to rebound under the protection of the Karasabai community. We are likely to spend some time learning from the local community about this successful conservation program. We will also look for the distinctive subspecies of the White-bellied Piculet and Yellow-hooded



Sun Parakeet, *Aratinga solstitialis* © David Ascanio

Blackbird, which may soon be elevated to full species status. After lunch, we will bird our way back across the North Rupununi Savannas, looking for open country birds including Aplomado Falcon, Pearl Kite, White-tailed Hawk, Double-striped Thick-Knee, Maguari Stork, Azure Gallinule, and Jabiru. Back at Manari Ranch, we will relax and enjoy an early dinner. At dusk we'll watch the skies for Lesser, Least and Nacunda nighthawks leaving their roosting sites for their foraging grounds.

NIGHT: Manari Ranch, near Lethem

October 26, Day 5: Continue our Journey to the Core Area of Red Siskin; from Manari to South Rupununi Savanna and Wichabai Ranch.

We'll spend today on the road, birding our way to the southern Rupununi stronghold of the Red Siskin. We will leave early in the morning to allow time for birding stops. Along the road we will pass by ponds containing Brazilian Teal and Sharp-tailed Ibis, while in areas of drier ground we may find pairs of the attractive Buff-necked Ibis. As we continue our drive, we will encounter an open country avifauna rich in tyrant-flycatchers that includes Plain and Lesser elaenias, Southern Scrub Flycatcher and Mouse-colored Tyrannulet. Also, this is a key area to look for the unique White-naped Xenopsaris, a member of the becard and tityra family with an odd distribution in South America. We'll arrive in time for lunch at Wichabai Ranch. Bear in mind that most birding tours don't go further south from Lethem. Given that the Red Siskin is our top priority, we will take our adventure into the real interior of the Rupununi! After a deserved break, we will bird the

surroundings of the newly built Wichabai Guest Houses and then enjoy the sunset over these expansive, natural savannas.

NIGHT: Wichabai Ranch and Guest Houses, South Rupununi

October 27, Day 6: The Red Siskin Day! Today we'll focus our efforts on seeing the endangered Red Siskin. Once widespread in northern Venezuela, Trinidad and eastern Colombia, this charismatic species has been decimated due to intense trapping for the pet trade, despite decades of legal protection. Hope for its survival and recovery in the wild was rekindled when a previously unknown population of the species was discovered here in the South Rupununi. Imagine the excitement the ornithologists experienced the day of the discovery, at a site more than 900 kilometers from any known locality for the Red Siskin, in a country where the species had never before been recorded! Mike Braun was the co-leader of that expedition, and will share with you the story of the siskin's discovery in Guyana, the immediate actions he and his colleagues took to protect it, and the steady development of a vision for species recovery shared by the many individuals and organizations that now comprise the Red Siskin Initiative.



Red Siskin, *Spinus cucullatus* © David Ascanio

Today's plan will depend on recent siskin sightings. For that, the assistance of the rangers of the South Rupununi Conservation Society will be invaluable.

We know of populations near the communities of Sandcreek and Rupunau, but there may be other locations to check. Participants must be ready to leave our lodging before dawn (if needed) and for a lengthy drive. Along the road there will be chances of seeing other birds including Little Chachalaca, Black-collared Hawk, Crane Hawk, Gray Hawk, and the unique White-naped Xenopsaris. Likewise, we might come across Plumbeous and Gray seedeaters, White-bellied Antbird and Rufous-winged Antwren in the canopy of the forest

edge. Also, we might see Double-striped Thick-Knee, Burrowing Owl and Aplomado Falcon. In ponds at the side of the road, we will have the opportunity to add Muscovy Duck, whistling-ducks and the distinctive Jabiru. A special target species in these savannas will be the diminutive and adorable Bearded Tachuri (tyrant-flycatcher family).

NIGHT: Wichabai Ranch and Guest Houses, South Rupununi

October 28, Day 7: Morning Birding or Search for the Giant Anteater; Afternoon Drive to Manari Ranch.

Today's activities will depend on the previous day's success in locating the siskins. If we are satisfied with the siskin experience, we might offer an optional pre-breakfast outing to enjoy the chorus of birds welcoming a new day in the savanna. These might include Red-bellied and Red-shouldered macaws, Pale-bellied Tyrant-Manakin, White-barred Piculet, Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant and Finsch's Euphonia. Another option would be an early morning drive across the savannas looking for Giant Anteater, which feasts at the termite mounds that dot the landscape. This activity could take us to Kusad, an uninhabited mountain that rises starkly from the vast savannas, and that shelters another population of Red Siskins. After lunch, we will make the return drive to Lethem and Manari Ranch.



Giant Anteater © David Ascanio

NIGHT: Manari Ranch, near Lethem

October 29, Day 8: Ireng River Forest; Departure to Lethem; Flight to Georgetown. Our last morning in the field will again find us on the road before dawn, driving to a dry scrub forest along the Takutu and Ireng rivers, which form Guyana's southwestern boundary with Brazil. Our target species will be two poorly known and very local endemic species: Hoary-throated Spinetail and Rio Branco Antbird. Another possibility is the spritely Chestnut-vented Conebill, which travels in small but active groups through the riverine forest. We will also look for Crestless Curassow (nowadays difficult to locate due to intensive hunting), Pearl Kite, Aplomado Falcon, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, White-throated Kingbird and Flavescent Warbler. Lunch will be at Manari followed by a short 20-minute drive to Lethem where we will catch the one-hour commercial flight to Georgetown. This evening we will gather for a final group dinner in the hotel.

NIGHT: Cara Lodge Hotel, Georgetown

October 30, Day 9: Departure for Home. A group transfer will be provided to Georgetown's Cheddi Jagan International Airport in time for the 5:35 a.m. departure of Caribbean Airlines Flight 484 which is scheduled to arrive into Miami at 12:35 p.m., enabling homeward connections (subject to change).

Separate airport transfers can be arranged for participants leaving on later flights for an additional cost.

IWOKRAMA RAINFOREST PRE-TRIP

OCTOBER 16-25, 2023



View of the Iwokrama Rainforest from atop Turtle Mountain © Gail Johnson/Shutterstock

*This optional pre-trip is designed to give you a full-immersion experience in the pristine rainforests of the Guianan Shield. The enormous Iwokrama Reserve is composed of 916,000 acres of mostly untouched rainforest. It is home to top predators such as Harpy Eagle, Anaconda, Black Caiman, Giant Otter and Jaguar. The habitat here is almost entirely humid lowland rainforest, interspersed with small areas of white sandy soil where forest gives way to scrub or grassland dotted with picturesque Moriche (*Mauritia flexulosa*) palms, both of which have distinctive birds. There are two ecolodges within the reserve with simple but comfortable accommodations and tasty, locally grown food. The reserve was established in 1996 as a joint effort between the Government of Guyana and the British Commonwealth. Today, it hosts a rich set of conservation, education and development programs including sustainable economic activities and biodiversity research.*

October 16, Day 1: Travel to Georgetown, Guyana. Participants arriving into Georgetown's Cheddi Jagan International Airport (airport code GEO) will be met outside the baggage claim area by a representative of our ground agent and transferred to the Cara Lodge Hotel, close to the Demerara River, where a room has been reserved in your name. Dinner tonight is on your own; the Cara dining room offers a delicious selection of both Guyanese and international favorite foods.

Both American Airlines and Caribbean Airlines offer non-stop service to Georgetown out of Miami, and Caribbean Airlines offers non-stop service from New York Kennedy. There is also non-stop service from Panama City, Panama on COPA Airlines which will connect with flights to and from various airports in the USA. All flight information is subject to change.

Participants wanting to avoid the risk of misconnecting with the group should consider arriving into Georgetown prior to October 16. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with any additional lodging arrangements.

NIGHT: Cara Lodge Hotel, Georgetown



Hoatzin, *Opisthocomus hoazin* © David Ascanio

Atlantic coast of the Guianas. We will sample these habitats.

Our day may begin with a visit to the Georgetown coastal mudflats where the restricted distribution Rufous Crab Hawk occurs. Here, we also may be delighted by the brightly-colored Scarlet Ibis, a vocal Mangrove Rail (split from Clapper Rail), the diminutive White-bellied Piculet or the Plain-bellied Emerald, a hummingbird found close to mangrove stands. At some point we will take a boat trip on the Mahaica River, where we will look for the bizarre and largely vegetarian Hoatzin. We might come across Snail Kite, Epaulet Oriole, Green-tailed Jacamar, Great Black-Hawk, Wing-barred Seedeater and probably a roost of Boat-billed Heron (usually crepuscular and nocturnal). Also, we might find pairs or trios of the entertaining Black-capped Donacobius, displaying their unique choreography.



Scarlet Ibis, *Eudocimus ruber* © David Ascanio

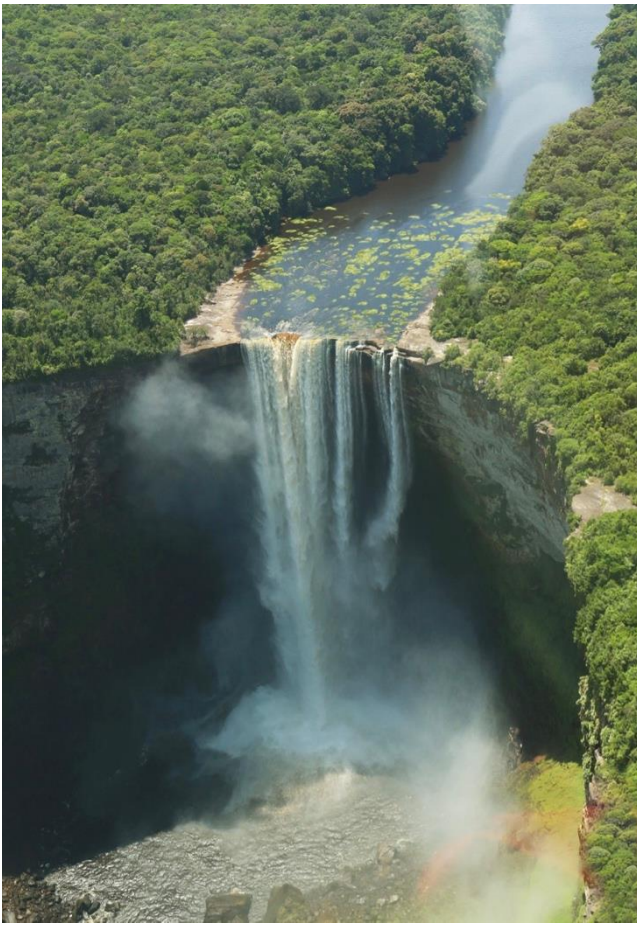
We will also include a visit to the Botanical Gardens in Georgetown.

Within the lovely grounds of the gardens are fine examples of well-known neotropical plants such as Copernicus Palm (*Copernicia* sp.), Sand-box tree (*Hura crepitans*), Silk-cotton tree (*Ceiba pentandra*), and the lovely flowering Cannonball tree (*Couroupita* spp.). Among the bird specialties, we will focus on finding the gorgeous and range restricted Blood-colored Woodpecker. We may also see Striated Heron in some of the ponds, Gray-lined and Roadside hawks, Wattled Jacana, Pale-vented Pigeon, Red-shouldered Macaw, Orange-winged and Yellow-crowned parrots, Rufous-breasted Hermit, Plain-bellied Emerald, Green Kingfisher, Black-crested Antshrike, White-winged Becard, Silver-beaked and Hooded tanagers, Yellow-rumped Cacique and much more.

NIGHT: Cara Lodge Hotel, Georgetown

October 17, Day 2: Full Day Around Georgetown. Our trip will begin in casual fashion with a 6:00 a.m. meeting for a trip welcome and orientation followed by breakfast. At this time, you will have a chance to meet your fellow travelers and trip leaders. After breakfast we will spend an easy day around Georgetown visiting several bird-rich areas, which together offer a superb introduction to the birdlife of Guyana, not to mention a look at Guyana's capital city. Our intended itinerary includes a visit to some coastal wetlands, a short boat trip on the Mahaica River and a visit to the Botanical Gardens in Georgetown. Our ability to visit all of these sites will be determined by weather conditions and timing, and our schedule will remain flexible.

Located in the far north of the country, Georgetown sits on the coast, where a mosaic of aquatic and forest habitats supports a mix of common and widespread birds and also species restricted to the swamp forest and mangrove stands that once blanketed the



Kaieteur Falls © David Ascanio

October 18, Day 3: Flight to Iwokrama via Kaieteur Falls. After breakfast, we will transfer to the airport to take a one-hour flight to visit one of the most spectacular waterfalls in the world: Kaieteur Falls. Plunging a heart-stopping 741 feet into a deep gorge, the falls, without question, are the scenic highlight of the trip. Kaieteur National Park is remarkably pristine and little visited; no roads link it to the outside world. Perhaps this is part of the lure of this magnificent region. The falls are situated where the Potaro River drops off the eastern edge of an ancient uplifted plateau, which forms the Pan-Tepui or Guianan Highlands region of western Guyana, southern Venezuela and northern Brazil.

The spectacular mesas (tepui) carved by millions of years of erosion of this plateau are the home of many endemic plants and animals. The vertical cliffs and inaccessible tops of these tepuis inspired the famous novel *The Lost World* by Arthur Conan Doyle. At about 1,320 ft. (400 meters), Kaieteur is the only region on the trip where we are high enough to encounter a few of the higher elevation species. Although our stop will be brief, we will look for Red-and-green Macaw, Blue-cheeked Parrot, White-chinned Swift (notably local elsewhere), White-tipped Swift, Black-eared Fairy, Swallow-winged Puffbird, Cliff Flycatcher, Pompadour and Spangled cotingas, Orange-bellied Manakin, Blue Dacnis, Red-legged and Purple honeycreepers, and Fulvous Shrike-Tanager.

Following the visit to the falls, we will continue our journey with a short flight (about 30 minutes) to the Iwokrama Reserve.

We will have the afternoon to settle into our cabins at the field station and explore several trails which enter the forest immediately behind the lodge. In fact, some of our best birding may occur on these trails during morning and late-afternoon walks. A sample of birds we've seen here, close to the lodge, includes exciting species such as Black-faced Hawk, Yellow-crowned and Mealy parrots, White-plumed Antbird, Pompadour Cotinga and White-throated Toucan as well as many species of antbirds, tanagers and tyrant-flycatchers in mixed species flocks.

TRAVEL NOTE: For domestic flights, the weight restriction for hand-luggage is 20 pounds per person. Your main luggage will be taken by road from Georgetown to Iwokrama.

NIGHT: Iwokrama River Lodge, Essequibo River

October 19, Day 4: Iwokrama Lodge and Turtle Mountain. The Iwokrama River Lodge is situated in a large clearing surrounded by beautiful, undisturbed rainforest. Several trails offer immediate and excellent access into this lovely forest, and the nearby river provides opportunities to see forest edge and riverine species. The half dozen cabañas, each with multiple beds, offer private bathrooms, hot and cold-water showers, internet connections and a pleasant veranda with hammocks. The second-floor dining room in the main administration building features an extensive library and an enormous, airy and comfortable lounge area as well as spectacular views over the river. In the early morning, it is likely you will be awakened by the roaring sound of the howler monkeys. In the pre-dawn chorus, we may hear both Barred and Lined forest-falcons, elusive predators of the deep forest; the voice of a potoo; or the soft notes of the Spectacled Owl. Later, the ear-splitting calls of flocks of Blue-and-yellow

or Red-and-green macaws will rival the howlers in decibels and remind us that we are in one of the most pristine forests in South America. A long list of birds has been recorded just from the field station including King Vulture; Greater Yellow-headed Vulture; Gray-headed and Double-toothed kites; Black-faced Hawk; Harpy Eagle; Lined Forest-Falcon; Bat Falcon; Spix's and Marail guans; Black Curassow; Gray-winged Trumpeter; Pied Lapwing; Black-headed, Caica, Blue-headed, Blue-cheeked, Orange-winged, and Mealy parrots; Squirrel and Black-bellied cuckoos; Spectacled Owl; Great and Common potoos; Black-tailed, Green-backed, and Violaceous trogons; Amazonian Motmot; Guianan Puffbird; Black Nunbird; Swallow-winged Puffbird; Golden-collared, Chestnut, Waved, Crimson-crested and Red-necked woodpeckers; White-throated and Channel-billed toucans; Green and Black-necked aracarís; Guianan Toucanet; Ringed Antpipit; Screaming Piha; Spangled and Pompadour cotingas; White-crowned and Golden-headed manakins; White-banded and Black-collared swallows; Musician Wren; Blue Dacnis and Golden-sided Euphonia.

Among the highlights of this reserve is the experience of walking trails through pristine forest. For this activity, we will explore the trail that leads to an impressive outcrop called Turtle Mountain. Although we are not expecting everyone to climb the rock (it rises 900 feet high), the walk up will be offered as an optional exercise since the views from atop are simply magical! Another great reason to explore the trails of the Iwokrama reserve is to look for a bird that resembles a mustard-stained vulture with a voice like a bawling calf, the Capuchinbird. In addition, we will stay vigilant for understory mixed species flocks containing Amazonian Antshrike, Helmeted Pygmy-tyrant and Red-necked Woodpecker. Similarly, we will keep our eyes open for an army ant swarm and its attendants including the rare Rufous-winged Ground-Cuckoo. There will also be possibilities here to look for Guianan Toucanet, Long-tailed Potoo, Red-and-black Grosbeak, Cream-colored Woodpecker, Ferruginous-backed Antbird, White-chinned Sapphire and Great Jacamar. Although we will have a day and a half to explore this amazing area, the birding is so impressive that you won't want to leave!

NIGHT: Iwokrama River Lodge, Essequibo River

October 20, Day 5: From Iwokrama to Atta Rainforest Lodge. Today, it is likely that the pre-dawn voice of a potoo or the soft notes of the Spectacled Owl will be replaced by the roaring notes of the howler monkeys as the sun rises. To take advantage of the morning hours—typically the most productive time of the day—we will leave the lodge early to drive the road from Iwokrama to Atta Rainforest Lodge, with birding along the way. At various locations we will look for understory mixed species flocks containing Dusky-throated and Cinereous antshrikes, White-flanked and Gray antwrens, Brown-bellied Stipplethroat (Antwren) and Chestnut-rumped or Buff-throated woodcreepers. As the day warms, our chances increase for encountering army ants. We hope to find a swarm, around which we'll watch for White-plumed and Rufous-throated antbirds, specialist species adapted for life in association with the ants. Also, we will pay attention to the forest canopy, the domain of cotingas, toucans and several species of woodpeckers. Eventually, we will cross a different type of forest: the sandy-belt forest. Here, the trees are stunted and the associated avifauna is less diverse, but highly specialized. Among the birds we'll seek in this environment are Black Manakin, Rufous-crowned Elaenia and Cinnamon Attila. After exploring this forest, we will continue our drive, with our chances for seeing parrots increasing. A typical day will allow views of Red-fan, Dusky, Orange-winged and Caica parrots. Less common but still possible is the Blue-cheeked Parrot. Life in the Neotropical forest functions somewhat like the stratified life of large cities, with skyscraper life being different from that in the tumultuous streets. While mixed species flocks rumble through the forest understory, other types of flocks remain high in the canopy. Also, as some birds prefer life in the upper floors, others have a preference for the ground level. Examples of the latter include Gray-winged Trumpeter and Black Curassow, large birds now rare in many areas of Amazonia due to hunting pressure, but still common in Guyana. As you will notice, we will be searching for birds at all levels of the forest, with many of the birds of each strata different from the last.

Upon arrival at Atta Rainforest Lodge we will check in to our rooms and have lunch. Following a break, we will continue to seek birds on the trails surrounding the lodge.

NIGHT: Atta Rainforest Lodge

October 21, Day 6: Atta Rainforest Lodge. Another night surrounded by untouched and pristine forest packed with the calls of wildlife will give way to an exciting day as we will be walking the famed Atta Canopy Walkway. Consisting of three platforms and four bridges, the plan is to be at the walkway right at dawn to enjoy the forest wildlife shifting from the night-life to the day-life. We are likely to hear a forest-falcon singing as well as spider monkeys calling. The walkway offers a unique opportunity to enjoy canopy species at eye level!

Some of the canopy flock representatives include Todd's and Spot-tailed antwrens, Short-tailed Pygmy-Tyrant, Guianan Tyrannulet and a variety of colorful birds including Paradise, Opal-rumped and Turquoise tanagers as well as Green Honeycreeper, and Black-faced and Blue dacnises. As the day warms, the relative quiet of the morning forest will be broken by the piercing calls of the Screaming Piha and the cacophony of a group of Red-throated Caracara. We will also have time to watch for a colorful cotinga perched atop a tree or observe a family group of beautiful Cayenne Jays moving along the midstory or a tyrant-flycatcher taking a sun bath. As we descend to the ground, tinamous likely will be singing and we will focus our efforts next on understory species such as Ferruginous-backed Antbird and Gray-winged Trumpeter. We will also look for the elusive Rufous Potoo, the smallest and most unusual member of that strange family of nightbirds, on its daytime roost.



Red-throated Caracara, *Ibycter americanus* © David Ascanio

After lunch, we will take a break, and later resume our search for birds. Back on the road that connects Iwokrama with Atta lodge, we will continue birding, and might be rewarded with views of Blue-backed Tanager, Reddish Hermit, Gartered Trogon, Rose-breasted Chat and Yellow-green Grosbeak. There is a small wetland at one side of the lodge where we have seen the astonishing Crimson Topaz and elegant Sunbittern, as well as Green-and-rufous and American Pygmy kingfishers. In the evening, we may ascend to the Canopy Walkway again to hear the mournful call of the White-winged Potoo, a ghostly, ethereal whistle emanating from dense canopy vegetation at dusk. This species was lost to science for more than 100 years until the advent of canopy towers and walkways in the 1980s, which allowed ornithologists to identify its voice.

NIGHT: Atta Rainforest Lodge

October 22, Day 7: From Atta Lodge to Rock View Lodge. The second morning at Atta Lodge will find us enjoying again the strange habitat of the sandy-belt forest. Here, we will look for Black Manakin and Bronzy Jacamar, two specialists of this kind of forest. Also, we will look for the Pelzel's Tody-Tyrant, a recent addition to the Guyana list found only in this habitat. After breakfast, we will leave the lodge and start our drive to Annai and Rock View Lodge. The first part of the road is covered by forest and we will surely come across a feeding



Guianan Cock-of-the-rock, *Rupicola rupicola* © David Ascanio

flock or, with luck, an ant swarm. But the highlight of the morning will be a visit to a lek of the Guianan Cock-of-the-rocks. The display of this species is mostly silent (as opposed to the Andean Cock-of-the-rocks display, which is quite vocal) and we might see males coming close to the forest floor to show their incredible orange plumage. After enjoying this unique experience, we will continue our drive and we may come across Gray-winged Trumpeters running with their hunched back and long neck held against the breast. Other target species found along this part of the road include Blue-cheeked and Caica parrots as well as the secretive Blue-backed Tanager (a canopy species). Once at the Surama junction, the evergreen forest will transition to savannas and riverine forest and the birds will also differ. In the more open savannas, tanagers are replaced by seedeaters and tyrant-flycatchers. By the end of the afternoon, we will arrive at Rock View Lodge, situated at the forest-savanna ecotone near the Rupununi River, toward the eastern end of the North Rupununi Savanna, with the rugged Pacaraima Mountains to the north.

NIGHT: Rock View Lodge, Annai Village

October 23, Day 8: The Northern Rupununi Savanna, Surama Village and the Harpy Eagle Trail. The Rupununi Savanna is an extensive flatland that projects south to the border with Brazil. It hosts extensive tropical grasslands and areas with scattered trees (savanna) as well as shrubs and scrubby vegetation. Ecologically speaking, it is part of a series of savannas separating the forest of two immense biomes, the Orinoquian and the Amazonian. Despite its apparent homogeneity, there are various microhabitats where highly specialized birds are found. For this reason, we will invest our morning checking wetlands and scrubby vegetation where we might come across a Sharp-tailed Ibis in the muddy bank of a pond while in tall grasses we may find the cute Bearded Tachuri. In the meantime, the White-tailed Goldenthrout (hummingbird) could be seen visiting flowering plants near or inside shallow wetlands while the widespread Burrowing Owl will be standing in areas that never get flooded. We will also explore the short seasonal grasses for pairs of Buff-necked Ibis or the dull Yellowish Pipit that may be singing there. Apart from the birds, this extensive area will be a good bet to look for the Giant Anteater. Other open country birds we might come across include Aplomado Falcon, Pearl Kite, White-tailed Hawk, Double-striped Thick-Knee, Maguari Stork, Azure Gallinule and Jabiru. We will continue toward the savanna-forest ecotone at Surama Village, where sharp-eyed Amerindian observers of the Makushi tribe (like our leader Ron, who is from Surama) may be able to show us an active nest of the Harpy Eagle.

NIGHT: Rock View Lodge, Annai Village

October 24-25, Days 9-10: Harpy Eagle Trail or North Rupununi Birding; Drive to Manari, near Lethem. Flight back home (25 October). Depending on the birds seen on previous days, we might return to the Harpy Eagle trail to continue searching for primary forest birds or change the habitat and explore the savannas of the Northern Rupununi. As we explore these open savannas, we will be looking for Cocoi and Striated herons, White-winged Swallow and Roadside Hawk. Also, we might come across flocks of Black-bellied and White-faced

whistling-ducks, and scattered Common Ground Dove or a loose group of Variable Chachalaca. We will pay special attention to ponds at the side of the road because the majestic Jabiru and the widespread Wood Stork might be seen feeding for fishes that are trapped in such ponds. Birding the savannas will be a much easier task than searching for birds in the forest. There will be Red-capped Cardinal, White-headed Marsh-Tyrant and Bicolored Wren. In patches of riverine forest, there will be an opportunity to find Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher and Mouse-colored Tyrannulet, as well as Yellow-bellied and Lesser ealenias. One species that may keep us busy is the diminutive Bearded Tachuri. This small tyrant-flycatcher is severely threatened due to the intensive fires in grasslands and Guyana is probably one of the few countries where a viable population remains. Upon arriving at Manari, we will have some time to relax and get ready to be in the field at dusk when Least and Nacunda nighthawks will become active as the evening gets darker and the day gives way to the night wildlife. Participants continuing to the main tour will be joined by incoming participants this evening. Participants who are not continuing to the main tour will be transferred to the Lethem airport for a return flight to Georgetown. Departure flights can be booked for any time on October 25.



Bearded Tachuri, *Polystictus pectoralis* © David Ascanio

NIGHT: Manari Ranch, near Lethem (for those on the main tour)

NIGHT: Cara Lodge Hotel, Georgetown (for those not continuing to the main tour)

TOUR SIZE: The main tour and pre-trip will be limited to 10 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: The main tour and pre-trip will be led by **David Ascanio**, **Mike Braun** and **Ron Allicock**.



David Ascanio, a Venezuelan birder and naturalist, has spent 36 years guiding birding tours throughout his native country, Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Costa Rica, the Orinoco and Amazon river basins, Trinidad & Tobago, Suriname, the Guianas, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, the Lesser Antilles, Cuba, Chile, and Panama. He is especially interested in bird vocalizations and has a private library containing voices of more than 70% of all the birds of Venezuela. David combines superb birding skills with an astonishing command of bird vocalizations. He has published a book for children about bird songs and has coauthored the descriptions of two new species, the Rio Orinoco Spinetail and the Delta Amacuro Softtail. David has also published various manuscripts about the birds of the *llanos* (plains), the Orinoco River Island species, and the pantepui endemic species for which he has become an authority. He is the first author of the *Field Guide to the Birds of Venezuela* (2017). David is an excellent communicator,

has a great sense of humor, and is tireless in helping others find birds and wildlife. These traits have made him one of the most popular naturalists/guides in the Neotropics.



Mike Braun grew up in Houston enthralled by the natural wonders of the Texas Gulf Coast and Hill Country. He began birding in high school and roamed Texas and Mexico with family and friends of the birding community. His love of nature led him to study science as an undergraduate at Cornell University, and to pursue a doctorate on the evolutionary genetics of birds at Louisiana State University. After postdoctoral studies at the National Cancer Institute and a year on the faculty of the University of Cincinnati, Mike moved to the Smithsonian Institution where he founded the Laboratory of Molecular Systematics in 1988. His research employs genomic tools to explore the evolutionary relationships, diversification processes, and conservation biology of birds and other organisms. Mike has led bird tours to North and South America since his days in graduate

school, and loves to share his knowledge of nature and science with others. He lives in Washington, DC.



Ron Allicock, a Guyanese Makushi Amerindian, was born in a small indigenous community called Surama Village located in the North Rupununi region of central Guyana. As a boy, Ron followed in his father's and grandfather's footsteps as a true conservationist. He referred to his elders as "bare footed doctors" because they had few academic qualifications but had mastered the practical knowledge of how to live in harmony with nature. Ron's father taught him how to hunt, fish, and farm in order to feed a family. From an early age, Ron's passion was making his own bow and arrows and weaving all sorts of handicrafts. Indeed, survival of the fittest was the game of the day. Ron completed his academic studies at the Surama Primary School where he was known as a scholar, team leader, and a pioneer for environmental education. Shortly after graduation, Ron became a research assistant for Dr. Robert S. Ridgely and Dr. Graham Watkins from the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

Working in the Iwokrama forest where he had grown up, Ron gained invaluable hands-on training while mist-netting birds, collecting scientific specimens, and identifying birds by sight and vocalization. Ron soon found himself working with other research teams investigating the abundant biodiversity of Guyana's pristine rain forests.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for both sections combined is **\$9,495** per person in double occupancy from Georgetown. This includes all meals from breakfast on Day 2 of the pre-trip to dinner on Day 8 of the main tour.

The fee for main tour or pre-trip taken as a stand-alone tour is **\$8,095** per person in double occupancy from Georgetown. This includes all meals from breakfast on Day 2 to dinner on the last night of each section.

Both sections include accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, internal flights and guide services provided by the tour leaders. The tour fees do not include airfare from your home to Georgetown and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement is **\$350** for the combined tour sections or for either section taken alone. **Note that single rooms cannot be guaranteed at Wichabai Ranch and Guest Houses (Days 5 & 6 of the main tour). This has been taken into account for the single supplement.**

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person, per tour. 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 date (May 19, 2023 for the pre-trip combined with the main tour or taken alone; May 25, 2023 for the main tour only).

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.**

If participant cancels:

180 days or more before departure date

179 to 151 days before departure date

150 days or less before departure date

Participant's refund will be:

Participant's deposit minus \$500*

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

No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, 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 their **Ripcord** plan. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most comprehensive travel protection programs available.

Critical benefits of Ripcord include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation and rescue services** from your point of injury or illness to your **hospital of choice**; comprehensive travel insurance for **trip cancellation/interruption**, primary medical expense coverage, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as security evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or other security events, **waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion**, and a “**Cancel for Any Reason**” benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.*

For a price quote, or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: <https://ripcordtravelprotection.com/ventbird>; or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help and Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 14 days of making your tour deposit. 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 14 days in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. The primary medical expense benefit is available to U.S. residents only. For this reason, non-U.S. residents will pay an adjusted premium when purchasing a comprehensive policy, which includes all of the other benefits available to U.S. residents. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Coronavirus (COVID-19):

The coronavirus pandemic has brought uncertainty for many people currently holding travel insurance policies or who are considering future travel and purchasing such insurance. Redpoint has added a **Coronavirus FAQ page** to its website that addresses questions and concerns regarding its travel insurance and the impact of COVID-19. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of topics such as policy coverage and limitations, policy modifications, cancellation, refunds, and more. Among the most important points: 1) Trip cancellation solely for concern or fear of travel associated with COVID-19 is not covered; 2) Should you request cancellation of your policy, a full refund of your premium is available only under a limited set of conditions; and 3) Should you request cancellation, you may be eligible to receive a pro-rated refund of the unused portion of your premium or a travel insurance credit. Travel insurance credit (“Premium Credit”) is for the value of the policy purchased and may be applied to future policies. Premium Credits have no expiration dates. Rules and regulations apply.

Please visit the **Coronavirus FAQ** page at the following link:
https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/

Additionally, as countries begin opening up for travel, many are instituting an array of COVID-19 entry requirements, including mandates to purchase travel insurance covering medical expenses due to COVID-19 illness and accommodation in case of quarantine. Ripcord’s comprehensive travel insurance plans are designed to satisfy the various country-specific travel insurance entry requirements. Those who purchase a Ripcord policy will receive a “letter of confirmation” that affirms that the policy satisfies such requirements.

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT: These tours visits remote locations where immediate access to primary medical care may **NOT** be available. **For this reason, travel insurance which**

covers you for emergency evacuation is required for participation on this tour. This coverage is included in the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** program. Through Ripcord, “emergency evacuation” can be purchased as a stand-alone benefit or as part of a comprehensive travel insurance policy. If you choose not to purchase insurance through Ripcord, you are required to obtain it through another provider.

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

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

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. 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 responsible for any air ticket penalties.***

BAGGAGE: We recommend bringing one medium or large checked bag and one carry-on bag.

The airlines are strictly enforcing weight restrictions for checked baggage. Most of the airlines have adopted a maximum weight allowance policy of 50 pounds (22.6 kilograms) per bag for economy class tickets. Baggage weight limits and fee amounts for checking multiple bags may vary by airline and class of service. Excess baggage charges can be substantial and are the personal responsibility of the traveler. Most airlines permit one carry-on bag plus one personal item free of charge. As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack in your carry-on a change of clothes, essential toiletries, medications, a change of clothing, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government’s attempts to improve airport security, we recommend that you check with your airline and the website of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for the most updated information: <http://www.tsa.gov/>.

On the main tour, we will take one domestic scheduled flight and one charter flight. On the pre-trip we will take one charter flight. Those participants who are not continuing to the main tour will be transferred to the Lethem airport for a return flight to Georgetown. Departure flights can be booked for any time on October 25. In all cases, **please limit the weight of your hand luggage to 20 pounds. Your other luggage will be transferred overland overnight.** Please avoid bringing large square suitcases. We recommend bringing soft-sided duffle-bag types of luggage.

CLOTHING: October falls in the dry season in Guyana, but there could still be brief rain showers. This trip operates mostly in the lowlands where you can expect high heat and humidity, although it should be considerably drier in the south. Daytime temperatures will be quite warm, but nights are comfortably mild. Lightweight clothing is the rule. Clothing that you can self-wash and that dries quickly is preferred. **Please do not bring white or very light-colored shirts, pants or hats** as we will be doing much forest birding. We recommend the following items:

- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Cabela’s and REI carry field clothing that many birders find appealing. Pants and shirts made of lightweight yet durable, quick-drying materials, such as nylon and polyester, with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular and more reasonably priced than in the

past. Such clothing offers protection from the sun and biting insects and is easy to launder (including by hand). Notable brands include Columbia, ExOfficio, and REI. In particular, we recommend “Buzz-Off Outdoor Wear,” which is field clothing pre-treated with permethrin, designed to ward off biting insects.

- **Pants and shirts:** We recommend wearing long pants throughout most of the trip. Please bring two or three pairs of pants made of nylon, polyester, or other lightweight, quick-drying material. Pants with zip off lower legs provide an option to convert to shorts at appropriate times. You should also consider two or three long-sleeved and short-sleeved shirts in addition to other comfortable styles suitable for warm weather.
- **Raingear:** The area around Kaieteur Falls will be the coolest and most humid area that we’ll visit, and at least for this portion of the trip, you should have an umbrella and/or rain jacket. Rain pants are optional but probably not needed. We do not anticipate a lot of rain on this trip, but due to the nature of being in the tropics, the possibility cannot be ruled out.
- **Hat:** A hat for protection from the sun is essential. We recommend a flat-brimmed hat for the best protection, but you should at the least bring a baseball-style cap.
- **Socks:** Some people prefer thick socks for absorbing perspiration and cushioning one’s feet, especially when walking constantly on a hard surface. Others prefer thin socks made from a moisture wicking fabric to help cool the feet.
- **Swimsuit:** You might want to pack a swimsuit if you like to swim, as a couple of the hotels and lodges we use have a swimming pool.
- **Bug repellent.** We strongly recommend you not bring a spray form of repellent but rather stick or liquid forms. Consider using two types: one with Deet for mosquitoes inside the forest and another with natural oils for tiny black flies in open savannas.

FOOTWEAR: We suggest bringing sturdy hiking boots. Gore-Tex boots are fine, although not essential because we should rarely if ever be wading in water. A pair of lighter weight athletic shoes will be useful when not in the field, as well as a pair of shower thongs for showers. Rubber boots are not necessary unless you wish to use them for chigger protection or to feel secure walking inside the forest. Please refer to the HEALTH section below regarding chigger protection.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service will most likely not be available in the hotels and lodges where we’ll stay. The lightweight field clothing recommended above will typically dry overnight after handwashing.

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:

- **Backpack or daypack:** Essential for carrying extra clothing, optical equipment, field guides, supplies, toiletries, “between-meal” snacks, and water during excursions
- **Notebooks and pens**
- **Travel alarm clock:** In addition to, or in lieu of the alarm on your mobile phone
- **Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection**
- **Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions:** Essential for sun protection
- **Personal toiletries:** Including medications, spare glasses and contact lenses, etc.
- **Cameras, lenses, memory cards, and extra batteries:** With added emphasis on memory cards. You will likely take many photographs and will need all the memory you can get.
- **Regular batteries:** Regular batteries are preferred over rechargeable, as opportunities to recharge may be limited at remote lodges.
- **Plastic bags:** A supply of strong plastic bags is very useful to protect equipment from rain, humidity, and dust.
- **Collapsible walking stick:** A highly recommended item for those who have trouble walking
- **Tissue packs and handwipes:** Especially useful
- **Insect repellent:** Sticks and lotions are preferred; please try to avoid sprays.
- **Water bottle:** We recommend a one-quart bottle with a tight-fitting lid.

- **Flashlight or headlamp:** Essential for being out after dark and useful for evening checklist sessions. Please bring spare batteries. Please see notes on batteries above.
- **Umbrella:** The small, collapsible type is easy to carry and useful against rain and sun.
- **Earplugs:** For those who have trouble sleeping

BINOCULARS & SPOTTING SCOPES:

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

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

CLIMATE & WEATHER: Guyana has an equatorial climate, with temperature on the coastland ranging from 68° F (20° C) to 93° F (34° C) with a mean temperature of 81° F (27° C). The interior temperature is between 64° F (18° C) and 103° F (39° C) with a mean temperature of 83° F (28° C). The coastal heat is alleviated by northeast trade-winds. Still air makes the forest sultry in the daytime but equable at night. The equatorial sun makes savannas quite warm in the heat of the day, but there is usually a breeze, which picks up toward sunset, making the nights comfortable. Day length varies relatively little near the equator, and dawn and dusk come on quickly. The seasonal appearance of rain leads to four seasons in the Guianas: two dry seasons, which occur between February/April and July/November, and two rainy seasons, which occur between May/June and December/January. The average annual rainfall is about 90 inches. We expect a dry trip, generally, but by virtue of being in the tropics, rain is always a possibility.

CONDITIONS: This is a tour to a real wilderness area in South America. Guyana's infrastructure is still quite basic, and many people in the interior lead simple lives under primitive conditions. But life in the tropics doesn't need to be complicated! Don't expect luxury, but be ready for charming people and a great wildlife experience. On the other hand, most of the lodges where we'll stay have many modern conveniences, including internet, cell phone service, and extensive solar powered systems, in some cases. Guyana's most important achievement in conservation is the commitment of the villages to protect the birds and their habitats. Our flights will be in small planes which are noisy, unpressurized, and can be a bit cramped. Some airstrips are unpaved. No flights will take more than about an hour. We expect to make lengthy drives in 4-wheel drive vehicles. Some roads are nothing more than dirt tracks over open savanna. Rain can make them difficult or impassable, which may necessitate detours over higher ground. All of our drivers are very experienced with local conditions, being native to the area. Also, the distances between available accommodations and some key habitats will make for some early mornings (for example, 3:00-4:00 a.m. wake-up) and long days of birding. Hiking and walking conditions may be over uneven, though generally level ground of distances up to a mile or more. Midday temperatures can be uncomfortably warm, especially in the sunny savanna. Accommodations are not luxurious, but simple and clean. Culinary fare is also simple, generally nutritious and tasty, and somewhat dependent on availability of ingredients, many of which are grown locally. All of these issues are part of daily life in southern Guyana, and part of the adventure of experiencing unspoiled nature firsthand.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:

Passports

A passport valid for at least six months beyond your trip return date is required for entry into Guyana. You must also have at least two blank pages in your passport for stamps. Please check the expiration date on your passport.

If you need a passport, you should get it well in advance of your trip departure date. For additional fees, a passport can be issued on an expedited basis. In the United States this can be done at the nearest passport office, most post offices, or the county clerk's office. You may also visit www.state.gov/travel/ for information on how to get or renew a passport.

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

Visas

A tourist visa is not required of U.S. citizens for entry into Guyana. Non-U.S. citizens should check with their local Guyana consulate or embassy for instructions.

CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS: Your trip to Guyana includes most necessary expenses. You will want to bring enough cash to cover personal expenses not included in the tour fees, such as taxi rides, gifts, laundry, gratuities, meals on your own, and personal items. It is best to carry small denominations of cash as many places we visit may be unable to provide change for large bills. While U.S. dollars may be accepted in more populous areas, it is always convenient to have a supply of local currency for such items. It is best to acquire local currency before leaving home or at the airport.

Should you extend your vacation beyond what is offered in the program, you'll want to obtain local currency. Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

The official currency of Guyana is the Guyanese Dollar (GYD). You can check the latest currency conversion rate by visiting "XE-The World's Favorite Currency Site" at: <http://www.xe.com/>.

ELECTRICITY: Electricity in Guyana is generally supplied at 110 volts. Wall outlets accommodate plug types A, G, and D, with type A outlets being the most common. The type A plug, or "American" plug, is characterized by two flat blades and no grounding pin. Most modern electronic appliances will not have a problem working with electrical outlets in Guyana. Because outlets in some places are of the G and D type, and run higher voltage, we recommend bringing a plug adapter kit as well as an electrical converter if you have any doubt about your appliances being properly protected. All our lodges are equipped with solar power, with the standard USA outlets; however, when not using, please switch off your lights or unplug your equipment from the electrical outlet to save the batteries.

LANGUAGE: The official language of Guyana is English.

INTERNET: All the lodges where we'll stay (except at Wichabai Ranch and Guest Houses) have internet service, either unlimited or on a voucher system for \$5 US per hour. However, because they are in remote and thinly populated areas, equipment failure can and does occur. Such events are unpredictable, and repairs can take time.

TIME: Guyana operates on Guyana Time (GYT) and is on the same time zone as Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) and one hour ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST).

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. Typhoid vaccination is also recommended for travel to Guyana.

Yellow Fever is a viral disease transmitted by a mosquito. It is a very rare cause of illness in travelers, in part because of the precautions taken by affected countries. In Guyana it is recommended for all travelers over the age of nine months. It is required for anyone entering Guyana who has been in a country in the last year where yellow fever is known to occur. The yellow fever vaccine is a live virus vaccine which has been in use for several decades. A single dose confers immunity for ten years or more if you are not continually exposed. Adults and children over nine months can take this vaccine.

Malaria is a protozoan transmitted by a mosquito. Malaria is widespread in Guyana including the chloroquine-resistant strain in rural areas. Travelers to most places in Guyana lying below 3,600 feet, including all locations on this tour, are advised to take anti-malarial medication. To reduce the risk of contracting this disease, travelers are strongly urged to take one of the following antimalarial drugs (brand names in parentheses): mefloquine (Lariam), doxycycline, or atovaquone/proguanil (Malarone). Some travelers may experience serious side effects from antimalarial drugs; consult with your physician to determine the best preventative medication. These medications are available by prescription only. Please consult your physician or local travel clinic for recommendations. Please see the **Insect Protection** section below regarding bite prevention.

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: The world has been in the grip of a pandemic since early 2020, a result of the uncontrolled spread of SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes the illness COVID-19. COVID-19 is transmitted through person-to-person contact, almost always through inhaling respiratory aerosols or droplets exuded from an infected person. Common signs of COVID-19 illness include fever or chills, fatigue, shortness of breath, cough, loss of taste or smell, and more. Based on what is known about the disease, COVID-19 is far more serious than seasonal flu. Few places in the world have been unaffected. The impact on travel has been substantial, as demonstrated by the fact that VENT did not operate a tour between late March 2020 and late April 2021. The development and deployment of COVID-19 vaccines, particularly in the United States, has allowed VENT to return to tour operations. We emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. **With this in mind, VENT instituted a COVID-19 vaccination requirement.** All tour participants and tour leaders must be fully vaccinated in order to travel with us while we are still in a declared public health emergency. In accordance with the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), full vaccination is defined as an individual being 14 days beyond having received the required amount of vaccine for reaching full immunity to the degree specific vaccines confer. In the United States, so far, this means either the two-shot sequence for the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines or the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Proof of vaccination must be provided to our office at least one week before the start of the tour and kept with you while on the tour. Because the world is a very different place than it was before the pandemic, we've made a number of important adjustments to our processes to ensure that our tours can operate as safely as possible. Please visit the **Coronavirus Travel Update** page of our website <https://ventbird.com/covid-19>, where you may view our **COVID-19 Protocols for VENT Tours** document, which details the guidance VENT will follow in the operation of its tours in the time of pandemic. Our decision and policy are firmly rooted in the latest CDC guidance regarding recommendations for avoiding COVID-19. As we move forward, VENT will continue to follow the latest information from the CDC and will update our policy accordingly. Please visit the CDC website for the most up to date information about COVID-19 and associated guidance for proper health and hygiene: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

Insect Protection: As chiggers can be a problem in some areas, we recommend you come prepared with a good repellent. Some of the name brand manufacturers (Cutter and OFF!) produce a variety of products you will find useful. Pump-action dispensers are generally preferable to sprays, while lotions and sticks are especially good for quick and easy application to sensitive areas on the face, or when out in the field. Topsyn gel is useful in reducing irritation from chigger bites or nettle stings (cortisone creams are now available without a prescription). Some people recommend sprinkling sulfur on your socks as a chigger deterrent.

Insect Repellents – There are insect repellents for the skin and an insect repellent used to treat clothing that should not be applied to the skin.

Insect repellents for the skin are commonly available in three forms:

- DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide): A chemical compound that is marketed under various brand names (OFF!®, Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered in a variety of formulations including sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The formulations will state a percentage of the active ingredient DEET on the packaging. DEET may be applied to exposed skin directly and/or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.
- Picaridin: A synthetic formulation that is derived from piperine, a substance found in plants that produce black pepper.
- Herbal insect repellents: Various mixtures of organic ingredients such as oils from eucalyptus, citronella, cedar, and other herbs. The herbal repellents are more difficult to categorize because of the difference in ingredients from one brand to another. There is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

An insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

- Permanone® (Permethrin) is an odorless spray-on repellent that may be used for **pre-treatment** of clothing, gear, and tents. It should not be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pre-treatment process requires a number of hours to complete and must be done outdoors, so is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment has to be repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.
- Insect Shield® apparel: Clothing pre-treated with Permanone is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

The US EPA offers a search tool to help choose a repellent that is best for a particular situation. For example, some repellents work for mosquitoes, but not for ticks.

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

A Note About Chiggers: This tour visits areas where chiggers are known to occur. Chiggers are tiny parasitic mites found in most warm weather areas of the southern United States and the world's tropics. They are especially numerous in grassy areas, where, in the immature stage, they attach themselves to other animals or humans who make contact with the grass as they pass by. Chiggers do not suck blood and the majority of species do not carry disease. They do feed on bodily fluids through a process in which a digestive enzyme is produced by the chigger which essentially liquefies the skin around the area where the chigger is attached. The chigger is not usually attached to the skin for more than a few hours before it either falls off or is knocked off. Our bodies respond by producing a hardened area as a defense against the chigger's digestive enzyme. Though the chigger may be long gone, it is the presence of the hardened area, and the body's natural process of reabsorbing it that typically causes intense itching, often lasting for a week or more. Chiggers like to attach themselves to areas of thin skin, like around the ankles, beltline, undergarment lines, knees, and elbows.

Chiggers can be avoided by following these procedures:

- Avoid walking or standing in areas dominated by grass. These areas are where one is most likely to encounter chiggers.
- Tuck your pants into your socks to avoid direct skin-to-grass contact. Chiggers can find their way through clothing, but this is a standard and effective prevention technique.
- Apply insect repellent to your skin and clothing. Please refer to the Insect Repellent section that follows for important information about selecting and applying repellent.
- Powdered sulfur applied to waist, bottoms of pants, sock and boots is also effective at repelling chiggers. However, be warned that clothes will retain the sulfur odor for several washings. If using sulfur, never touch your eyes, nose, or mouth before washing your hands first.

- Shower at the end of each day in the field. Use a washcloth to vigorously rub your legs, feet, and ankles.

By following these methods, you should be able to avoid all chigger bites, as well as tick bites. If, however, you are bitten by chiggers anyway, you can reduce or eliminate the symptoms by applying benzocaine or hydrocortisone creams, calamine lotion, After Bite, or any number of anti-itch products.

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).

Food, water, and general sanitation: Although sanitation conditions are generally good at the major hotels in Georgetown and the eco-lodges where we'll stay in the interior, international travelers vary tremendously in their susceptibility to gastrointestinal complaints. To avoid getting sick (traveler's diarrhea, for example) you should avoid drinking untreated water anywhere in Guyana, even in the nicer hotels. All the lodges where we'll stay provide purified water, either in large bottles or locally filtered. To limit plastic waste in the interior, please bring a water bottle or bottles (32 oz total capacity) with you to be refilled at the lodges. Beer, soda, and other bottled drinks are safe. You are advised to carry iodine tablets for personal drinking water purification as an added precaution in case purified water is not available due to unforeseeable circumstances. You are also advised to avoid eating uncooked or partially cooked food or food that has been cooling in the open. Only eat fruit that you have peeled, preferably first washing the outside with clean water. Remember the old adage: "Boil it, peel it, or forget it."

Sun Exposure: The sun's ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes). Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. A severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors and be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

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.

Apps:

Merlin Bird ID. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The best app to use in the field. Nowadays considered the "future of birding." Once you download the app, you must download the packs for countries with similar avifauna to that of Guyana. As this itinerary is written, there are packs for Colombia and Brazil that will be useful in Guyana. Includes bird description, photos and voices. Also, there is a section for Bird Photo ID which can be useful in the field. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.**

Ebird. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. This is nowadays your best way to keep your life list, all in a single application. When taxonomic splits are incorporated, your list will be automatically updated. Furthermore, your guide will be able to share the daily list. You can just accept the list, and have it uploaded in your files! **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.**

Bird Call Xeno. This app gives you access to one of the largest online bird libraries in the world. Provided that your phone has an active data service, you'll be able to listen to the bird recordings uploaded in the site. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.**

Field Guides (Birds):

Ascanio, David; Gustavo Rodriguez & Robin Restall. **Birds of Venezuela**. Helm Field Guides, 2017. This is the most appropriate book for this trip. It treats and illustrates most of the species you will see. This is probably the best field guide to be used in Guyana at this time.

Hilty, Steven L. **Birds of Venezuela**. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

Ridgely, Robert. **Field Guide to the Songbirds of South America: The Passerine**. Mildred Wyatt-Wold Series in Ornithology, 2009.

Ridgely, R. S. & G. Tudor. **Birds of South America. Vols. I and II**. Austin: University of Texas Press. Vol. 1 (1989) is subtitled **The Oscine Passerines**. Vol. 2 (1994) **The Suboscine Passerines**. Excellent references and superb plates, but these volumes are too large to carry in the field.

Field Guides (Other):

Emmons, Louise H. **Neotropical Rainforest Mammals: A Field Guide**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997 (2nd ed.). Paperback.

General Introduction to the Tropics:

Forsyth, Adrian, & Ken Miyata. **Tropical Nature**. Life & Death in the Rain Forests of Central and South America. New York: Scribners Sons, 1984. Does not deal much with birds but is a fantastic introduction to all kinds of topics relating to tropical wildlife including bugs, frogs, plant strategies, bot flies, and much more. Extraordinarily well written, a classic, and a book that ought to be read by anyone contemplating a visit to the American tropics.

Hilty, Steven. **Birds of Tropical America: A Watcher's Introduction to Behavior, Breeding and Diversity**. University of Texas Press, 2005. Highly recommended for background information on how things work in bird communities in tropical latitudes; topics include diversity of birds, hummingbird communities; mixed species flocks; antbirds and army ants; colorfulness, song structure in relation to environments, and much more.

Kricher, John C. **The New Neotropical Companion**. Princeton University Press, 2017. An introduction to the animals, plants and ecosystems of the New World Tropics. Recommended as a general, broad-based introduction to plants and animals of Amazonia.

Other Topics:

Conan Doyle, Arthur. **The Lost World**. 1912 (several reprints available).

Hudson, William Henry. **Green Mansions: A Romance of the Tropical Forest**. 1904 (several reprints available).

Ishmael, Odeen. **The Guyana Story: From Earliest Times to Independence**. XLIBRIS. 2013.

Marvin, Uzo. **Guyana History, The Early Years: Independence and the Burham Era, Society, Population, Ethnic Groups, Economy, Government and Politics**. CreateSpace, 2016. As of November 2018, it was a free download in Kindle.

Smock, Kirk. **Guyana Bradt Travel Guide**. Most recent edition.

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 January 20, 2022, 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.