



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

AVIAN JEWELS OF ARIZONA HUMMINGBIRDS, TROGONS, WARBLERS & MORE

JULY 15-25, 2026

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Chiricahua Mountains, Arizona © Barry Zimmer

In the birding world, Southeast Arizona and hummingbirds are nearly synonymous! An incredible fifteen species are possible in late summer in this small corner of the state and many of them can be found nowhere else in the United States. Often a row of feeders are buzzing with so many individuals that it is hard to decide where to look first. For eastern birders accustomed to one species of hummingbird it can be a mind-boggling experience, and even most western states are home to only two or three species. In Southeast Arizona, however, due to a proximity to both the northern end of the Sierra Madre Occidental and the southern end of the Rocky Mountain chain, there is a diversity of hummingbirds unmatched anywhere else in the country.

At least eight hummingbird species found here are regular breeders: Black-chinned, Costa's, Broad-tailed, Anna's, Broad-billed, Violet-crowned, Blue-throated Mountain-gem, and Rivoli's (formerly Magnificent). Three others occur, mainly as late summer/early fall migrants: Rufous, Allen's (rare), and Calliope. The remaining four – Lucifer, Berylline, White-eared, and Plain-capped Starthroat – occur as post-breeding vagrants from Mexico. Of these four, all but the starthroat and Berylline typically occur on an annual basis, and late July/early August is the prime time to search for these rarities. Arizona is truly a mecca for first-hand study of hummingbird identification, ecology, range, and other related topics.

In addition to the hummingbirds, there are other rich birding rewards to be found on this tour. We will spend time searching for most of the specialty birds of southeastern Arizona including Elegant Trogon; Whiskered Screech-Owl; Arizona Woodpecker; Gilded Flicker (declining); Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet; Greater Pewee; Buff-breasted, Dusky-capped, and Sulphur-bellied flycatchers; Tropical and Thick-billed kingbirds; Mexican Chickadee; Bridled Titmouse; Olive and Red-faced warblers; Painted Redstart; Rufous-winged, Botteri's and Five-striped sparrows; Yellow-eyed Junco; Varied Bunting; and many more. We will be working our way through the best of Southeast Arizona's birding hotspots, and, although we won't have time to search out all of the regional specialties (as on our Spring Grand Arizona tour), we invariably find a high proportion of them. Mexican vagrants are a possibility as well, and examples from recent tours include Tufted Flycatcher, Flame-colored Tanager, Rufous-capped Warbler, Slate-throated Redstart, Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Rose-throated Becard, and Short-tailed Hawk – all very rare birds.



Other Southwestern species that we have a chance to encounter include Zone-tailed and Gray hawks; Montezuma and Scaled quail; Common Ground Dove; Greater Roadrunner; Lesser Nighthawk; White-throated Swift; Gila and Ladder-backed woodpeckers; Western Flycatcher; Vermilion Flycatcher; Ash-throated and Brown-crested flycatchers; Cassin's and Western kingbirds; Bell's, Plumbeous and Hutton's vireos; Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay; Mexican Jay; Chihuahuan Raven; Juniper Titmouse; Verdin; Pygmy Nuthatch; Cactus, Rock and Canyon wrens; Black-tailed Gnatcatcher; Bendire's and Crissal thrashers; Phainopepla; Lucy's, Black-throated Gray, and Grace's warblers; Western and Hepatic tanagers; Canyon and Abert's towhees; Cassin's, Rufous-crowned, Black-chinned, and Black-throated sparrows; Pyrrhuloxia; Bronzed Cowbird; Hooded and Scott's orioles; and Lesser Goldfinch.

July 15, Day 1: Arrival in Tucson. Participants should plan to arrive in Tucson (airport code TUS) before 3:00 p.m. today and transfer to our hotel where a room will be reserved in your name. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 3:30 p.m. for a quick, get-acquainted session followed by some brief afternoon birding. A visit to the nearby Sweetwater wetlands should provide a nice introduction to many of the common birds of the area. Possibilities here include Gambel's Quail, Gila Woodpecker, the localized Tropical Kingbird, Verdin, Abert's Towhee, and the southwestern race of Song Sparrow. We may go from birding directly to dinner.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn Tucson Airport, Tucson

July 16, Day 2: Mount Lemmon. Today we will venture up to 8,000, north of Tucson in the Santa Catalina Mountains, one of the sky islands that rise above the Sonoran Desert. Firs, pines and maples host a variety of breeders and early fall migrants. Some years at Rose Canyon Lake there is a nesting Common Black Hawk and in the nearby mountains Zone-tailed Hawk is a more regular breeder. Greater Pewee, Western Flycatcher, Red-faced and Olive warblers as well as Painted Redstart are all possible. Most recent summers have hosted at least one, sometimes a breeding pair of Short-tailed Hawks, so we will keep our eyes skyward for this rarity. A picnic lunch will give us time to search for Western Bluebirds and Steller's Jays. Our first full day in the mountains should produce many great sightings.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn Tucson Airport, Tucson

July 17, Day 3: Madera Canyon. We depart Tucson this morning heading toward the Santa Rita Mountains. We'll make a stop or two along the way in the lower-elevation grasslands and scrub, including some good habitat for Botteri's, Cassin's, and Rufous-winged sparrows; Varied Bunting; Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet; Ash-throated Flycatcher; Bell's Vireo; Blue Grosbeak; and others. Eventually we'll reach the famous Madera Canyon. Feeders hanging outside the Santa Rita Lodge and other canyon lodges often bustle with bird activity; Broad-billed, Black-chinned, and the incredible Rivoli's hummingbirds are common breeding species in the canyon, while migrant Rufous, Anna's, and Broad-tailed hummingbirds are possible as well.



Broad-billed Hummingbird © Barry Zimmer

In addition to hummingbirds, we should find a variety of other species in the vicinity of the feeders. Regular visitors include Acorn Woodpecker, Mexican Jay, Bridled Titmouse, and Black-headed Grosbeak, White Brown-crested and Sulphur-bellied flycatchers nest in the adjacent sycamores and oak-juniper woods. As the day progresses, we will explore other parts of Madera Canyon and adjacent habitats. Depending on the day's events, we may bird higher in the canyon, return to the scrub and grasslands, or even strike out after some nearby rarity if one is reported. Some of the many exciting bird possibilities include Elegant Trogon, Arizona Woodpecker, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Painted Redstart, Black-throated Gray Warbler, and Hepatic Tanager.

We may have an optional owling excursion this evening to search for both Whiskered and Western screech-owls and possibly Common Poorwill and Elf Owl.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn Tucson Airport, Tucson



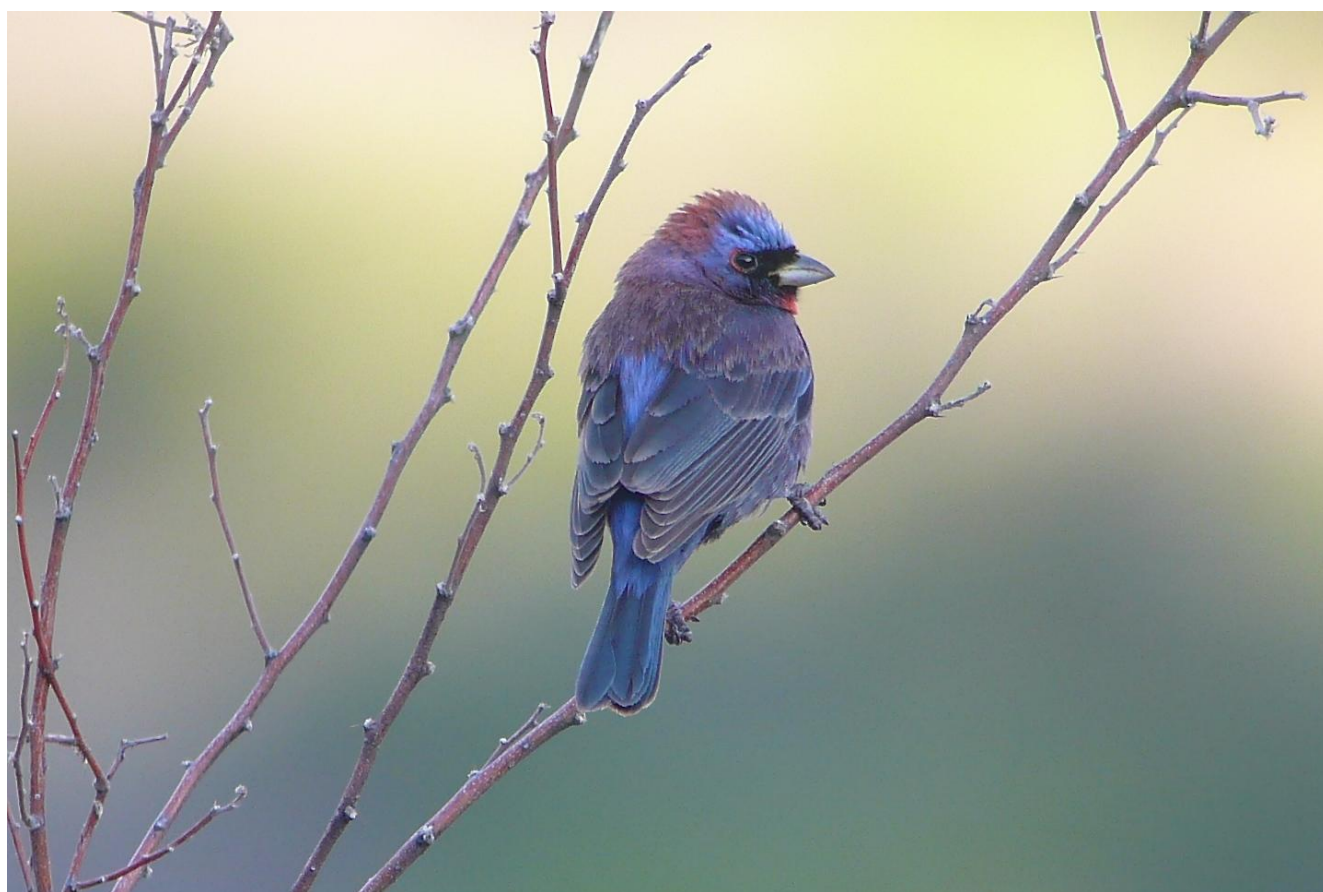
Western Screech-Owl © Barry Zimmer

July 18, Day 4: Madera Canyon to Nogales. This morning we will likely revisit portions of the Santa Rita Mountains. Florida or Montosa canyon would be likely options. Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Rock and Canyon wrens, Lucy's Warbler, and fabulously plum-colored Varied Buntings might be found in these areas. If any Five-striped Sparrows are being seen in nearby Box Canyon, that would be our most likely option. A cruise through desert could produce the highly localized and declining Gilded Flicker. After lunch we will work our way southward to the Nogales/ Patagonia area. Riparian habitats in this region harbor the likes of Gray and Zone-tailed hawk, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Violet-crowned Hummingbird, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Thick-billed Kingbird, and Summer Tanager, among others. Two small ponds near Rio Rico could produce Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, the localized Tropical Kingbird, stunning Vermilion Flycatchers, and Phainopeplas. Even the rare Rose-throated Becard has been seen in recent years.

NIGHT: Best Western Sonora Inn & Suites, Nogales

July 19, Day 5: California Gulch; Sonoita Grasslands; Drive to Sierra Vista. Following a 5:00 a.m. breakfast, we will venture west of Nogales through the Pajarito Mountains to remote California Gulch. This is currently the most reliable place to find Five-striped Sparrow in the United States. Mid-summer is prime time to locate this highly sought species, as their breeding is often timed to coincide with the arrival of the monsoon rains. En route to the gulch, we will carefully scan the roadsides for the nearly mythical Montezuma Quail. Golden Eagle (uncommon), Greater Roadrunner, Costa's Hummingbird, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Rock and Canyon wrens, Varied Bunting, and Scott's Oriole are among the other possibilities. After lunch in Nogales, we may revisit the Patagonia area if we are missing any of the specialties there. At any rate, by midafternoon, we will be heading eastward through the Sonoita grasslands en route to Sierra Vista. Horned Lark, Chihuahuan Meadowlark and Grasshopper Sparrow might be encountered along the way. After checking into our hotel, we will likely make a late evening visit to Ash Canyon in search of the highly localized Lucifer Hummingbird.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn, Sierra Vista



Varied Bunting © Barry Zimmer

July 20, Day 6: Huachuca Mountains and Canyons. We have two nights in Sierra Vista to do justice to the many potential birding spots in the Huachuca Mountains and canyons. Today offers a number of options, including visiting Carr Canyon, Miller Canyon, Hunter Canyon or Ramsey Canyon. Carr Canyon offers the best location for Buff-breasted Flycatcher. Other good possibilities include Zone-tailed Hawk, Arizona Woodpecker, Greater Pewee, Brown Creeper, Virginia's (scarce), Black-throated Gray, and Grace's warblers, Painted Redstart and Yellow-eyed Junco among others. Miller Canyon often has the best hummingbird show on our entire route, and an afternoon visit to the feeders there is a near certainty. Rivoli's, Broad-billed, Black-chinned, Anna's and Broad-tailed are expected. The rare White-eared Hummingbird has been sighted here almost annually for the past several years. Migrant Rufous and

Calliope are also possible. Whichever option we choose, this is certain to be a birdy day. If we still need either species, we will likely do some evening owling to look for Western and Whiskered screech-owls, as well as Common Poorwill.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn, Sierra Vista



Elegant Trogon © Barry Zimmer

July 21, Day 7: Sierra Vista to Chiricahua Mountains. We will likely spend the morning visiting one of the canyons in the Huachucas looking for any species we may have missed. Miller Canyon may be our destination. A steep hike further up the canyon (above the hummingbird feeders) sometimes yields the highly sought Spotted Owl or possibly Greater Pewee or the incomparable Red-faced Warbler. By midday we will leave the Huachucas and head for the majestic Chiricahua Mountains. Our route will take us through the Sulphur Springs Valley where such species as Scaled Quail, Swainson's Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Chihuahuan Raven, and Bendire's Thrasher might be found. When we arrive at our lodging for the next two nights in Portal, we are again in the midst of some of the best hummingbird watching Arizona has to offer. Time permitting, we may visit some local feeders before dinner, where the increasingly localized Blue-throated Mountain-gem can often be found.

NIGHT: Portal Peak Lodge, Portal

July 22-23, Days 8-9: Portal and the Chiricahua Mountains; Return to Tucson. We will have the better part of two days to enjoy this incredible area. Unmatched in birds and scenery, Cave Creek Canyon will provide a fitting conclusion to our tour. Cave Creek is home to many highly-sought species, including the incomparable Elegant Trogon, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Hutton's and Plumbeous vireos, and Painted Redstart. The juniper habitat at mid-elevation hosts Black-chinned (very uncommon & declining here) and Lark sparrows, Rock Wren, Juniper Titmouse, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, and other species. Returning to higher elevations in the Chiricahuas, we will have our first and only chance

to see Mexican Chickadee. Other high elevation species like Greater Pewee as well as Olive, Grace's, and Red-faced warblers are possible here too. Evening owling options could produce a Common Poorwill, Mexican Whip-poor-will, Barn Owl or some interesting mammals or reptiles.

By mid-day on Day 9, we will head toward Tucson, stopping en route at Willcox to check for migrant shorebirds (possibilities include American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Baird's Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, and more). A pond in the middle of the desert is a magnet for migrant birds and there's no telling what rarity might drop in. At tonight's farewell dinner, we will recap a superb week of birding amid Arizona's natural wonders.

NIGHTS: Portal Peak Lodge, Portal (July 22)
Hampton Inn Tucson Airport, Tucson (July 23)

July 24, Day 10: Departure for Home. Tour participants may plan to depart for home at any time today.

Essential Tour Information

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 6 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: This tour is led by Brian Gibbons.



Brian Gibbons grew up in suburban Dallas where he began exploring the wild world in local creeks and parks. Chasing butterflies and any animal that was unfortunate enough to cross paths with the Gibbons boys occupied his childhood. A wooden bird feeder kit sparked a flame that was stoked by a gift of the *Golden Guide* and family camping trips to Texas state parks. Thirty years ago Brian attended two VENT camps for young birders. Birds are now his primary interest, but all things wild continue to captivate him. After college, Brian undertook a variety of field biology research jobs that have taken him to the Caribbean, the Bering Sea, and the land of the midnight sun, arctic Alaska. He enjoys working with kids, hoping to spark environmental awareness through birds. For many years

Brian's field research has involved bird banding. His most amazing recoveries were a female Wilson's Warbler that had been banded in Alaska and was captured by Brian in Colorado, and a Sooty Tern that perished after a hurricane on the Texas coast; it had plied the Gulf of Mexico and the oceans of the world for 24 years. Brian's recreational bird-seeking has taken him to Machu Picchu in Peru, the Great Wall in China, the plains of East Africa, and the Himalayas in Nepal. Brian leads birding trips in the United States, Central America, the Caribbean, and Europe. As well as being a fanatical birder, he loves capturing birds with photography. He lives in Tucson, Arizona with his wife, Lacrechia Johnson, and their son, Grayson.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: \$4,550 per person based on double occupancy. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 9, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, all ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does **not** include airfare to nor from the starting/ending city; however, flights within the tour (if any) are included. The fee also excludes alcoholic beverages, laundry, personal expenses, and other items of a personal nature. For information about gratuities, please see the "TIPPING" sub-section below.

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: If you request single accommodations, a single supplement of **\$875** will be added to your tour fee.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: You may register for this tour through the VENT [website](#) or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person. We accept MasterCard and Visa. If you choose not to register online, you may pay your deposit by credit card, check, money order, or bank transfer. If not paying online, or by card, your tour space will be held for 10 days pending receipt of your deposit.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 150 days (February 15, 2026) prior to the tour departure date.

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.

FUEL SURCHARGES: Our prices are based on fuel prices at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TIPPING: An important part of the value of a VENT tour is knowing that tips for local service providers at our destinations—restaurant staff, hotel staff, drivers, local guides, and various other support staff—are included in your tour fee. If you would like to offer any of your local guides an additional tip, \$5 to \$10 a day is a common amount.

Tips for your VENT tour leader(s) are **not** included, but it is customary to tip one or both if you feel that you have received exceptional service. To assist in your planning, we recommend tipping your VENT tour leader(s) \$15 to \$20 per day, or the equivalent of approximately 2–4% of the tour fee.

If you plan to give tips by cash, they should be given directly to your tour leader at the end of the tour and **not** sent to the VENT office. Some of our tour leaders use mobile payment applications such as Venmo, PayPal, and Wise. If you would like to use this method, please ask your tour leaders directly whether they can accept tips through such an application.

We emphasize that tipping is optional and that these amounts are only recommendations. The amount you decide to tip is based entirely on your experience and at your discretion.

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 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:

Your deposit(s) minus \$250*

No refund of the deposits, but any payments on the balance will be refunded

No refund available

- * If you cancel 180 days or more before departure, you may transfer your deposit **one time** to another VENT tour departing within the next 12 months. The transfer must be made at the time of cancellation, and a **\$100 per-person** cancellation fee will apply.

Please note: Once a deposit has been transferred to a new tour, it **cannot be transferred again and becomes non-transferable and non-refundable**.

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

SUGGESTED OPTIONS: To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with **Redpoint Travel Protection** as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend its comprehensive Ripcord plan, which includes a medical evacuation benefit. With this in mind, it is important to note that medical evacuation is not offered by Redpoint as a stand-alone policy or benefit. For travelers not interested in comprehensive travel insurance, VENT recommends **Medjet** and its **MedjetAssist®** plan. Medjet is not an insurance company, and Medjet Assist is not an insurance product; rather, Medjet is a membership-based air-medical transport company specializing in moving hospitalized travelers from an admitting hospital to a medical facility of choice. Medjet does not provide medical evacuation service from the point of injury or illness; yet, the MedjetAssist plan offers robust enough travel protection to satisfy the medical evacuation insurance requirement in place for many VENT tours.

About Redpoint Travel’s Ripcord Plan

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

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

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, second deposit, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip costs in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy. Redpoint maintains a [Coronavirus FAQ page](#) on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

About Medjet’s MedjetAssist Plan

MedjetAssist is a membership program that functions like AAA for motorists. The company’s primary service is air medical transport. Critical benefits of MedjetAssist include a staff on call and ready to provide assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; all-expenses-paid air medical transport in the United States and internationally to medical facility of choice, regardless of medical necessity; repatriation of remains; and no exclusions for pre-existing conditions.

For travelers under 75, MedjetAssist may be purchased as Short-Term Memberships of 8, 15, 21, and 30 days, or Regular Annual Memberships from 1 to 5 years. For travelers 75–84, Medjet offers a Diamond Membership that is the same program but with a few additional conditions.

For a price quote or to purchase MedjetAssist, please visit: [Medjet.com/VentBird](#) or call 1-800-527-7478. Pricing is based on type and term of membership.

GETTING THERE & REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

AIR TRAVEL: 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 baggage to one piece of luggage and one carry-on. The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal

responsibility of each participant. Please consult your pre-departure materials and/or airline to find out specific weight restrictions.

As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security, we recommend that you check the website of the [Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\)](#) for information pertaining to permissible carry-on items.

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTHING: The temperate climate of Arizona's mountains promises warm days and cool nights. Informal dress is the rule throughout.

- **Lightweight clothing, hat & sunscreen:** recommended for mid-day
- **Long-sleeved shirts (possibly sweaters):** appropriate for mountain evenings
- **Shorts:** okay for some outings, but long pants might be better for most birding
- **Raincoat or travel umbrella:** in preparation for rain showers

FOOTWEAR:

- **Light hiking boots:** highly recommended

EQUIPMENT: Having the right equipment makes the travel experience more enjoyable. Below is a list of items that will ensure you are well-prepared:

- **Alarm clock:** certain accommodations on this tour do not have wake-up service
- **Small water bottle:** for use in the field
- **Small flashlight or headlamp:** useful for optional night outings
- **Skin lotion and lip balm:** very useful in the dry heat

Binoculars: We strongly recommend you bring a pair of good binoculars of 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 magnification. Please 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. You will find that 8x32 binoculars are compact and light enough.

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

DESTINATION INFORMATION & TOUR CONDITIONS

CLIMATE & WEATHER: Summer is the "monsoon" season in Southeastern Arizona. Frequent afternoon and evening thundershowers considerably ameliorate the desert heat and bring about a resurgence of intense biological activity. This is the famous "second spring" in Arizona when many birds are in full song and breeding activity is visible at every hand. The tour begins and ends at relatively low elevations in Tucson (just over 2,000'), but most of the trip is spent in the mountain canyons at medium elevations (5,000'-8,300'). Expect daytime temperatures in the high 90s to low 100s in Tucson and in the low to mid 80s in the mountains. We will get an early start as a rule (breakfast will be around 6:00 a.m. most mornings but will be at 5:00 a.m. on our morning in Nogales). When possible, we will take a break in the heat of the afternoon. If the monsoon is late in developing, it can be very dry. We will be spending a lot of time above 5,000' in elevation, getting as high as 8,300'. If storms hit at these high elevations, it will cool off dramatically and may get down into the 60s or lower (our 2021 tour had high temperatures in the upper 50's one day at Rustler Park!).

MOBILE & INTERNET ACCESS: Cell phone service and internet are generally available throughout the tour; however, most cell providers do not have service in the Portal area. As of this time, only Verizon customers have service at this location. Wi-Fi is available in the Portal Peak Lodge. **Also please note that cell phones with reception in the Portal area are generally picking up service from a tower in New Mexico and thus will change over to Mountain Daylight Saving Time (Arizona does not go on to Daylight Saving Time).**

HEALTH & SAFETY

HEALTH: VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which includes vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases. Among these so-called Routine Vaccinations are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers), and Varicella (Chickenpox). You should also be up-to-date with Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations. If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

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

SUN EXPOSURE: The sun’s ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes), even in winter and early spring. 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.

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.

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 it is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment must be repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.
- **Insect Shield® apparel:** Clothing pre-treated with Permanone is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

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

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

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta Georgia. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636), or you can check their website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION

A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

FIELD GUIDES:

Birds

Dunn, Jon L. & Jonathan Alderfer (Editors). *National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. 7th edition, 2017.

Howell, Steve N.G. *Hummingbirds of North America: The Photographic Guide*. New York: Natural World/Academic Press, 2002. The best single guide to North American hummingbirds.

Kaufman, Kenn. *Advanced Birding*. Peterson Field Guide Series. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999.

Kaufman, Kenn. *Kaufman Field Guide to Birds of North America*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005. The best available *photographic* field guide to the birds of North America.

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western North America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2nd edition, 2016. This is a slimmed down version of *The Sibley Guide to Birds*.

Williamson, Sheri L. *A Field Guide to Hummingbirds of North America*. Peterson Field Guide Series. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002. Another excellent resource for hummer ID.

BIRDING RESOURCES AND GENERAL NATURE:

Blake, Clark (editor). *Finding Birds in Southeast Arizona*. Tucson: Tucson Audubon Society, 2007. This is an excellent resource for status and distribution of birds in Southeast Arizona as well as where to find them.

Ehrlich, Paul R. Et al. *The Birder's Handbook: A Field Guide to the Natural History of North American Birds*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988.

- Mlodinow, Steven G. and Michael O'Brien. America's 100 Most Wanted Birds. Helena, Montana: Falcon, 1996.
- Peterson, Roger T. and James Fisher. Wild America: The Record of a 30,000 Mile Journey. Mariner Books, 1997 (originally published in 1975). See especially the chapter "Chiricahuas: Islands in the Sky."
- Zimmer, Kevin J. Birding in the American West: A Handbook. Ithaca: Comstock/Cornell University Press, 2000. Teaches you how to sort out the tough species identification comparisons.

HISTORY AND CULTURE:

- Bowers, Bowers, and Kaufman. Mammals of North America. Kaufman Focus Guides. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004.
- Brock, Jim P. and Kenn Kaufman. Field Guide to Butterflies of North America. Houghton Mifflin Co, 2006.
- Epple, Anne Orth and Lewis E. Epple. A Field Guide to the Plants of Arizona. Helena, Montana: Falcon, 1997 (reprint ed.).
- Olin, George. House in the Sun: A Natural History of the Sonoran Desert. Tucson: Southwest Parks and Monuments Association, 2000 (2nd ed.).
- Petrides, George A. and Olivia. Western Trees. Second Edition. Peterson Field Guide Series. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.
- Stebbins, Robert C. Western Reptiles and Amphibians. (Peterson Field Guides). Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003 (3rd reprint ed.).

CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY APPS & ONLINE RESOURCES:

eBird: Among the largest and most successful citizen science projects in existence, eBird is an essential tool in promoting bird study and conservation. Among a range of benefits, eBird allows users to keep a variety of lists in a single application. When taxonomic splits are incorporated, lists are automatically updated. Additionally, trip leaders can share daily lists, so one only need accept a shared list and it will upload to your files! **Highly recommended.**

MERLIN BIRD ID: Merlin is an app designed as a birding coach for beginning and intermediate bird watchers. Excellent for use in the field, Merlin asks the observer a series of questions regarding his or her bird sighting, including date and location, and color, size, and behavior of a bird. Merlin then processes the viewer's responses to present a shortlist of possible identifications, from which the user can choose the likely bird. 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 through audible recognition. To use Merlin, download the app, followed by the appropriate regional "pack."

TERMS, CONDITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

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 December 4, 2025 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant's Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant's risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the "**Airline**") is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline's aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

View the complete [Terms and Conditions](#) on our website.

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