



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

NORTH CAROLINA: FROM THE SWAMP TO THE GULF STREAM

MAY 16-23, 2026

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White-tailed Tropicbird © Michael O'Brien

Coastal North Carolina harbors a marvelous array of breeding species in its hardwood swamps, pine forests, salt marshes, and barrier beaches. This tour will sample all these habitats and also spend two days exploring North Carolina's rich offshore waters. Beginning in the Wilmington area, we'll search for such southeastern specialties as Wilson's Plover, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Swainson's and Prothonotary

warblers, Summer Tanager, Bachman's Sparrow, and Painted Bunting. An optional evening trip may afford a chance to see Chuck-will's-widow and perhaps other night birds. Along the Outer Banks, we should see a wide variety of herons and shorebirds, as well as such coastal specialties as Clapper Rail, Piping Plover, Sandwich and Gull-billed terns, Seaside Sparrow, and Boat-tailed Grackle.

The centerpiece of this tour will be two Brian Patteson Inc. pelagic trips aboard the Stormy Petrel II. Offshore of North Carolina's Outer Banks runs a fast-flowing river, the Gulf Stream, which flows north at up to five m.p.h. and carries warm water out of the Caribbean and across the North Atlantic to the British Isles. The Gulf Stream comes close to shore only here where it is deflected eastward by the projection of Cape Hatteras and where it mixes with cooler water flowing south in the Labrador Current. This mixing makes for unusually rich offshore waters. The Outer Banks area is not only renowned for its great fishing, but also for the best seabirding on the Atlantic Coast; both the numbers and variety are unmatched at any other East Coast site. Our daylong trips should see up to ten species of seabirds, and possibly other oceanic creatures such as dolphins, whales, sea turtles, or sharks.



Swainson's Warbler © Michael O'Brien

May 16, Day 1: Arrival in Wilmington. Participants should plan to arrive in Wilmington this afternoon and take a taxi to the Hampton Inn Medical Park, where a room will be reserved in your name. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 6:00 p.m. for a tour introduction, followed by dinner.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn Medical Park, Wilmington

May 17, Day 2: Wilmington Area. Wilmington, N.C. was settled as a port city in 1729 and has a long and exciting history. The area offers a wealth of interesting East Coast species. We will spend this morning birding several sites around town for such species as Anhinga, Painted Bunting, and possibly King Rail. We will then work our way north along the coast, being sure to stop at the New River Inlet at Topsail Beach which allegedly got its name from pirates who would hide in the coves awaiting the view of a top of a sail. The inlet here is attractive to gulls, terns, pelicans, and a number of shorebirds species, including the much-sought Wilson's Plover, which we will not see farther up the coast.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn, Morehead City

May 18, Day 3: Croatan National Forest and Environs.

Croatan National Forest features coastal and inland swamp habitats. Significant natural features include pocosin habitat, estuaries, and a large number of carnivorous plants. Our first stop this morning will be to search for the local and declining Red-cockaded Woodpecker. This species nests exclusively in old growth southern pine forest, particularly favoring longleaf pine. Red-cockadeds are unique among North American woodpeckers in that they usually nest in extended family clusters (often incorrectly referred to as colonies), typically using live trees for nest cavities. The same cavities may be used for many years, and tiny resin wells dug around the cavities create a sticky resin shield, which protects the nest from rat snakes. While the woodpeckers will be our primary target for the morning, we will also run across other species of interest including Red-headed Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Pine and Prothonotary warblers, Bachman's Sparrow, and hopefully Swainson's Warbler.

After lunch, we will return to the field to search for additional forest birds or other species that have eluded us. Following an early dinner, participants will have the option of returning to the hotel or joining an evening birding expedition in search of Chuck-will's-widow, Eastern Screech-Owl, and possibly other night birds.



Red-cockaded Woodpecker © Michael O'Brien

NIGHT: Hampton Inn, Morehead City

May 19, Day 4: Morehead City to Hatteras. After breakfast this morning, we will commute to Cedar Point for the 10 a.m. ferry to Ocracoke Island. En route we will visit the vast marshes of Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuge, where Seaside Sparrow, Marsh Wren, and Clapper Rail are numerous, and even Least Bittern is a possibility. Our two-and-a-half-hour ferry ride will give us an excellent opportunity to study terns, including Royal, Sandwich, Forster's, and Common. With luck, we may even see a few Bottlenose Dolphins riding the bow. Upon departing the ferry, we will be instantly charmed by the quaint oceanside village of Ocracoke, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and is beautifully nestled among stands of live oak. After lunch, we will save some time to explore Ocracoke Island, one of the barrier islands of the Outer Banks where the pirate Blackbeard is known to have once roamed. This remote and unique island, part of Cape Hatteras National Seashore, is refreshingly undeveloped for most of its length, and will give us a taste of what natural barrier islands should look like. By late afternoon, we will catch the ferry across Hatteras Inlet to Hatteras Island for check-in to our hotel and a delicious seafood dinner.

NIGHT: Breakwater Inn, Hatteras

May 20, Day 5: Pelagic Trip. We will need to rise early this morning in order to be ready for the 5:30 a.m. Brian Patteson Inc. pelagic trip, aboard the *Stormy Petrel II*. The trip will ply the Gulf Stream waters up to 40 miles offshore in search of rarely seen pelagic specialties. Brian's trips are renowned as the best on the East Coast, and ace Captain Patteson will do a great job getting us close looks at whatever birds we will happen to find. In addition to your VENT leader, Brian usually staffs the boat with one or more expert spotters, equipped with radio headsets, so that any unusual birds can be instantly called out on the P.A. system. If the trip is not weathered out (and they rarely are at this season), we are virtually assured of seeing Black-capped Petrel, Cory's and Audubon's shearwaters, Wilson's and Band-rumped storm-petrels, and Pomarine Jaegers. Most trips see Great and Sooty shearwaters, Leach's Storm-Petrel, and Bridled Tern. We will also hope for Manx Shearwater, South Polar Skua, Long-tailed Jaeger, and Arctic and Sooty terns. Last but not least, we will "hold our breath" for a really rare sighting, such as European Storm-Petrel; Trindade, Fea's, or Bermuda petrel; White-tailed or Red-billed tropicbird; or Masked Booby, all of which have been seen on these trips recently. We will eat lunch on the boat and return around 5:00 p.m.

NIGHT: Breakwater Inn, Hatteras

May 21, Day 6: Pelagic Trip. Today we'll spend a second day offshore aboard the *Stormy Petrel II*. With so many exciting possibilities in the pelagic waters off Hatteras, a second boat trip will greatly increase our chances of connecting with one of the real rarities. In the (unlikely) event of bad weather canceling one of our two boat trips, we will spend a leisurely day exploring the Cape Hatteras area, renowned as one of the better birding areas on the East Coast.

NIGHT: Breakwater Inn, Hatteras



Wilson's Storm-Petrels © Michael O'Brien

May 22, Day 7: Pea Island NWR to Norfolk. After breakfast this morning we will drive north along the Outer Banks, stopping to investigate the large impoundments at Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, on the north end of Hatteras Island. Even in early June, there should be a few lingering migrant shorebirds around, as

well as local breeders such as American Oystercatcher and Black-necked Stilt. These impoundments have attracted many rarities over the years, so a visit here at any season could always yield a surprise. We'll also visit Oregon Inlet, where a thriving colony of Least and Common terns, and Black Skimmers will keep us entertained as we look for less numerous species such as Piping Plover, Gull-billed and Sandwich terns, and perhaps a summering Lesser Black-backed Gull on the beach or a lingering Northern Gannet offshore.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn & Suites Norfolk Airport, Norfolk

May 23, Day 8: Departure for Home. Participants may make arrangements to leave Norfolk any time today.

Essential Tour Information

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 7 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: This tour is led by Kevin Burke.



Kevin Burke is originally from the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. He grew up running around in the woods and trails of Shenandoah National Park. His family spent many summers camping and hiking in the park. One of Kevin's favorite activities was jumping in the river and turning over every rock to see what was underneath. This eventually earned him the nickname "Hellgrammite Kid." This early exposure to the natural world has vaulted into a lifelong obsession with the outdoors. Kevin was introduced to birding while spending summers in Rhode Island at his grandmother's house. She would point out all the feeder birds and help him identify them. These early encounters helped foster a love for birds. An early Ornithology class at Hocking College in Ohio rekindled his love for birds. He has been birding every day since. He went on to get a Bachelor of Science in Ecotourism and Conservation Ecology from the University of Idaho. Kevin has been involved with leading

bird trips in some capacity for almost 20 years. He has led birding trips all throughout the United States, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic. His birding journeys have also taken him to some spectacular locations such as Portugal, Colombia, The Bahamas, and Canada. This is truly a lifelong obsession. He currently resides with his family in Hendersonville, North Carolina. Kevin's wife and two kids also enjoy birding. They have fun kayaking, hiking, and camping in the mountains that surround their home. One of their favorite activities is jumping on the paddle board and kayaks and leisurely floating the French Broad River near their house.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: The fee for the tour is **\$4,525** per person in double occupancy from Wilmington, North Carolina (tour ends in Norfolk, Virginia). This includes all meals from Dinner on Day.1 to Dinner on Day.7, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leader(s). It does not include airfare from your home to Wilmington and return from Norfolk, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: The single supplement for this tour is **\$740**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: You may register for this tour through the VENT website or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The initial deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person is due 210 days prior to departure (August 3, 2025). We accept MasterCard and Visa for both deposits. 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 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 (December 17, 2025).

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: If you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months before your departure date. We can easily make hotel arrangements, often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

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.

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.

<u>If participant cancels:</u>	<u>Participant’s refund will be:</u>
180 days or more before departure date	Your deposit(s) minus \$250*
179 to 151 days before departure date	No refund of the deposits, but any payments on the balance will be refunded
150 days or less before departure date	No refund available

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

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

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

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

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

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](https://www.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. **Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be held responsible for any air ticket penalties.**

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

BAGGAGE: 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: Bring lightweight, cool, well-ventilated clothing. Mosquitoes will certainly be a nuisance at some sites, so lightweight long pants and long-sleeved shirts will be preferable, and some may want to pack mosquito netting just in case. Bring a hat to provide shade from the sun, and sunglasses, especially for the pelagic trip. A lightweight rain jacket is also a good idea. For the pelagic trip, a good combination would be a lightweight base layer, a slightly warmer second layer (like a heavy shirt or thin fleece in the event of cooler conditions), and a lightweight rain jacket for protection from salt spray.

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

- **Day pack**
- **Water bottle**
- **Sunscreen**
- **Insect repellent**
- **Sunscreen**
- **Seasickness medicine for the pelagic trips:** If you are prone to motion sickness.
- **Alarm Clock**

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 & LOCAL CONDITIONS

TOUR CONDITIONS: At this time of year, we can expect high temperatures in the 80s along with very high humidity in coastal North Carolina. We will likely encounter mosquitos in some places, particularly in the forest and near saltmarshes, so proper clothing is essential (see clothing below). All walking will be in flat, easy terrain, mainly along roadsides and dirt tracks, but also some walking on sand beaches. To take advantage of prime birding activity, all mornings will start with breakfast no later than 6 am, sometimes earlier when possible. On our two pelagic trips, we need to be at the dock by 5:15 am, with breakfast on the boat (see note below about pelagic birding). We will balance our early departures with a minimum of one hour of down time before dinner each evening.

A NOTE ABOUT PELAGIC BIRDING TRIPS: This tour includes two all-day pelagic trips, departing at 5:45 a.m. and returning around 5:00 p.m. Pelagic trips can be physically demanding. Although some days may see calm seas and comfortable conditions the entire time, other days may be a bit rougher, making sturdy footing and getting around the boat more difficult. Captain Patteson will give a safety briefing at the beginning of each trip, but we would like to reiterate here that one must always use caution while moving around the boat. Our boat, the *Stormy Petrel II*, has seating along both sides and inside, as well as an open bow. In calm seas, anywhere on the boat may offer good viewing opportunities, particularly on the bow. In rougher seas, it is generally best to sit along the side where there is less motion and more protection from spray. During much of the trip we will be chumming in order to attract seabirds, and at times we may have flocks of storm-petrels and other species following in our wake. In these situations, the stern may be the best place to watch from, particularly if you are seeking rare storm-petrels. Please be aware that some birds seen on our boat trips may not stay in view for very long. While your VENT leader and the other leaders on the boat will do their best to get everyone on every bird, it is likely that some birds will not be seen by everyone. The keys to getting the most out of a pelagic trip are: A) choosing a stable and dry viewing location, and B) scanning and watching birds all day—the more you become acquainted with the common species (and become accustomed to using your binoculars at sea), the more quickly you will get on and recognize the rarer species when they are called out.

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 regarding recommendations for avoiding COVID-19.

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

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

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

Insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

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

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

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

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). You can check the CDC website at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html> (click on Travel Health).

SUGGESTED READING & 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.

Enticott, Jim and David Tipling. *Seabirds of the World: The Complete Reference*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1997.

Fussell, John. O. III. *A Birder's Guide to Coastal North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994.

Glassberg, Jeffrey. *Butterflies Through Binoculars: The East*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Harrison, Peter. *Seabirds: An Identification Guide*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983.

Harrison, Peter. *Seabirds of the World*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991.

Howell, Steve N. G. *Petrels, Albatrosses & Storm-Petrels of North America, A Photographic Guide*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2012. Recommended for those interested in a more in-depth treatment of the ID and taxonomy of tubenoses.

Howell, Steve N. G. & Brian Sullivan. *Offshore Sea Life ID Guide: East Coast*. Princeton University Press, 2015. Highly recommended. The single most useful reference for birds and other wildlife seen offshore.

Kaufman, Kenn. *A Field Guide to Advanced Birding*. Peterson Field Guide Series #39. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2011.

National Geographic. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Sixth Edition. Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society, 2011.

Olsen, Klaus Malling and Hans Larsson. *Skuas and Jaegers: A Guide to the Skuas and Jaegers of the World*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997.

Newcomb, Lawrence. *Newcomb's Wildflower Guide*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1989.

Sibley, David S. *The Sibley Guide to Birds, Second Edition*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014.

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 July 10, 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.

11.03.2025 – CD

11.04.2025 - DE