



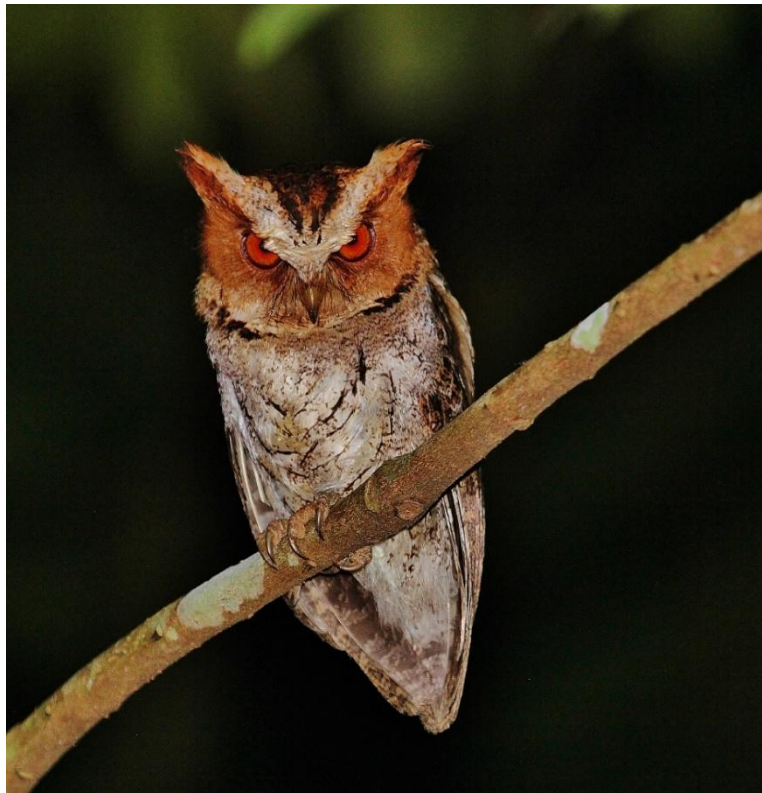
VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

## PHILIPPINES HIGHLIGHTS

MARCH 1 - 19, 2026

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The Negros Scops-Owl,  
one of many beautiful Philippine endemic night birds © Dion

***The geographic location and geological history of this amazing country has conspired to create a suite of fascinating endemic species—birds, mammals, reptiles and plants. Wedged between China, Japan, Malaysia and Indonesia and consisting of over 7,000 islands, successive invasions from different biogeographic zones and a complex geography in the Philippines have led to an adaptive radiation of a myriad of species. Many species in the Philippines have been subject to taxonomic review in recent years with a huge amount of splitting taking place. Of the almost 600 bird species in the islands, an extraordinary 290 or more species are endemic or very close to it. Putting it simply, with names such as Scale-feathered Malkoha, Chocolate Boobook, Visayan Hornbill and Palawan Peacock-Pheasant, the birds of the Philippines are without doubt some of the most exciting in the world!***



***Birding near Manila gives us an excellent introduction to the birds of Luzon. We will explore five major sites—Mount Makiling, Canareem Lakes, La Mesa Ecopark, Infanta, and Subic Bay—which are home to some 60 endemics. Philippine Duck, Spotted Buttonquail, Philippine Hawk-Eagle, Philippine Serpent-Eagle, Philippine Falconet, Plain Bush-hen, Philippine Swampphen, Luzon Bleeding-Heart, White-eared Brown-dove, Black-chinned Fruit-Dove, Philippine Green-Pigeon, Guaiabero, Philippine Hanging-Parrot, Philippine Hawk-Cuckoo, Scale-feathered Malkoha, Red-crested Malkoha, Rufous Coucal, Philippine Coucal, Philippine Scops-Owl, Luzon Boobook, Chocolate Boobook, Luzon Hornbill, Rufous Hornbill, Philippine Trogon, Spotted Kingfisher, Indigo-banded Kingfisher, Brown-breasted Kingfisher, Northern Sooty Woodpecker, Luzon Flameback, Philippine Pygmy-Woodpecker, Whiskered Pitta, Philippine Fairy-bluebird, Balicassiao, Blackish Cuckoo-shrike, Elegant Tit, Sulphur-billed Nuthatch, Stripe-sided Rhabdornis, Long-billed Rhabdornis, White-browed Shama, Ashy Thrush, Gray-backed and Green-backed tailorbirds, Lemon-throated Leaf-Warbler, Yellow-bellied Whistler, Coletto, Flaming and Handsome sunbirds, and Buzzing, Olive-backed, Pygmy and Bicolored flowerpeckers can all be found here.***

***We will travel to the beautiful island of Palawan, which forms a bridge between the main Philippine islands and Borneo. Palawan is home to some 20 or more endemics, depending on your taxonomy and a bunch of other more widely distributed birds. This includes the stunning Palawan Peacock-Pheasant; Blue-naped Parrot; Blue-headed Racquet-tail; Palawan Hornbill; Great Slaty Woodpecker; Spot-throated Flameback; Red-headed Flameback; Western Hooded and Philippine pittas; Yellow-throated Leafbird; Ashy-fronted, Sulphur-bellied and Gray-throated bulbuls; Palawan Tit; Ashy-headed and Palawan babblers; Falcated Ground-Babbler; White-vented Shama; Palawan Blue-Flycatcher; Blue Paradise-Flycatcher; Lovely Sunbird; and Palawan Flowerpecker. In the evening, we will search for the Palawan Scops-Owl and the Palawan Frogmouth.***

***We will also visit two Visayan islands: Bohol and Negros, each offering unique bird species in accessible forests with comfortable hotels. Bohol offers quite a lot of species although many are at low density; possibilities include Samar Hornbill, Black-faced Coucal, both Northern Silvery and Rufous-lored kingfisher, the beautiful Philippine Trogon, sought after Azure-breasted Pitta, and rare Visayan Wattled Broadbill. Another beautiful island that offers excellent birding is Negros, home to the delightful Twin Lakes National Park and Gawahon Eco-park, which protects what precious little remains of once extensive forests. Exploring these forests will give us the chance for another suite of special endemics. Negros Scops-Owl, Visayan Hornbill, Southern Indigo-banded Kingfisher, White-winged Cuckoo-shrike, Visayan Bulbul, Visayan Drongo, Visayan Fantail, Flame-templed Babbler, Negros Jungle-Flycatcher, Black-belted Flowerpecker, Maroon-naped and Magnificent sunbird are possible amidst a mix of more widespread species like Sulphur-billed Nuthatch, Elegant Tit, Mangrove Blue Flycatcher and White-vented Whistler.***

***This is a wonderful tour of a remarkable country with an amazing array of endemic birds. The pace is relatively relaxed; although there are a couple of long drives and obligatory early starts, we will enjoy very pleasant accommodation close to well-protected forests and delicious meals. Best of all, the birding is simply wonderful!***

***Please note that the order of the itinerary may be slightly rearranged to accommodate for revised internal flight schedules, to avoid conflicting with other groups, or due to other unforeseen factors.***



**A male Palawan Peacock-Pheasant © Dion Hobcroft**

**March 1-2, Days 1-2: Departure from Home; Arrival in Manila.** Most flights connecting from North America will arrive at Manila's *Ninoy Aquino International Airport* (airport code MNL) one or two days following your departure due to flight time and crossing the International Date Line. You will be met upon arrival by a representative of our ground agent and escorted to our hotel. We recommend flying in a day early due to potential misconnects and weather-related flight delays. **The group will assemble at 7:00 p.m. on the evening of March 2.**

NIGHT (March 1): In transit, overnight flight

NIGHT (March 2): TBA

**March 3, Day 3: Drive to Canarem Lake; Afternoon Subic Bay.** We'll depart early this morning for Canarem Lake, where we will spend three to four hours. This area is particularly good for the rare endemic Philippine Duck and Philippine Swamphen. There is also a large variety of more widespread Asian wetland and woodland birds like Little Grebe; Wandering Whistling-Duck; Purple Heron; Little, Great, Cattle and Medium egrets; Cinnamon, Yellow and Black bitterns; Eurasian Moorhen; White-browed Crake; Barred Rail; White-breasted Waterhen; Eastern Marsh-Harrier; Black-winged Stilt; possibly Pheasant-tailed Jacana; Kentish and Little Ringed plovers; Common and Wood sandpiper; Long-toed Stint; Oriental Pratincole; Whiskered Tern; Red Collared-Dove; Zebra Dove; Asian Koel; Lesser Coucal; Ameline Swiftlet; Common Kingfisher; Collared Kingfisher; Blue-tailed Bee-eater; Golden-bellied Gerygone; Striated Grassbird; Clamorous Reed-Warbler; Pied Bushchat; and possibly wintering Middendorf's Grasshopper-Warbler or White-shouldered Starling. There are still often a few wintering ducks from north Asia with Garganey being quite possible, with smaller numbers of Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Shoveler and Northern Pintail. Occasionally there are some rarer visitors.

Around 11:00 a.m., we'll proceed to Subic Bay. Subic Bay is an American naval base that was abandoned after Mount Pinatubo erupted in 1991 and covered the base with volcanic ash. We will spend the afternoon birding in the well-protected forests adjacent to the old Subic Naval Magazine. Here we can expect to see a variety of endemics or near endemics such as White-eared Brown-dove, Philippine Green-Pigeon, Guaiabero, Philippine Hanging-Parrot, Blue-naped Parrot, Green Racquet-tail, Red-crested Malkoha,



Rufous Coucal, Philippine Coucal, Luzon Hornbill, Rufous-crowned Bee-eater, Brown-breasted Kingfisher, Luzon Flameback, Northern Sooty Woodpecker, Philippine Pygmy Woodpecker, Blackish Cuckooshrike, Philippine Bulbul, Philippine Pied-Fantail, Coletto, White-browed Shama, Green-backed Tailorbird and Philippine Jungle Crow. More widespread species that occur at Subic include Red Junglefowl, Green Imperial-Pigeon, Dollarbird, Whiskered Treeswift, Coppersmith Barbet, White-bellied Woodpecker, White-breasted Woodswallow, Ashy Minivet, Bar-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Yellow-vented Bulbul, Barn and Pacific swallows, Arctic Warbler, Gray-streaked Flycatcher and Blue Rock-Thrush. At night we can search for Great Eared-Nightjar, Chocolate Boobook, Luzon Boobook and Philippine Scops-Owl. There is an enormous roost of two species of giant flying-foxes that sometimes attract the attention of White-bellied Sea-Eagles. Other possible raptors include the scarce Philippine Hawk-Eagle, widespread Brahminy Kite, migrant Chinese Goshawk and Gray-faced Buzzard, and the diminutive endemic Philippine Falconet.

NIGHT: Kamana Sanctuary, Subic

**March 4, Day 4: Birding at Subic Bay.** We will spend the day birding in Subic's forests along the trail to Hill 394 and the Nabasan Beach road searching for specialty birds. We will be planning a break in the middle of the day when bird activity largely ceases. Where possible, we will always schedule a siesta during the heat of the day on this tour.

NIGHT: Kamana Sanctuary, Subic

**March 5, Day 5: Morning Birding in Subic; Afternoon Return to Manila.** After a final morning's birding in Subic, we will head back towards Manila. On the way we will make a stop at some wetlands that act as a back-up site for the now rare Philippine Swampphen if we have not seen this species at Canareme Lakes.

NIGHT: TBA, Manila

**March 6, Day 6: Flight to Palawan; Birding at St. Paul's National Park.** This morning, we will catch a flight to Puerto Princesa on the island of Palawan. We will go to a coastal mangrove area where there is an excellent restaurant for lunch. It is a good site for the Copper-throated Sunbird, Common Iora and a variety of smaller forest birds including some chance for Pale Spiderhunter. After lunch we will settle into our excellent hotel for a three-night stay. The hotel is located on the coast and nearby mangroves and mudflats provide habitat for Pink-necked Green-Pigeon, Stork-billed Kingfisher, a variety of shorebirds, the occasional Chinese Egret and we have a good chance to see the critically endangered Philippine Cockatoo in this area. Other species, not endemic, that are possible include Crested Serpent-Eagle, Changeable Hawk-Eagle, Rufous-bellied Eagle, Green Imperial-Pigeon, Chestnut-breasted Malkoha, Plaintive Cuckoo, Brown-backed Needletail, Great Slaty Woodpecker, Western Hooded Pitta, Fiery Minivet and Ventriloquial Oriole. In the evening, if people wish, we will search for Spotted Wood-Owl, Palawan Scops-Owl and the Palawan Frogmouth.

NIGHT: Princesa Garden Resort, Puerto Princesa

**March 7-8, Day 7-8: Napsan Road.** We will have two full days to explore the extensively forested Napsan Road. We will spend one morning in a well-constructed photographers hide where if we are very quiet, we have an excellent chance of seeing the extremely shy Palawan Peacock-Pheasant. Falcated Wren-Babbler is another regular visitor, and we can have point blank views of Asian Emerald-Dove, Ashy-headed Babbler, White-vented Shama, Palawan Blue-Flycatcher, Sulphur-bellied and Gray-throated bulbuls whilst Northern Palawan Squirrel and Palawan Treeshrew are both regular visitors. The overall area is rich in birds and there is a good chance of seeing some of the following birds: Blue-naped Parrot; Blue-headed Racquet-tail; Red-headed and Spot-throated flamebacks; Ruddy Kingfisher; Palawan Hornbill; Philippine Pitta;

Yellow-throated Leafbird; Palawan Tit; Blue Paradise-Flycatcher; Common Hill Myna; Lovely Sunbird; and Palawan Flowerpecker. Depending on how the endemics are being observed we may opt to visit nearby rice fields and forest patches where we will search for Rufous Night-Heron, Swinhoe's Snipe and Watercock. If people wish, it is possible to search for nocturnal birds after dinner and maybe a few mammals.

NIGHTS: Princesa Garden Resort, Puerto Princesa

**March 9, Day 9: Morning at Irawan; Afternoon Flight to Manila.** This morning, we will visit Irawan and other nearby forests. Our target birds here include the skulking Palawan Babbler and the elusive Palawan Flycatcher. Other species we have encountered here include Square-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo, Greater Coucal, Rufous-backed Dwarf-Kingfisher, Blue-eared Kingfisher, both pittas, Palawan Drongo, Black-naped Monarch, Palawan Crow, Black-headed Bulbul, Rufous-tailed Tailorbird and the Asian Glossy Starling. We'll enjoy a tasty lunch before catching our late afternoon flight back to Manila.

NIGHT: TBA

**March 10, Day 10: Infanta via La Mesa.** We will make the necessary early departure to visit the La Mesa Ecopark. This site has proven reliable in recent years to see the elusive Ashy Thrush. It is also quite good for the often-shy Gray-backed Tailorbird, the occasional wintering Brown-headed Thrush, Philippine Magpie-Robin, Mangrove Blue Flycatcher, Lowland White-eye and if we are in luck, perhaps a Philippine Nightjar, Philippine Pitta or Indigo-banded Kingfisher. After this we will head to Infanta and if time permits make some stops to look for some locally scarce species like Chirruping Nightjar. In the afternoon we will commence our birding in Infanta.

NIGHT: LA View Hotel, Infanta

**March 11, Day 11: Infanta to Mount Makiling.** Located in the Southern Sierra Madre Mountains, Infanta gives access to some decent patches of montane rainforest and overlooks of well forested valleys. It can be slow birding here but a long list of rarely seen endemics makes it a popular location for local birders and international birders are following hot on their heels. Here we will be searching for Philippine Hawk-Eagle, Purple Needletail, Rufous Hornbill, Cream-bellied and Flame-breasted fruit-doves, Luzon Scops-Owl, Whiskered Pitta (rare), Citrine Canary-Flycatcher, Blue-headed Fantail, Elegant Tit, Sulphur-billed Nuthatch, Bicol Ground-Warbler (rare), Philippine Fairy-bluebird, Long-billed Rhabdornis (rare), Yellowish White-eye, Calabarzon Babbler, Olive-backed, Bicolored and Orange-bellied flowerpeckers and Flaming Sunbird. Fruiting trees are the key to success so we will make enquiries with local land holders who often give us access to fruiting trees in the forest adjoining their backyards. With time and patience, we hope to encounter some of these rare birds.

In the afternoon we will head to Mount Makiling where will explore the lower slopes of the mountain. This will include a visit to the Botanic Gardens where there are often some flowering and fruiting trees. Here we are looking for Red-keeled and Pygmy flowerpeckers, Indigo-banded Kingfisher, Scale-feathered Malkoha and Philippine Falconet. We can also visit the Dairy Husbandry section of the University of the Philippines campus for hopefully the endemic Spotted Buttonquail. Other birds we hope to see include Buff-banded Rail, Plain Bush-hen, Philippine Serpent-Eagle, White-eared Brown-dove, Black-chinned Fruit-Dove, Philippine Cuckoo-Dove, Guaiabero, Philippine Hawk-Cuckoo, Sunda Brush Cuckoo, Luzon Hornbill, Red-crested Malkoha, Asian Palm Swift, House Swift, Pygmy Swiftlet, Philippine Pygmy Woodpecker, Eastern Red-rumped Swallow, Yellow-wattled Bulbul, Balicassiao, Elegant Tit, Sulphur-billed Nuthatch, Stripesided Rhabdornis, White-browed Shama, Blue-headed Fantail, Yellow-bellied Whistler, Coleto, Flaming

and Handsome sunbirds, and Buzzing and Striped flowerpeckers. We can search at night for Luzon Hawk-Owl, Philippine Scops-Owl and Philippine Nightjar.

NIGHT: SEARCA Hotel, Los Banos

**March 12, Day 12: Mount Makiling.** We have a full morning of birding the higher slopes at about 1,500 feet above sea-level. We will take a jeepney from the bottom up to our start-off point and hike along forest trails until the forest becomes inactive as the day warms up. There are quite a few high-quality birds on this trail but they can be shy. With patience we hope to find Philippine Trogon, Spotted Kingfisher and with really good luck, the enigmatic Luzon Bleeding-heart. In the afternoon we will go wherever we think will most likely provide the best chance of new birds.

NIGHT: SEARCA Hotel, Los Banos

**March 13, Day 13: Morning at Mount Makiling; afternoon fly to Bacolod, Negros.** A final morning at Mount Makiling will give us a chance to search for any of the forest birds we have not been able to see. In the afternoon we will return to Manila and take a flight to Bacolod in Negros to commence our birding in the Visayan islands where a whole new bunch of birds are anticipated.

NIGHT: TBA, Bacolod



A beautiful male Spotted Kingfisher at Mount Makiling © Dion Hobcroft

**March 14, Day 14: Bacolod to Gawahon Eco-park. Afternoon drive to Dumaguete.** Our morning destination is Gawahon Ecopark. This forest site will give us the chance to look for several rare endemics—the elusive Southern Indigo-banded Kingfisher, Negros Jungle-Flycatcher, Flame-templed Babbler and if time permits Visayan Shama. They are all low density, inconspicuous species so hopefully we will have some success. In between the rarer species, we hope to see White-vented Whistler, Visayan Tailorbird, Visayan Bulbul, Lemon-throated Leaf-warbler, Visayan Fantail, Black-belted Flowerpecker and Magnificent Sunbird. Mention should be made of the distinctive white-bellied subspecies *mirabilis* of Balicassiao here—a good chance for a split! In the afternoon we will make the four-hour drive to the south-east to the town of Dumaguete.

NIGHT: TBA-Dumaguete

**March 15, Day 15: Twin Lakes National Park.** We will spend the better part of the day at the Twin Lakes National Park, a well-protected site. While being paddled around the lovely volcanic lake, we will have a chance to see several more special birds of this island including the beautiful but scarce Visayan Hornbill. Other specific endemics at this site include Maroon-naped Sunbird, White-winged Cuckooshrike, Visayan Cuckooshrike and the previously mentioned Visayan Tailorbird, Visayan Bulbul, Visayan Fantail and Black-belted Flowerpecker. More widespread species include Sulphur-billed Nuthatch, Elegant Tit, Lemon-throated Leaf-Warbler, White-vented Whistler and Magnificent Sunbird. It is also possible to locate with some luck the Yellow-breasted Fruit-Dove, Amethyst Brown-Dove (a rare endemic subspecies here split

by some taxonomies), Spotted Kingfisher, Blue-crowned Racquet-tail, Philippine Honey-buzzard and the now rare Pink-bellied Imperial-Pigeon. At night, if people wish, we will try and track down the very attractive Negros Scops-Owl. The national park with its lakes and forest is particularly photogenic. In the late afternoon, after a siesta we can venture out to see a small series of freshwater ponds that often hold a good variety of shorebirds and waterbirds. Previous visits have produced Barred Buttonquail, Greater and Siberian sand-plovers and Java Sparrow.

NIGHT: TBA, Dumaguete

**March 16, Day 16: Ferry to Bohol; Rajah Sikatuna National Park.** In the morning, we will catch a fast ferry to Tagbilaran, the main city in Bohol. We will have an air-conditioned, first-class seating arrangement and seas are typically flat so it is comfortable and efficient. The trip typically takes about two hours, and we do not see much in the way of animal activity except the occasional tern or dolphin. After lunch we will transfer to our comfortable hotel where we have a chance to see both Northern Silvery Kingfisher, Pink-necked Green-Pigeon and occasionally Philippine Duck. We will spend the afternoon exploring Rajah Sikatuna National Park. The park offers chances to see a good cross-section of Philippine endemics, and we hope to see Black-faced Coucal, Philippine Drongo-Cuckoo, Samar Hornbill, Rufous-lored Kingfisher, Philippine Trogon, Buff-spotted Flameback, Azure-breasted Pitta, Visayan Wattled Broadbill (rare), Visayan Blue Fantail, Philippine Fairy-bluebird, Yellow-breasted Tailorbird, Rufous-fronted Tailorbird (both tailorbirds are remarkably shy), Philippine Leaf-Warbler, Brown Tit-Babbler, Philippine Jungle-Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Whistler and Metallic-winged Sunbird. Night birds include Everett's Scops-Owl, Luzon Boobook and Philippine Frogmouth. Please note that some trails in the forest interior can be rocky and slippery if it has been raining. We can offer forest edge birding if people do not feel comfortable birding in the forest interior. The great majority of sites we visit here are straight-forward for walking but the forest interior is one exception. It does offer the chance for some special birds.

NIGHT: Loboc River Resort, Loboc

**March 17, Day 17: Bohol-Rajah Sikatuna National Park.** We will have a whole day to track down all of the interesting birds in Bohol. We will schedule a visit to the Corella Tarsier Centre. Here we are pretty much guaranteed to see the amazing Philippine Tarsier at their day-roost in some fenced-off protected forest.

NIGHT: Loboc River Resort, Loboc

**March 18, Day 18: Morning Bohol; Afternoon Fly to Manila.** A final morning of birding will be spent searching for whatever we think gives us the best chance to add to our trip list. After lunch we will retrace our steps and fly to Manila.

NIGHT: TBA, Manila

**March 19, Day 19: Departure for Home.** Transfers to the airport will be provided for departures any time today.



## **Essential Tour Information**

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour will be limited to 8 participants. However, VENT reserves the right to increase the tour limit by one in order to accommodate a couple when only one space is available.

**TOUR LEADER:** Dion Hobcroft



**TOUR LEADER: Dion Hobcroft** has been working for VENT since 2001. He has led many tours (more than 200) to Australia, New Guinea, New Zealand, Bhutan, Indonesia, India, China, Southwest Pacific, Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, Malawi, Myanmar, Japan, Russia, Alaska, Tanzania, Uganda, Madagascar, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and the Antarctic. In 2007, 2013–2019, and 2022–2025 alone, Dion showed more than 2,000 species of birds to VENT clients every calendar year. His informative, relaxed, and educational nature, combined with sharp eyes and ears, has established Dion as a favorite of many tour participants. His fieldwork for over 40 years on birds and other terrestrial vertebrates has allowed him to amass an extraordinary knowledge of the biodiversity in the Asia-Pacific region. Born in Tasmania and based in Sydney, Dion has traveled widely throughout Australasia, listing over 1,200 species, placing him in the top echelons of the region's birders. He is very tuned-in to the songs of bird species in the Asia-Pacific region and specializes in rare and elusive species. He is delighted to show these skulking rarities to his travel companions. Dion has published several papers on field ornithology, served on national and state rare bird committees, managed *Birdline NSW*, run introduction to ornithology courses for Sydney University, and, before he traveled so continuously, was a popular speaker with various natural history societies. Dion has worked for many research and government agencies ranging from the Antarctic Division, Department of Environment NSW, Agriculture Protection WA, Taronga Zoo, Australian Museum, and the Queensland Department of Primary Industry. Dion lives in Sydney with his wife, Lise, and two grown-up children, Grace (age 24) and Daniel (age 20).

### **TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION**

**TOUR FEE:** The fee for this tour is \$9,695 in double occupancy from Manila. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 19. The tour includes lodging as stated in the itinerary; all ground, air, and water transportation during the tours; and guide services provided by the tour leader. These tour fees do not include airfare from your home to Manila and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, telephone calls, laundry or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tours do not have sufficient registration, a small party supplement may have to be charged.

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT:** The single supplement for this tour is \$1,450. 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 deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** 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 (October 2, 2025) 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.

**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.

**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 **\$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 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 \$500\*

No refund of the deposits, 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 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 MedjetAssist

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 INFORMATION:** Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international.\* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air

arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. **Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be held responsible for any air ticket penalties.**

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

**BAGGAGE:** When traveling within the Philippines, officially one piece of checked luggage weighing no more than 44 pounds is allowed free of charge. In addition, you are allowed one piece of carry-on luggage and whatever you carry over your arm or in your hands (i.e. coat, book, purse, umbrella etc.).

The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. Please consult your airline to find out specific weight restrictions. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security we recommend that you check the website of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for the most updated information: <http://www.tsa.gov/>.

## **TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:**

**PASSPORTS:** A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure is required for United States and Canadian citizens to enter the Philippines. Canadian and U.S. citizens are not required to have a visa for stays under 30 days. Citizens of other countries should check with your local consulate/embassy for instructions. International passengers must follow the arrival procedures of their PH port of entry mandated by PAL and the Philippine Government.

## **WHAT TO BRING**

**CLOTHING:** Bring light-weight and predominantly cotton field clothing. Bright colors are best avoided (remember – browns, tans and greens are less likely to startle birds and mammals). Please do not wear military style camouflage clothing. Bring a warm sweater; a hat with a good brim to keep the sun off; a waterproof poncho, jacket or the like; a small collapsible umbrella is essential; and comfortable boots with rugged soles—even flat trails can become slippery when wet. You should also have relatively thick socks to cushion your feet during long walks.

Laundry service will be available at most of the hotels where we stay in the Philippines.

**EQUIPMENT:** Please bring along your binoculars. Your tour leader will be carrying a spotting scope if circumstances provide that we might need it. You should bring all the camera equipment that you will need, as there will be photographic opportunities.

A small day pack (either waterproofed or with a strong plastic bag inside) is useful for carrying excess clothing, camera equipment, toiletries, food, and water. However, we will have regular access to our vehicle, which will be attended by a driver. Water bottles are important if you like to carry a regular supply of water.



Other useful items include:

- **Handy wipes and paper tissues:** All participants should carry sufficient for their personal needs for the entire tour.
- **Spare glasses or contact lenses.**
- **A large handkerchief:** for use in bathrooms, as paper towels are often not provided.
- **Umbrella:** the collapsible type is easy to carry and useful both against rain and sun.
- **Snacks:** It is advisable to bring granola-type bars, dried fruit or other snacks. Convenience stores are not common, but they stock many snacks and other products that you will be familiar with (and some not so familiar).
- **Flashlight or headlamp:** for night walking or blackouts

## **COUNTRY INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS**

**CLIMATE:** The Philippines is hot and humid year-round. The weather pattern across the archipelago is complex, but can be roughly divided into the dry season (September to May) and the wet season (June to September). There is little seasonal variation in most places with average highs and lows of around 31°C (87°F) and 24°C (76°F) respectively. Between December and May, slightly cooler and drier conditions prevail.

**OFFICIAL CURRENCY:** The currency in the Philippines is the Peso (PhP), divided into 100 Centavos. Participants are advised to carry sufficient funds in low denomination US dollars cash, which can be very useful in an emergency. Automatic teller machines are widely available.

**ELECTRICITY:** The Philippines uses 220 volts, 60 Hz, AC. European and Japanese style plugs are used.

**INTERNET ACCESS:** Most of the hotels we will visit will have internet access.

**LANGUAGE:** Tagalog and English are the official national languages.

**TIME:** The Philippines is 15 hours ahead of Eastern Standard 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.

**SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT LEECHES:** Leeches can at times be a nuisance, most notably at Mount Makiling if there has been recent rain. While spraying your socks and trousers with bug-juice is some help, a pair of leech-socks is much more effective. A website that sells anti-leech socks is [Mosquito Hammock](#). They are based in Philadelphia.

**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).

## **FURTHER 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](http://www.amazon.com) which has a wide selection; [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com) and [www.nhbs.com](http://www.nhbs.com) which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles. We also recommend Andrew Isles books for the Asia-Pacific region at <http://www.andrewisles.com> for difficult to find and out of print books for Australia.

This list includes some basic field guides and reference volumes of use to the visitor. A great deal has been written about all aspects of Australia's natural history. You will find a variety of selections in any library. Browse around a little and you will discover many resources not listed here.

**\*Birds of the Philippines** by Desmond Allen Lynx and Birdlife International Field Guides, Lynx Edicions, Barcelona 2020-This is by far the best bird book to have on this tour!

**\* A Guide to the Birds of the Philippines** by Robert Kennedy, Pedro C. Gonzales, Edward Dickinson, Hector Miranda and T Fisher. 2000. Oxford University Press – this is the second best bird field guide for the area although unfortunately now quite out of date regarding the recent splitting of many bird species.

**\*A Naturalists Guide to the Birds of the Philippines** by Maia Tanedo, Robert Hutchinson, Adrian and Trinket Constantino. 2015. John Beaufoy publishing ([www.johnbeaufoy.com](http://www.johnbeaufoy.com)) Excellent photographs of many (but not all) bird species in the Philippines. Concise and informative sections on aspects of Philippine ornithology and a handy checklist in the back section. A very useful publication.

\* Recommended to bring on tour.

## **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 15, 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.

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