



SOUTH AFRICA: THE SOUTHWESTERN CAPE & KRUGER

SEPTEMBER 19–OCTOBER 4, 2024

WAKKERSTROOM EXTENSION

OCTOBER 3–7, 2024

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South Africa is so diverse it has been called “a world in one country.” From the rugged coastline of the Cape through to the subtropical woodlands of the Greater Kruger Conservancy and the temperate grasslands of the interior, the terrain and wildlife are remarkably varied, making it a paradise for the visiting naturalist. There is so much to see here that one trip cannot possibly cover it all, so instead we focus on three regions, each representing a different aspect of the very best of South Africa.

Our first week will be spent in the spectacular southwestern Cape, with its near-perfect Mediterranean climate and world-renowned flora. Endemism is the key word here, and because of its complex geography and long isolation, this region is home to a truly amazing number of birds, plants and animals that are found nowhere else. Unique environments that we visit include the twisted and folded mountains that plunge to the sea, protected patches of native prairie and fynbos scrub (literally “fine bush”), and the interior semi-deserts of the Karoo.



Cape Sugarbird © Geoff Lockwood

In them we will seek a host of special birds, ranging from African Penguin, Cape Sugarbirds, sunbirds, cormorants and bustards through a plethora of larks, flycatchers and warblers to sought-after oddities like the elusive Cape Rockjumper. An added bonus is a pelagic trip offshore into the rich Benguela Current, its waters literally teeming with albatrosses, petrels and other oceanic birds. A second boat trip into the shallow waters of Walker Bay at Hermanus offers a chance to see Southern Right Whales which annually mate and calve in the bay.

Our visit is timed for the southern spring, as a new breeding season begins and the birds are at their most active. If we are lucky, and the winter rains have been good, this is also the best time of year to catch the famed Cape flora in full bloom. Many consider this to be the most spectacular wildflower display in the world.

From the Cape we will fly to the opposite side of the country, to the Greater Kruger Conservancy. This huge area has long been famous as one of the great game parks of the world and offers a very exciting and complete safari experience. It is home to all of “The Big Five,” including one of the largest populations of elephants in the world, plus a long list of other mammals including African Wild Dog, Cheetah and Greater Kudu. Birds are abundant and include many classic African species such as Ostrich, vultures, Martial and other eagles, Gray Go-away-bird, Green Wood-Hoopoe, hornbills, and Lilac-breasted Roller, plus a wide variety of smaller ones. Among the many habitats that we will explore are open broadleaf woodland and grassy savanna, tall riverine forest, and thick bush of varying types. All of them have their specialties and by the end of our stay here we will have seen an incredible variety of wildlife. Based at the exclusive and well-appointed Inyati Game Lodge, away from the crowds, our game drives are sure to be action-packed and incredibly productive!



The final swing of our South Africa tour is an optional extension to the temperate grasslands of the Highveld of the interior plateau, to the tiny community of Wakkerstroom. Like our Great Plains, much of this region has been converted to agriculture and the native grasslands are greatly-diminished but the area is home to a surprising number endemic bird species, many of whom are threatened. Here we will seek the unique Southern Bald Ibis, elegant Blue Crane, Blue and Denham’s bustards, Ground Woodpecker and several very local, range-restricted and endangered larks, chats and pipits. This is also our best chance for such African classics as Gray Crowned-Crane, Secretary-bird and Malachite Kingfisher. Marshes and ponds attract a wide variety of waterfowl and other waterbirds at this season, while patches of native bush and rocky ridges add to the region’s avian diversity.

An added bonus to a visit to South Africa is the great infrastructure for tourism. This agricultural and industrial giant is the only truly modern country on the continent, and the accommodations, food and other facilities are excellent, while health problems are almost non-existent. Expert local leadership, an extensive system of parks and reserves, and a wealth of printed materials on the birds and other aspects of natural history add to the pleasure of visiting this very unique part of the continent. This tour promises some of the very best of South Africa, in a productive, yet reasonably paced, itinerary.



Male Leopard © Geoff Lockwood

September 19-20, Days 1-2: Travel to Cape Town. Participants have the option of arriving in Cape Town at any time on September 20 and will be met and provided with a transfer to our hotel. Cape Town is an especially attractive city and our lovely historic hotel is centrally located in a beautiful wooded suburb. Separated from the rest of the continent by a ring of mountains, the southwestern Cape Province is a world apart. Characterized by a pleasant Mediterranean climate (cool, wet winters and warm, dry summers), this region is scenically beautiful, home to many unique and distinctive birds, and has one of the most diverse floras in the world (spectacular when in bloom, as many plants should be at this season).

Direct overnight flights to Johannesburg from Washington Dulles, New York Kennedy and Atlanta depart on September 19 and will enable participants to connect to a September 20 flight to Cape Town. For those wishing to avoid connecting through Johannesburg, non-stop overnight flights to Cape Town are available from Amsterdam, London and Frankfurt. Please contact Victor Emanuel Travel for the latest schedules and information. All flights and times are subject to change.

If you wish to rest up before the tour or spend time visiting the city you should consider arriving prior to the tour and spending the night of September 19 in Cape Town. The VENT office will be happy to assist with any additional lodging arrangements. The peaceful grounds of our beautiful hotel here harbor many typical Cape birds.

NIGHT (September 20): Alphen Boutique Hotel, Constantia, Cape Town



Cape Grassbird © Geoff Lockwood

September 21, Day 3: Kirstenbosch & Cape Point. Our exploration of the Cape Peninsula and its unique environments begins in earnest today, with our first stop at the world-renowned Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden. There couldn't be a more pleasant introduction to the land birds of the region, perhaps including Cape Francolin, Cape Batis, Southern Boubou, Cape Bulbul, Sombre Greenbul, Cape White-eye, Fiscal Flycatcher, Cape Robin-Chat, Olive Thrush, Cape Wagtail, and Cape Canary, among others. By now you should be getting the idea that, from the number of species named "Cape," there are many specialties in this region! We should also find the gardens in full bloom, likely attracting colorful sunbirds like the Orange-breasted, Malachite and Southern Double-collared, and, if we are lucky, we will find our first Cape Sugarbirds feeding amidst the spectacular Protea collection.

Then we will continue on to the Cape of Good Hope unit of Table Mountain National Park for the afternoon. In this vast tract of windswept fynbos and grassland, birds are scarce, but species like the Jackal Buzzard, Rock Kestrel, White-necked Raven, Cape Grassbird, Red-headed Cisticola, Karoo Prinia, Red-winged Starling, Cape Sugarbird, Orange-breasted Sunbird, Yellow Bishop, Cape Bunting and Cape Siskin (an irregular wanderer) may be found. Of greater interest is the spectacular rocky coastline and cliffs, home to Cape Gannet, Cape and Crowned cormorants (endemic to these waters), African (Black) Oystercatcher, Hartlaub's Gull, and perhaps roosting terns. The park even protects a few mammals, including the beautiful Bontebok, an antelope that was almost reduced to extinction, and comical, but dangerous Chacma Baboons.

NIGHT: Alphen Boutique Hotel, Constantia, Cape Town

September 22, Day 4: Pelagic Trip.

Depending upon weather and sea conditions, today we will set out on a pelagic trip from the west coast of the Cape. Here the cold Benguela current sweeps northward, causing strong up-wellings of nutrient-rich waters that support an abundance of marine life. The pelagic birding here is simply spectacular, and it is not unusual to see 20 or more species offshore in a day. The numbers can be incredible and among the commoner species are Black-browed and White-capped (Shy) albatrosses, Cape and White-chinned petrels, Sooty Shearwater, Cape Gannet and Kelp Gull.



White-capped (Shy) Albatross © Geoff Lockwood

Less numerous, but still fairly regular are Yellow-nosed Albatross, Northern and Southern giant-petrels, Soft-plumaged Petrel, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Subantarctic Skua and Great Crested Tern, while there is always the possibility of one of the many rarer species that have been recorded in these waters—perhaps even the impressive Wandering

Albatross. Inshore waters are frequented by Jackass (African) Penguins, cormorants and terns. There is also an excellent chance of encountering cetaceans, particularly Southern Right-Whales and various species of dolphins.

Please note: Wet-weather gear is recommended for this boat trip. Also, these seas can be rough and if you are prone to seasickness, please come prepared with the necessary medication. If sea conditions are unfavorable for going out, we will instead bird the many productive watery habitats in the greater Cape Town area, gaining a great introduction to a wide array of African water-associated birds.

NIGHT: Alphen Boutique Hotel, Constantia, Cape Town

September 23, Day 5: Cape Town to Langebaan. With a prompt start we will bird our way up the western coast of the Cape region today. Much of the coastal plain has been converted to wheat farming, the vast fields supporting Spur-winged Goose, Large-billed Lark, Southern Anteater-Chat, Sicklewing Chat and Capped Wheatear, but little else. In contrast, the remnant patches of native grassland and bush that survive are alive with birds at this time of year, as a new breeding season begins. Many of them will be singing, while others will already be nesting. Normally obscure “little brown jobs” like the various larks and cisticolas are giving their delightful flight displays, while patches of coastal fynbos ring with the songs of birds like the Bokmakierie (a colorful bush-shrike), Gray Tit, Karoo Prinia, Rufous-vented Warbler, Karoo Scrub-Robin, Cape Sparrow and Yellow Canary. Black Harriers, a declining species, hunt over the fields, while South African Shelducks and Cape Shovelers may be seen at marshy ponds en route. If the winter rains have been good, the diversity of wildflowers is spectacular. By late afternoon we will undoubtedly be ready to settle into our comfortable hotel overlooking the vast Langebaan Lagoon.

NIGHT: Farmhouse Hotel, Langebaan

September 24, Day 6: West Coast National Park. We have a full day to explore West Coast National Park, a unique reserve set between the scenic lagoon and the Atlantic coastline. Water levels vary, but the habitats here include open water, shoreline and tidal flats, and marshes and reedbeds. Although they move around, a variety of African waterbirds and migrant shorebirds can always be found in this area, including both Greater and Lesser flamingos, plus we may find some of the specialized inhabitants of the marshes like the African Marsh-Harrier, African Snipe, Levallant’s Cisticola, Cape Weaver and Southern Red Bishop.



Greater Flamingos © Geoff Lockwood



Black Bustard © Geoff Lockwood

Of equal interest is the higher ground in the park, which supports several types of native bush interspersed with grassy openings. The variety of birds found in this region is substantial, and in addition to many of those seen the previous day, the possibilities include Gray-winged Francolin (a rather secretive endemic), Black Bustard (spectacular), Spotted Thick-knee, White-backed Mousebird, Pied Barbet, Banded Martin, White-throated Swallow, Southern Penduline-Tit, Bar-throated Apalis, Cape Crombec, and African Pied-Starling, plus widespread African species like Helmeted Guineafowl, Black-shouldered Kite and even the Ostrich (thanks to re-introduction efforts). The park is also home to some very interesting mammals, several of which were once reduced almost to extinction, but have now been bred in great enough numbers

to re-introduce as the habitat is restored and protected. The park is also famous for its incredible wildflower show, with spectacular swaths of color blanketing the valleys, and many rare and unusual flowers tucked amidst the shrubs on the surrounding hills.

NIGHT: Farmhouse Hotel, Langebaan

September 25, Day 7: Langebaan to Tanqua Karoo via the Cedarberg Mountains. This morning, we head inland through the farmlands of the southwestern Cape, to the flanks of the rocky and folded Cedarberg Mountains, stopping in the town of Ceres, in the heart of the deciduous fruit growing region, for a light lunch.

The route quickly gives way to the thorny succulents and low scrub typical of the vast flat region ahead of us known as the Tanqua Karoo. Seemingly stretching almost to infinity, this is one of the most unique South African environments, partially due to the dominance of low-growing succulent plants. Here the rugged Cape mountains block the moisture coming from the ocean, creating near desert-like conditions in their rain shadow. Rainfall is highly irregular, but if we are lucky the winter rains will have reached the area. When they do, the birds respond by moving in and displaying and nesting in abundance. Just as alluring as the birdlife is the potential for one of the greatest wildflower shows on earth—with rain the floral displays are simply spectacular! They may vary from isolated patches in response to scattered thunderstorms to blankets of blinding color as far as the eye can see if rainfall has been widespread. Of course, this could also be a dry year, but even so we should find a surprisingly diverse mix of birds that have adapted to this stark and unique environment.

We will arrive at our game lodge in time for afternoon tea and a game drive in safari vehicles to connect with mammals not found in the Greater Kruger Park conservancy such as Springbuck and Oryx. This will be followed by an introduction to the Cheetah rehabilitation program aimed at reintroducing these endangered animals back into the wild once they have been assessed to be self-sustaining by a team of dedicated researchers. The daily exercise routine, usually involving two full grown Cheetahs, provides for spectacular viewing and photographic opportunities as these fleet-footed cats streak past the observation towers in pursuit of an artificial lure designed to simulate a fleeing prey item ahead of their release in suitable habitat.

NIGHT: Inverdoorn Game Lodge, Ceres Karoo

September 26, Day 8: The Tanqua Karoo. We have a full day to explore the Karoo environs, systematically working our way through the various micro-habitats in search of the bird specialties unique to the region. Here the bushes are low, scrubby and widely-spaced, with sparse grasslands in-between and only scattered clumps of

small trees and brush along the usually dry watercourses. A surprising number of “hard-to-find” specialties are resident in this environment, including Pale Chanting-Goshawk, Karoo Bustard, several larks, Fairy Flycatcher, Greater Kestrel, Rufous-eared Warbler, Namaqua Warbler, Yellow-rumped Eremomela and Layard’s Warbler. Other birds more typical of the still-drier Kalahari and Namib deserts—such as the Namaqua Sandgrouse, Greater Kestrel, Pirit Batis, Spike-heeled Lark, Gray-backed Sparrow-Lark, Pale-winged Starling, Lark-like Bunting and Black-headed Canary (irregular) also occur in varying numbers. If the winter rains have been good, there may be water in the ephemeral pans, attracting a surprising number of waterfowl, including the beautiful and endemic South African Shelduck.



Karoo Bustard © Geoff Lockwood

NIGHT: Inverdoorn Game Lodge, Ceres Karoo

September 27, Day 9: The Karoo to Hermanus. After an early bird walk in the vicinity of the lodge, followed by breakfast and a mid-morning departure, we will head back across the scenic flanks of the Hex River Mountains to the rolling hills of the Overberg. We’ll search for Blue Crane, South Africa’s national bird, usually encountered in number in the wheat lands, before enjoying lunch at a classic wine estate in the Bot River valley. After lunch we will look for the endangered Denham’s Bustard in lowland grassland, as well as a variety of typical open country Cape birds found on the coastal plain. Our hotel is situated on a cliff-top overlooking Walker Bay and affords the more energetic with the opportunity of a late afternoon stroll or bird walk along the cliff-path ahead of dinner at a local restaurant in the town.

NIGHT: The Marine Hotel, Hermanus



Southern Right Whale cow & calf © Geoff Lockwood

September 28, Day 10: Hermanus to Cape Town. After breakfast we will board a special whale-watching boat and head out into the bay in search of Southern Right Whales, our prime objective for the morning. After the boat trip we will head to Stony Point for close-up views of the comical Jackass (African) Penguins at one of their few breeding colonies on the mainland. This well-managed reserve is also home to all four of South Africa’s marine cormorants: Bank, (endangered), Crowned, Cape and Great, as well as African Oystercatchers. A final afternoon stroll will find us searching the rocky slopes for the iconic and elusive Cape Rockjumper, one of the most distinctive of the southwestern Cape endemics. Also possible in this area are Cape and Sentinel

rock-thrushes, Cape Grassbird and Cape Siskin, while in protected areas the famous Protea shrubs attract the Cape Sugarbird and sunbirds, including the stunning Orange-breasted Sunbird. It will be hard to tear ourselves away from these pleasant surroundings to head back to Cape Town for the night.

NIGHT: Hotel Verde Cape Town Airport, Cape Town

September 29, Day 11: Cape Town to Kruger. New adventures and completely different eco-systems await us today as we transfer to the Cape Town airport for a flight to Skukuza, in the heart of the Greater Kruger Conservation Area on the far eastern side of the country. Kruger National Park is one of the oldest and largest reserves in all of Africa, while additional huge conservation areas surround its boundaries, adding to the vast extent of well-protected land. This enormous area supports an amazing diversity of life forms in a variety of habitats, and offers a complete “safari” experience. The mammals may be the most obvious and impressive creatures here, but the birds are not far behind, and are also extremely varied and abundant. Based at two lodges—Skukuza Rest Camp and Inyati Lodge—we will have ample opportunity to sample the variety of habitats and attendant wildlife that makes this part of Africa so special.

Our flight to Skukuza will arrive in the afternoon. Upon touchdown we will transfer to the Skukuza Rest Camp for lunch, before driving through the park to Lower Sabie. Our exploration of the area will focus on the road network flanking the Sabie and Sand rivers that flow east towards Mozambique. We’ll make regular stops to scan the river for birds, mammals, hippopotamuses and crocodiles, with emphasis on locating bird species unlikely to be found at our next destination, Inyati Game Lodge.

NIGHT: Skukuza Rest Camp, Kruger National Park

September 30-October 2, Days 12-14: Greater Kruger Park Conservation Area. The day will begin with an early morning game drive along the river route of the previous afternoon. At mid-morning, we will return to the Rest Camp for checkout and brunch. Afterward, we may enjoy a bird walk that could produce several beautiful robin-chats (White-browed, White-throated, and Red-capped) and Eastern Bearded and White-browed scrub-robins. We’ll head out the main gate of Kruger National Park to connect with the back road to Inyati Game Lodge, arriving in time for high tea and an afternoon game drive.



White Rhinoceros © Geoff Lockwood

Away from the crowds of Kruger Park, the exclusive and well-appointed Inyati Game Lodge is one of the very best parts of the entire region for game-viewing and birding. Our time here is sure to be action-packed and incredibly productive.

We will take morning and afternoon game drives in open safari vehicles in one of the very best areas in the entire Greater Kruger Conservancy, the Sabi Sand Reserve. This area is so vast we will only be able to cover a fraction of it, but in the process, we will explore a variety of habitats. All of “The Big Five” mammals are found here, including White Rhinoceros and a large population of elephants. Cats are a major attraction and the region holds a very healthy population of Lions. Cheetah are also present, though they range over huge areas and can be hard to find, while that most stealthy of the large cats, the Leopard, is possible throughout the area, though typically well-concealed and hard to find by day. Of course, to support the predators there must be a prey base and a wide assortment of antelope of varying sizes will be seen, along with Giraffe and Zebra. Spotted Hyenas, African Wild Dogs (outside chance), Dwarf Mongooses and Vervet Monkeys are also among the possibilities at Inyati.

The impressive avifauna here in the lowland “bushveld” includes many species not found in the more temperate parts of the country that we have already visited. Large and easily-spotted are such classic African birds as the



Lilac-breasted Roller © Geoff Lockwood

Ostrich, Black-bellied Bustard and Southern Ground-Hornbill. Raptors are a common sight and include the huge and powerful Martial Eagle, the very distinctive Bateleur and several scavenging vultures. The open woodlands, thick scrub and riverine trees support a wide range of smaller “bush birds,” including francolins, mousebirds, Gray Go-away-bird, four species of small hornbills, Green Wood-Hoopoe, Lilac-breasted Roller, barbets, woodpeckers, bush-shrikes, starlings, weavers, waxbills and much more. Small dams provide a vital water source for the mammals, but may also attract surprising waterbirds, perhaps including the huge Marabou Stork.

Each day will end with sundowners at dusk, followed by a night drive back to camp for a classic barbeque under the stars (weather

permitting). With so much to see and do, our time here will undoubtedly pass very quickly.

NIGHTS: Inyati Game Lodge, Sabi Sand Reserve

October 3-4, Days 15-16: Kruger to Johannesburg; Departure for Home or Begin Wakkerstroom Extension. After a final morning game drive, we will connect with a domestic flight back to Johannesburg. Participants not continuing on the Wakkerstroom Extension will arrive at the Johannesburg airport in time for evening departures to Atlanta, New York Kennedy, Washington Dulles, Amsterdam, London and Frankfurt which will arrive on October 4, allowing time for onward connections.

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October 3, Day 1: Johannesburg. Upon arrival into Johannesburg from Skukuza this afternoon, we’ll say goodbye to our friends not joining the extension, before having dinner and an overnight at our airport-area hotel.

NIGHT: Peermont Mondior Hotel at Emperors Palace, Kempton Park

October 4, Day 2: Johannesburg to Wakkerstroom. Departing early this morning, we’ll travel to the Wakkerstroom area of the central plateau, arriving in time for lunch. Here on the “Highveld” the habitat is largely rolling grassland of varying types, but, as is true of native prairie almost everywhere, much of it has now been reduced in extent by farming and overgrazing. A surprising number of endemics have evolved in these grasslands and though many are now very localized in occurrence, we will begin seeking them out this afternoon.

While these specialties will be the main focus of our time here, the wetlands in this area are also quite special and the small reservoirs, marshy “vleis” and farm ponds attract a nice variety of waterfowl and other waterbirds including African Black- and White-backed ducks, African Spoonbill, and African Marsh-Harrier plus numbers of bishops, weavers and widowbirds. Arch-skulkers such as African Rail and Red-chested Flufftail (both heard more readily than seen) are often recorded, while African Snipe and several marsh-dwelling warblers display from the reedbeds. Away from the water, the grasslands and farmlands will hopefully produce our first Southern Bald

Ibis or Blue Bustard, both unique and threatened South African endemics, while an exciting mammal possibility is encountering a family group of comical and charismatic Meerkats (of TV fame) foraging in the grassland.

Please note: If we should experience a late cold front, the Wakkerstroom area can be quite chilly (possibly even to the low 40s), so participants need to be prepared with the proper clothing for warmth.

NIGHT: Wetlands Country House & Sheds, Wakkerstroom

October 5, Day 3: Wakkerstroom Area.

We have a full day to explore the various habitats in the Wakkerstroom area, searching the grasslands for special endemics like Southern Bald Ibis, Blue Bustard, Rudd's and Botha's larks (both very rare and secretive, with tiny world ranges), and Yellow-breasted Pipit. Rocky areas and eroded ridges and hillsides could produce Ground Woodpecker, Wailing Cisticola, Sentinel Rock-Thrush, Buff-streaked Bushchat, Yellow-tufted Pipit and Cape Bunting. Small, relict patches of forest could produce a Bush Blackcap or Barratt's Warbler (both tricky), plus a variety of robin-chats and bush-shrikes. Other less range-restricted specialties of the area that we hope to see include Red-winged, Gray-winged and Swainson's francolins; Rock



Blue Cranes © Geoff Lockwood

Kestrel; Black-winged and Wattled lapwings; Rufous-necked Wryneck; Spike-heeled and Pink-billed larks; Greater Striped-Swallow; Familiar Chat; Mountain Wheatear; Orange-throated (Cape) Longclaw; Drakensberg Prinia; African Yellow Warbler; Yellow Bishop; Long-tailed Widowbird; and African Quailfinch; while Cape Glossy-Starlings and Cape Weavers can be numerous around the village and farm houses. With luck we may also find Denham's Bustard or Blue Crane, though both are irregular in their occurrence.

NIGHT: Wetlands Country House & Sheds, Wakkerstroom

October 6-7, Days 4-5: Wakkerstroom to Johannesburg; Departure for Home. After an early start to search for those 'specials' of the area that we might have missed, we'll head back to our lodge for breakfast and check-out. Depending on our success thus far, we might head back to the wetlands to try for a Red-chested Flufftail or African Rail before driving to Johannesburg. We will visit noted birding spots along the way, stopping en route for lunch and some final birding. Exact plans will be determined based on what we have seen—or not seen—on the trip up to this point.

We will arrive at the Johannesburg airport in plenty of time for early evening departures to Atlanta, New York Kennedy, Washington Dulles, Amsterdam, London, and Frankfurt. Flights arrive at these destinations in the early morning on October 7, allowing time for onward connections.

TOUR LEADER: Geoff Lockwood



Geoff Lockwood's interest and involvement with birds dates back to his early years at school and forms part of a wider interest in the biodiversity of the Southern African sub-region. After leaving school, he began a career as a bird artist, illustrator, and author. In 1981, he published *Garden Birds of Southern Africa* and later also contributed half the illustrations to the 5th and 6th editions of *Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa*. Geoff is currently based at the Delta Environmental Centre in Johannesburg where he acts as part-time manager and education officer, working to instill an environmental ethos in teachers and school groups that visit the Centre. For the past 40 years he has been involved with local birding organizations and has served on the Council of the Southern African Ornithological Society—now BirdLife South Africa, for most of that time. He travels widely in the region, presenting lectures, talks, and courses on bird identification, ecology, and behaviour, and was also involved in the training of local bird guides as part

of a BLSA initiative to give communities a vested interest in the conservation of their local birds. With 874 species listed within southern Africa, Geoff is amongst the region's top birders. He has led tours to many destinations in Southern and Central Africa, as well as Kenya and Israel.

TOUR SIZE: Both sections 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.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for South Africa: The Southwestern Cape & Kruger is **\$11,995** per person in double occupancy from Cape Town (tour ends in Johannesburg). The fee includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 to lunch on Day 15; all lodging as stated in the itinerary; internal flights; ground transportation; tipping; entrance fees; and guide services of the tour leader. The tour fee does NOT include roundtrip airfare between your home and Cape Town and return from Johannesburg; entrance and departure taxes; alcoholic beverages; special gratuities; phone calls; laundry; or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for South Africa: The Southwestern Cape & Kruger is **\$2,480**.

The fee for South Africa: Wakkerstroom Extension is **\$1,795** per person in double occupancy from Johannesburg. The fee includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 4; all lodging as stated in the itinerary; ground transportation; tipping; entrance fees; and guide services of the tour leader. The tour fee does NOT include roundtrip airfare between your home and Johannesburg; entrance and departure taxes; alcoholic beverages; special gratuities; phone calls; laundry; or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for the South Africa: Wakkerstroom Extension is **\$180**.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person per section. If you would like to pay your deposit using a credit card, the deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at www.ventbird.com) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 150 days prior to the tour departure date (April 22, 2024 for the main tour; May 6, 2024 for the extension.)

For the main tour, a second deposit of **\$3,000** is due 210 days prior to departure (February 22, 2024). If you would like to pay your deposits using a credit card, the deposits must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS FOR MAIN TOUR:

Cancellation by Participant:

Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 210 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$500** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 209 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. **For participants' protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

If participant cancels:

210 days or more before departure date

209 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 will be refunded

No refund available

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

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS FOR WAKKERSTROOM EXTENSION

Cancellation by Participant:

Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 180 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$500** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 179 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the tour fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre- and post-tour extensions. **For participants' protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

If participant cancels:

180 days or more before departure date

179 to 151 days before departure date

150 days or less before departure date

Participant's refund will be:

Participant's deposit minus \$500*

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

No refund available

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

Cancellation by VENT:

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

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement. A "**Force Majeure**" event means any act beyond VENT's control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane,

epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

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

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

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.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with Redpoint Travel Protection as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend their **Ripcord** plan. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most comprehensive travel protection programs available.

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

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

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

Coronavirus (COVID-19):

In line with the decision made by the federal government (including the CDC), Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy. Redpoint maintains a **Coronavirus FAQ** page on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding

COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

Please visit the **Coronavirus FAQ** page at the following link:

https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT: This tour visits remote locations where immediate access to primary medical care may **NOT** be available. **For this reason, travel insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation is required for participation on this tour.** This coverage is included in the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** program. Through Ripcord, “emergency evacuation” can be purchased as a stand-alone benefit or as part of a comprehensive travel insurance policy. If you choose not to purchase insurance through Ripcord, you are required to obtain it through another provider.

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.

CLIMATE: South Africa is a land of great physical contrasts, and October is a time of seasonal change. Thus the climate on the tour varies considerably and is somewhat unpredictable. The southwestern Cape can be marvelously warm and clear at this season or it can be quite chilly and damp, depending on the passage of cold fronts. Temperatures generally range from the 50s to the 70s. Temperatures in the interior Karoo are higher, but not excessively hot (perhaps to 90 degrees at most). The Kruger region is generally mild and dry at this season, with warm days and possibly cool nights as low as 50 degrees. Though usually mild, the Wakkerstroom area can be surprisingly cold if a front is passing through, with temperatures as low as the 40s (especially at night). Rain is possible in some areas, although this trip is after the main rains in the southwestern Cape and before the rainy season in the subtropical east.

CLOTHING AND LUGGAGE: Dress is informal throughout. Light to medium-weight field clothing is the norm (drab colors such as olive or khaki preferred), with a warm sweater or jacket for cooler weather. Thermal underwear is very useful for layering and for chilly hotel rooms that are not well heated, plus it is small and easy to pack. Southern Africa’s spring climate is variable, and conditions often change markedly during a single day, so layers that can be put on and taken off as needed are ideal.

Good walking shoes or light boots will suffice, but ideally should be rated “water-resistant.” People with balance problems and/or weak ankles may find hiking boots and a light cane useful.

Depending on sea conditions, the pelagic trip can get very wet, and a rain suit and water-resistant footwear is strongly recommended. Warm clothing and windbreakers will also be necessary for the Wakkerstroom Extension, as it can be surprisingly chilly, even cold, on the Highveld.

Please restrict your luggage to one medium-sized soft-sided suitcase or duffel bag, and one small carry-on, because of space limitations on the bus. Most people find that they have brought far too much “stuff” (and laundry services are available at most hotels and lodges where we spend more than one night).

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/>.

LAUNDRY: Laundry services are available at most hotels and lodges where we spend more than one night.

DIFFICULTY: There is relatively little walking on this tour and the walking that we do is largely on fairly level ground. A few short stretches may have steeper inclines.

CURRENCY: South African Rand (ZAR). MasterCard and Visa are more widely accepted than American Express, but all are useful, particularly in major centers.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least 30 days beyond your planned departure with **at least 2 consecutive empty pages** is required for U.S. citizens to enter South Africa. Non-U.S. citizens should check with their closest South African consulate/embassy for instructions.

EQUIPMENT: Of course, everyone should have a pair of binoculars in good condition. Your tour leader will be carrying a spotting scope; however, you are welcome and encouraged to bring your own if you wish. You should also bring a hat, sunscreen, lip balm, small alarm clock, washcloth, insect repellent (not a major problem), and a small flashlight or headlamp. A dust mask may be helpful on the backroads. It is advisable to bring along all of the digital storage media and medicines you will require for the trip.

HEALTH AND COMFORT: Although South Africa is one of the few countries in Africa where you can drink the water in major cities, eat the salads and unpeeled fresh vegetables and fruit, and assume that Western sanitation standards are followed, a powerful antibiotic for any possible GI problems could be useful.

Malaria has been recorded from the Kruger region, but the risk of contracting it is slight as mosquitos are scarce at this time of year. You may, however, choose to take a course of malaria prophylaxis drugs, available only by prescription. Please consult your physician and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention for further information and help in making your decision.

Yellow fever certificates are required if you happen to be arriving from an infected area.

Please be sure to bring insect repellent, sunscreen, lip-ointment, and normal travel medications (motion sickness prevention, Imodium, etc.)

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. Please visit the **Coronavirus Travel Update** page of our website <https://ventbird.com/covid-19> for our official statement regarding COVID-19 and the operation of our tours. Please visit the CDC website for the most up to date information about COVID-19 and associated guidance for proper health and hygiene: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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).

MISC:

Departure Tax: None (subject to change without notice)
Electricity: The electrical supply is 220 volts, and it is recommended that you bring an appliance designed for this voltage. **Please note that South African outlets require their own special adapter plugs.** These can be ordered online. Some adapters sold in the United States “for Africa” will not work in South Africa.

Wi-Fi	Available most of the trip
Language:	The official languages are Afrikaans and English. There are nine main African languages, the most widely spoken being Xhosa, Zulu and Sesotho.
Time:	7 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (GMT +2:00)

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

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

Birds:

Sinclair, Ian, Phil Hockey, and Warwick Tarboton. *SASOL Birds of Southern Africa*. 4th Ed. Princeton Field Guides. The recommended field guide (also available as an app).

Newman, Kenneth. *Newman's Birds of Southern Africa*. 10th Ed. Cape Town: Struik New Holland Publishers. An acceptable alternative field guide (also available as an app).

Kemp, Alan and Meg. *SASOL Birds of Prey of Africa and its Islands*. Cape Town: Struik New Holland Publishers, 2005.

Maclean, Gordon Lindsay. *Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa*, 7th Ed. John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, 2005. This is more of a handbook, with extended information on behavior, breeding, diet, etc. (also available as an app).

Ginn, P., W. G. McIlleron, and P. le S. Milstein. *The Complete Book of Southern African Birds*. Cape Town: Struik New Holland Publishers, 1989. Excellent photographs with anecdotal text.

Mammals:

Stuart, Chris and Tilde Stuart. *Field Guide: Mammals of Southern Africa*. Cape Town: Struik New Holland Publishers, 1999.

Kingdon, Jonathan. *The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals*. London: Academic Press, 1997.

Estes, Richard Despard. *The Behavior Guide to African Mammals*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

General Social, Historical and Geographical Background:

Johnson-Barker, Brian. *South Africa The Beautiful*. Cape Town: Struik New Holland Publishers, 1991.

Cubitt, Gerald S. and Peter Joyce. *Journey through South Africa*. Cape Town: Struik New Holland Publishers, 1986. OUT OF PRINT.

Davenport, Rodney and Christopher Saunders. *South Africa, a Modern History*, 5th ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that tips are not expected and are entirely optional. Tips should be given directly to your tour leader; they should not be sent to the VENT office.

RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, “**VENT**”) act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure. 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. Notwithstanding the foregoing, VENT will not provide any participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to any 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, when and to the extent such failure or delay is caused by or results from acts beyond VENT’s control, including, without limitation, the following force majeure events: (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 in effect on or after the date of the scheduled tour; (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.

If a participant cancels any tour or any portion of a tour, VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by any participant (see VENT Registration & Deposit policy and Cancellation & Refunds policy contained in the itinerary). Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on December 22, 2023 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. If a participant is removed from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed 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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