



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

SOUTHWEST PACIFIC: SAMOA & FIJI

AUGUST 14-27, 2025

NEW CALEDONIA EXTENSION

AUGUST 27-30, 2025

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The southwest Pacific is a remote part of the world, dotted by small, often uninhabited islands sometimes thousands of miles apart. Unique avifauna and human cultures have evolved here over time, leaving a rich and highly diverse array of island inhabitants. This tour will provide participants a rare insight into this incomparable part of the world. Samoa and Fiji represent two of the larger and more diverse island groups in the region. As such they offer some of the best birding, as well as a high standard of lodgings and transport. A visit to each island is a memorable experience, but we will have the privilege of experiencing both on this compact yet comprehensive tour.

We will start our island odyssey on Samoa, focusing on the beautiful island of Upolu where all of Samoa's endemic birds can be found. We will enjoy two full days of relaxed-pace birding around the island's forests and coasts looking for a gorgeous selection of island specialties like Blue-crowned Lorikeet, Samoan Myzomela, the strange Samoan Triller, and hopefully Mao – a species of large endemic honeyeater.

Our exploration of the Fijian islands will include the main island, Viti Levu, as well as two endemic-rich islands just a short flight away—Kadavu and Taveuni. Some world-class birds exist in Fiji, with the Golden and Orange doves both needing to be seen to be believed. We will spend ample time on each island, making excursions into the montane rainforests and along stunning coastlines in search of new birds every day. Some of the highlights include the dazzling Azure-crested Flycatcher, enigmatic Taveuni Silktail, wattled and giant honeyeaters, a variety of beautiful shining-parrots, songful shrikebills, and cute parrotfinches.



Many-colored Fruit-Dove is one of the fantastic species of doves featured on this trip © Max Breckenridge

August 14–16, Days 1–3: Travel to Nadi, Fiji; Flight to Apia, Samoa. There are direct flights from the U.S. to Nadi, Fiji from Honolulu, Los Angeles and San Francisco. From Fiji it is a short flight to the Samoan capital of Apia (airport code APW). Upon arrival at Faleolo International Airport you will be met by a representative of our hotel and transferred there. We will have our first meeting on the evening of August 16 at the hotel with birding to follow the next morning.

NIGHTS: August 14-15, in transit

NIGHT: August 16, *Sheraton Samoa Aggie Grey's Hotel & Bungalows*

August 17, Day 4: Birding at Malolo'lelei Watershed Reserve. Our first morning of birding will likely be spent in the vicinity of the Malolo'lelei Watershed Reserve on the southern edge of Apia. A boardwalk here along the edge of the native forest allows for easy birding and most of the species here should be quite confiding. Species likely to be encountered include White-throated Pigeon, Crimson-crowned Fruit-Dove, Pacific Imperial-Pigeon, White-rumped Swiftlet, White Tern, Common Noddy and White-tailed Tropicbird overhead, Flat-billed Kingfisher, Blue-crowned Lorikeet, Mao, Eastern Wattled-Honeyeater, Polynesian Triller, Samoan Whistler, Samoan Fantail, Pacific Robin, Polynesian and Samoan starlings, and Royal Parrotfinch.

We will return to our hotel for lunch and a siesta (as will be the case for most days during this trip) before an afternoon session searching for the strange and sometimes scarce Samoan Triller as well as any other species missed in the morning.

NIGHT: *Sheraton Samoa Aggie Grey's Hotel & Bungalows*

August 18, Day 5: Birding at Pupu-Pue National Park. This morning we will enjoy some beautiful scenery along the Coastal Walk in the Pupu-Pue National Park. The lava cliffs here are very reminiscent of Hawaii and we should see small numbers of Bridled Tern, as well as several other species of tern and boobies.

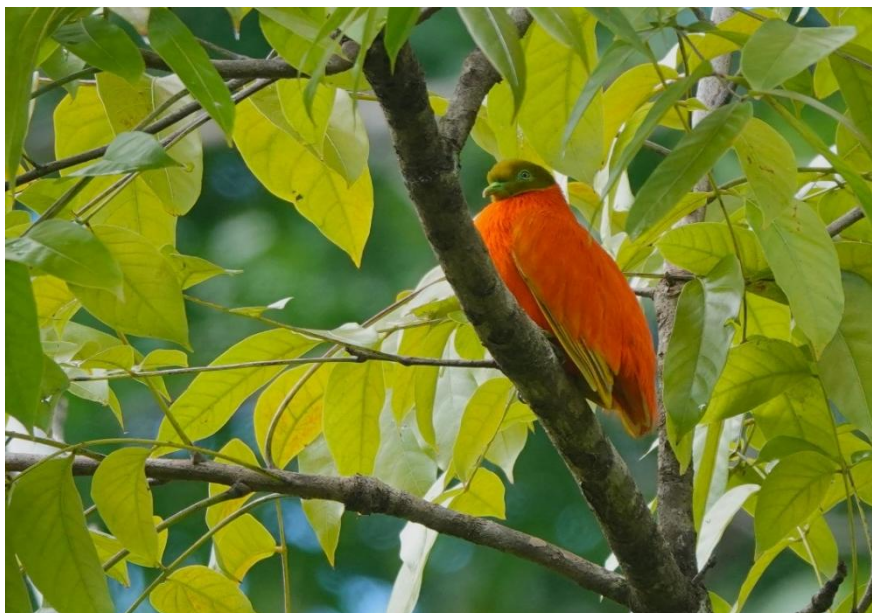
Samoaan Flycatcher and Samoa Myzomela are also a good bet in the coastal forest.

Later in the day there will be the option to visit the home, now-turned museum, of Robert Louis Stevenson. Otherwise, we can do more birding along the coast or enjoy the comforts of our pleasant resort.

NIGHT: *Sheraton Samoa Aggie Grey's Hotel & Bungalows*

August 19, Day 6: Fly to Taveuni

via Nadi. Today we will depart Samoa for Fiji. It is roughly a two-hour flight between the two islands. We will depart Apia on flight FJ252 (subject to change), arriving in the Fijian capitol of Nadi, before transferring to the outer island of Taveuni via another short flight over some stunning tropical seas. We should have a chance to explore our lovely resort along the western coast of Taveuni in the late afternoon. There is excellent snorkeling just off the beach in front of our hotel.



NIGHT: Garden Island Resort, Taveuni

The stunning Orange Dove is only found on the Vanua Levu islands
© Max Breckenridge

August 20, Day 7: Taveuni. Today we will explore the endemic-rich island of Taveuni, starting along the upper altitude road below the Des Voeux Peak (3,900 feet). Here in the early morning, we will search for several species only found on Taveuni - the cosmic Orange Dove, Chattering Giant-Honeyeater, Northern Wattled-Honeyeater, strange Taveuni Silktail, and the stunning little Azure-crested Flycatcher. The forests on Taveuni are also a good place for the beautiful Many-colored Fruit-Dove, barking Peale's Imperial-Pigeon, raucous Red Shining-Parrot, Collared Lory, 'Taveuni' Streaked Fantail, Fiji Shrikebill, songful Fiji Bush-Warbler, and Layard's White-eye.

In the afternoon, we can bird along the coastline or around the resort for species such as Wandering Tattler, Lesser Frigatebird, Buff-banded Rail, Pacific Kingfisher, Orange-breasted Myzomela, Fiji Woodswallow, Vanikoro Flycatcher, Pacific Swallow, or some rarer seabirds and waders. There will also be the option to visit the nearby island of Qamea where the fruiting trees in a small village often allow for great looks at Orange Dove and sometimes Pacific Imperial-Pigeon.

NIGHT: Garden Island Resort, Taveuni

August 21, Day 8: Taveuni to Suva. After some morning birding, we will transfer to the airport for our short flight to Suva on the southern side of Fiji's main island Viti Levu.

We can spend the afternoon at our leisure or visit Suva Point, close to our wonderful hotel, in search of waders, seabirds and some of the more common Viti Levu species.

NIGHT: Grand Pacific Hotel, Suva

August 22-23, Days 9-10: Suva. The forests around Suva provide some of the best birding on Viti Levu. We will have two full days to search for a number of specialties, while also enjoying the relaxing pace of life here and the stunning scenery. We will bird a variety of sites during our time here in the company of an excellent local guide. Two of the trickier, but much sought-after species here are the Pink-billed Parrotfinch and Long-legged Thicketbird. Both are vulnerable and endemic to Viti Levu but will take some effort and luck to see. There are many other wonderful species we expect to encounter during our time around Suva, not least the unbelievable Golden Dove, but also Masked Shining-Parrot, Fiji Goshawk, Duetting Giant-Honeyeater, Western Wattled-Honeyeater, Fiji and Black-throated shrikebills, Chestnut-throated Flycatcher, Polynesian Triller, lovely Pacific Robin, Polynesian Starling, Island Thrush, and Fiji Parrotfinch.

NIGHTS: Grand Pacific Hotel, Suva



Azure-crested Flycatcher from Taveuni © Max Breckenridge

August 24, Day 11: Suva to Kadavu. Today we will visit our second outer Fijian island, Kadavu. This is a true tropical island experience, as we stay at a remote, but well-serviced island resort where most of the specialty birds can be found right around the grounds.

NIGHT: Papageno Resort

August 25, Day 12: Kadavu. A full day on Kadavu will allow us to really soak up the place and enjoy some relaxed birding with the option for snorkeling nearby. Kadavu is known for excellent chances to snorkel with giant manta rays. During our time on Kadavu we will be on the lookout for a number of new species, including four endemics: Velvet Dove, Crimson Shining-Parrot, Kadavu Fantail, and Kadavu Honeyeater.

NIGHT: Papageno Resort

August 26, Day 13: Kadavu to Nadi. Departing beautiful Kadavu, we will begin our transit home (or onto New Caledonia) by flying to Nadi (possibly via Suva). If time allows, we can do some local birding in the afternoon, otherwise we will enjoy a final meal together at our airport hotel.

NIGHT: *TokaToka Resort*, Nadi

August 27, Day 14: Departure. Participants may make arrangements to fly out of Nadi International Airport or continue on with the New Caledonia Extension.

NEW CALEDONIA EXTENSION AUGUST 27-30, 2025

The French island territory of New Caledonia. The main island Grand Terre. The remarkable Kagu will be high on our list of targets, but there are many more beautiful and little-known endemics to enjoy in New Caledonia. The rare and strange Crow Honeyeater, Horned Parakeet, stunning Cloven-feathered Dove, tool-using New Caledonian Crow, and the scarce New Caledonian Grassbird are just some of the great birds on offer. We will stay at fine lodgings in Noumea, where French cuisine is served with a tropical backdrop.



Kagu © David Jeffrey Ringer/shutterstock

August 27, Day 1: Fly to New Caledonia. Upon arrival at La Tontouta International Airport (airport code NOU) on August 27, we will be transferred to our hotel in the capitol Noumea. In the afternoon we can visit the waterfront here and familiarize ourselves with some of the more readily observed species in New Caledonia like Silver Gull, Black-naped Tern, Wandering Tattler, Coconut Lorikeet, Dark-brown Honeyeater, and Green-backed White-eye.

NIGHT: Hotel Le Lagon, Noumea

August 28, Day 2: Birding at Parc de la Rivière Bleue (Blue River NP). There is of course one very special bird we have in mind for our first full day, but alongside the infamous Kagu, there is also a fantastic supporting cast to be found in the protected forests of Blue River National Park. Amongst the dry rainforest, dominated by houp and araucaria trees, we will search for the gorgeous Cloven-feathered Dove, New Caledonian Imperial-Pigeon, “New Caledonian” Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, the striking New Caledonian Goshawk, Horned and New Caledonian Parakeets, the rare Crow Honeyeater, Barred Honeyeater, New Caledonian Streaked Fantail, New Caledonian Cuckooshrike, the strange Southern Shrikebill, Melanesian Flycatcher, New Caledonian Whistler, cute Yellow-bellied Flyrobin, Green-backed White-eye, scarce Striated Starling, and the beautiful Red-throated Parrotfinch.

NIGHT: Hotel Le Lagon, Noumea

August 29, Day 3: Birding at Le Parc des Grandes Fougères. Today we will venture further into the country, following the beautiful southern coastline from the capital to the wonderful Le Parc des Grandes Fougères. Home to giant tree ferns and a good diversity of New Caledonian specialties, we will search for any species missed the previous day. Some of the more widespread species we hope to see today include Pacific Emerald Dove, White-throated Pigeon, ‘New Caledonian’ Sacred Kingfisher, Satin and White-rumped swiftlets, Whistling Kite, Coconut Lorikeet, New Caledonian Myzomela, Dark-brown Honeyeater, New Caledonian Friarbird, Fan-tailed Gerygone, South Melanesian Cuckooshrike, Rufous Whistler, Gray Fantail, Silvereye, and hopefully New Caledonian Crow.

NIGHT: Hotel Le Lagon, Noumea

August 30, Day 4: Departures for Home. Today flights depart from Noumea.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to decide 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.

TRAVEL INSURANCE REQUIREMENT: Travel insurance is mandatory for entry to New Caledonia and must cover all medical and hospitalization expenses and repatriation costs, including medical evacuation. 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.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 8 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: Max Breckenridge and local leaders.



Max Breckenridge was born in the UK, but has lived virtually his entire life in Sydney, Australia. At age 12, his passion for birds was fostered when his parents took him and his brother out of school for 10 weeks to travel across Australia. After completing high school in Sydney, Max drove solo from Darwin to Broome, birding all the way, and spent the next month volunteering at the world-renowned Broome Bird Observatory. Max completed a Bachelor of Biodiversity & Conservation at Macquarie University in 2018. Max has birded across every state and almost every corner of the Australian landmass. He has an excellent eye, and especially ear, for Australian birds. Some of his birding exploits in Australia include two separate trips to the remote rainforests of Iron Range National Park on

Queensland's Cape York (including a fly-in-fly-out trip during the middle of the wet season where he spent two weeks under a tarp in order to see some of the key migrants from Papua New Guinea). Max is at home birding in the Old World and has spent the last decade covering as much of it as possible. He is incredibly passionate about wildlife conservation. In addition to guiding, he has spent much of his spare time working for BirdLife Australia, monitoring and researching the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater - including working on several captive-releases of zoo-bred individuals. Max receives immense pleasure from birding and showing birds to others, and takes pride in writing detailed trip reports. He is currently living on Lake Macquarie, north of Sydney, with his partner Fernanda.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the main tour is **\$8,695** per person in double occupancy from Apia, ending in Nadi. This includes all meals from Dinner on Day 3 to Breakfast on Day 14, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$780**. You will be charged a single supplement if a roommate is not found and VENT cannot provide one for you.

The New Caledonia Extension fee for the tour is **\$3,995** per person in double occupancy from Noumea, ending in Noumeai. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 4, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Noumea with the return from Noumea, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$650**. You will be charged a single supplement if a roommate is not found and VENT cannot provide one for you.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for each tour is **\$1,000** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, the deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive

your deposit and completed registration form. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at <https://ventbird.com>) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the main tour fee is due 150 days (March 17, 2025 for the main tour, March 30, 2025 for the extension) prior to the tour departure date.

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.

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.

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:

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 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.

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.

TRAVEL INSURANCE/TRAVEL PROTECTION: 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 Ripcord

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:

<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, 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.

Coronavirus (COVID-19):

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/.

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://medjet.com/VentBird) or click the **Medjet** logo on our website (click Help and Trip Insurance); or call 1-800-527-7478. Pricing is based on type and term of membership.

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:

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/>.

Please limit baggage to one piece of luggage and one carry-on. As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag.

CLOTHING: The physical environment of this trip is tropical coastal plains and mountainous interior. The days will be warm to hot with storms possible. Lightweight, dull-colored field clothing and casual attire are suitable for this trip. The following items are recommended:

- **Pants and Shorts:** A couple pairs of pants are essential. Many people prefer lightweight pants made of cotton or other material, but denim, though not as comfortable, is certainly acceptable. Shorts can be useful in warmer locations or when relaxing around hotels.
- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI carry field clothing that many birders find appealing. Pants and long-sleeved shirts made of lightweight, yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular. These provide useful protection from the sun and occasional biting insects.
- **Shirts:** A couple long-sleeved t-shirts in addition to other comfortable styles suitable for warm weather. We do not recommend short-sleeved shirts as much as they offer no protection from biting insects or the sun.
- **Hat:** A hat, particularly of a wide-brimmed style, for protection from the sun is essential. Please bring a baseball-style cap at the very least.
- **Outerwear:** Warm weather is anticipated on this trip, but a sweater/fleece and water repellent light coat or jacket will come in handy on our visits to highland areas.
- **Swimsuit:** There will be opportunities to swim for those who desire.

FOOTWEAR: We recommend a good trail-walking shoe or light hiking boot when in the field. Athletic shoes are acceptable but will not keep your feet dry and can become soiled from muddy conditions, which do occur. A lighter shoe, like an athletic shoe, will come in handy when relaxing around the lodges.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is available at all of the hotels in our itinerary.

CLIMATE & WEATHER: You will be visiting the Southwest Pacific in the austral spring. Generally, the tropical climate is warm and humid with temperatures ranging from the low 60s to the lows 90s (°F), although it can be certainly cooler at the higher points on Fiji. The dry season runs from August through

December, with the hottest, driest conditions likelier later in the year. August is cooler than December, with greater chances for rain. Some rain should be expected.

EQUIPMENT: One of the most important aspects of having an enjoyable travel experience is being prepared with proper equipment. The following items will come in handy during your trip to the Southwest Pacific:

- **Daypack** – Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment, etc.
- **Notebooks and pens**
- **Travel alarm clock** – Battery operated is best (if not using this feature on your mobile phone).
- **Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection**
- **Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions**
- **Personal toiletries**
- **Cameras, lenses, memory cards, and extra batteries**
- **Collapsible walking stick** – A highly recommended item for those who have trouble walking
- **Umbrella** – A small, collapsible umbrella can be indispensable should we be caught on the trail in the rain
- **Water bottle**
- **Tissue packs**
- **Small flashlight or headlamp**
- **Small folding stool** – Many people find this item extremely useful when patiently waiting for shy forest birds.

BINOCULARS & SPOTTING SCOPES:

Binoculars – We strongly recommend good binoculars of at least 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 magnification. We recommend that you do NOT bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like “minis” because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. Trying to find a bird in your binoculars using minis is like trying to read a book through a keyhole. You will be very frustrated, and even if you do manage to get the bird in your binoculars before it flies, you will have a poor view. You will find that 8x32 or 8x42 binoculars are compact and light enough.

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

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:

PASSPORTS - A passport valid for six months beyond the tour end date is required for entry into New Caledonia and Fiji. Please check the expiration date on your passport. If it is not valid for the period of time as described, you will need to get it renewed. You will also want to make sure that you have at least two blank pages in your passport for stamps.

If you need a passport, you should get it well in advance of your trip departure date. For additional fees, a passport can be issued on an expedited basis. In the United States this can be done at the nearest passport office, most post offices, or the county clerk’s office. You may also visit the website of the U.S. Department of State (<https://state.gov/travelers/>) for information on how to apply for a passport or renew an existing passport.

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

VISAS - Citizens of the United States and Canada are not required to obtain a visa for entry into Samoa, Fiji or New Caledonia. Rules and regulations pertaining to non-U.S. and Canadian citizens may vary; please check with the respective consulates or embassies.

CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS: Your tour fee includes all necessary expenses; however, you will want to carry credit cards and/or a supply of cash to cover personal expenses not included in the program, such as gifts, laundry, gratuities, meals on your own, and personal items. If bringing cash, it is best to carry small denominations as the places we visit may be unable to provide change for large bills.

If you plan to extend your vacation in either country beyond what is offered in the program, you'll want to consider obtaining local currency. It is best to acquire local currency before leaving home, or at the airport or a city bank upon arrival in either country. The best exchange is always from automatic teller machines as opposed to changing at dealers. Please note that U.S. Dollars are not accepted in Samoa or New Caledonia. In Fiji, U.S. Dollars may be accepted, but it is recommended that your dollars be converted to Fijian Dollars.

Major credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, American Express) are accepted at most locations. Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

The official currency of Samoa is the Samoan Tala (WST); Fiji is the Fijian Dollar (FJD); New Caledonia is the CFP Franc (XPF). Exchange rates are subject to change. You can check the latest currency conversion rate by visiting "XE-The World's Favorite Currency Site" at: <http://www.xe.com/>.

ELECTRICITY: Standard voltage in Samoa and Fiji is 240V/50H. Electrical outlets are of the I-type, with three flat pins in a triangular pattern. Standard voltage in New Caledonia is 220V/50H. Electrical outlets are of the F-type, with two round pins. A plug adapter will be needed and we strongly recommend a voltage converter to protect sensitive electronic equipment.

INTERNET ACCES: Expect Wifi availability at most or all hotels and lodges.

LANGUAGE: Samoan and English are both spoken in Samoa. Fiji has three official languages: Fijian, Fijian Hindi, and English. French is the official language of New Caledonia but Kanak languages (family of Austronesian languages) are widely spoken.

TIME: Samoa is on Samoa Time (WST), 17 hours ahead of EST. Fiji is on Fiji Time (FJT), 16 hours ahead of EST. New Caledonia is on New Caledonia Time (NCT), 15 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST).

HEALTH: VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which includes vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases. Among these so-called Routine Vaccinations are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers), and Varicella (Chickenpox). You should also be up to date with Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations.

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>.

Typhoid – VENT recommends vaccination against Typhoid, a bacterial disease endemic to Samoa, Fiji and New Caledonia. Typhoid, or Typhoid Fever, is caused by *Salmonella Typhi*. It is transmitted through consumption of contaminated food and water, typically when someone who is infected uses the bathroom and does not wash their hands. Symptoms may include high fever, weakness, stomach pain, headache, diarrhea or constipation, cough, and loss of appetite.

Malaria & Yellow Fever – Neither is present in Samoa, Fiji or New Caledonia, although Yellow Fever vaccination may be required for those traveling from a country where Yellow Fever is known to occur.

Dengue and Zika – Dengue and Zika are viral diseases transmitted by mosquitos. Both are present on Sama, Fiji and New Caledonia. The best way to avoid these illnesses is by avoiding getting bitten by mosquitos. We recommend wearing long sleeve shirts and pants when in the field, and applying insect repellent to your clothing and areas of exposed skin. A stick-style repellent is easier to apply to the face and hands, while a pump-style container is ideal for clothing. Please refer to the Insect Repellent section below for more information on the use of repellents.

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

Chiggers can be avoided by following these procedures:

- Avoid walking or standing in areas dominated by grass. These areas are where one is most likely to encounter chiggers.

- Tuck your pants into your socks to avoid direct skin-to-grass contact. Chiggers can find their way through clothing, but this is a standard and effective prevention technique.
- Apply insect repellent to your skin and clothing. Please refer to the Insect Repellent section that follows for important information about selecting and applying repellent.
- Powdered sulfur applied to waist, bottoms of pants, sock and boots is also effective at repelling chiggers. However, be warned that clothes will retain the sulfur odor for several washings. If using sulfur, never touch your eyes, nose, or mouth before washing your hands first.
- Shower at the end of each day in the field. Use a washcloth to vigorously rub your legs, feet, and ankles.

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

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

Food and Water: Food and drinking water is safe for consumption in the major cities and hotels in New Caledonia and Fiji. Water served in restaurants is always safe.

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

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

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

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

SUGGESTED READING: 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 <https://amazon.com> which has a wide selection; <https://www.buteobooks.com/index.php> and <https://nhbs.com> which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and <https://abebooks.com> for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

Birds:

Samoa

There are currently no readily available field guides for Samoa. The best option is to use the Merlin Bird ID application and download the pack for Polynesia.

Watling, D. *Birds of Fiji, Tonga and Samoa*. 1982. An older field guide covering the avifauna of these island groups. Unfortunately **currently out of print**, although second hand copies may be tracked down.

Fiji

There are currently no readily available field guides for Fiji. The best option is to use the Merlin Bird ID application and download the pack for Melanesia.

Watling, D. *A Guide to the Birds of Fiji and Western Polynesia*. 2004. The only field guide covering the avifauna of Fiji. Unfortunately **currently out of print**, although second hand copies may be tracked down.

Melanesia

Dutson, G. *Birds of Melanesia: Bismarcks, Solomons, Vanuatu and New Caledonia*. Helm Field Guides, 2011.

This is the best available field guide for New Caledonia and this region of the Pacific, also covers many species possible in Fiji, but not the endemics.

APPS:

Merlin Bird ID. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Merlin is an app designed as a birding coach for beginning and intermediate birdwatchers. Excellent for use in the field, Merlin asks the observer a series of questions regarding his or her bird sighting, including date and location, and color, size, and behavior of a bird. Merlin then processes the viewer's responses to present a shortlist of possible identifications, from which the user can choose the likely bird. Species profiles include a brief physical description, photographs, and sound samples. The Photo ID feature allows anyone with a camera to snap a photo and obtain a list of suggestions. Merlin's Sound ID feature allows identification of birds through audible recognition. To use Merlin, download the app, followed by the appropriate regional "pack." For this trip, please download the pack for **Polynesia** and **Melanesia**.

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

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

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

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

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on November 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. 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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