



SOUTH DAKOTA

Black Hills & Badlands

May 30-June 10, 2027



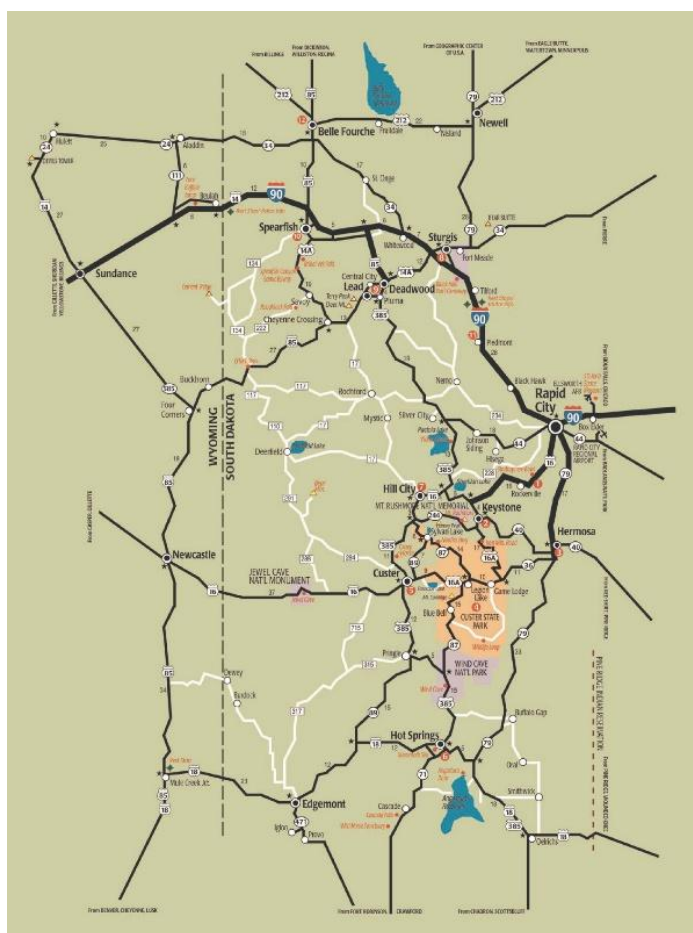
Photo Rick Wright

The craggy mountains known as Pahá Sápa, or the Black Hills, tower over the endless prairie of the Great Plains, their pine-clad slopes and stony summits home to a glorious and sometimes startling mixture of eastern and western birds, mammals, and plants. The region's rich human history is captured in such staggering monuments as Mount Rushmore and the Crazy Horse Memorial, crafted on a scale rivaled only by the work of nature in carving the more than 200 miles of underground passages that make up sparkling Jewel Cave.

Virtually at the center point of the northern plains, the granite peaks, red shale canyons, grassy mountain meadows, rushing streams, and pine-spruce forests of these mountains draw organisms from all directions. Here the observant visitor may meet up with Pinyon Jays from the

southwest, Blue Jays from the east, and Gray Jays from the Rockies. American Three-toed, Red-headed, and Black-backed Woodpeckers all nest within a few miles of each other, and Gray Catbirds, Bullock's and Orchard Orioles, and American Dippers share the lush canyon woodlands and rushing mountain streams. Eastern and Western Kingbirds, Chestnut-collared Longspurs and Red Crossbills, and Indigo and Lazuli Buntings are just some of the fascinating juxtapositions of east and west, north and south, that we can hope to encounter.

The impressive range of nesting raptors is equally appealing, with Golden Eagles, Broad-winged Hawks, and American Goshawks all good possibilities, while the high plains surrounding the mountains are the hunting grounds of Prairie Falcons and Ferruginous Hawks. Burrowing and Short-eared Owls can both be found on the shortgrass prairies, where they share an abundance of small mammal and insect prey with American Kestrels and the most elegant of grassland birds of prey, the Swainson's Hawk.



A very special excursion will take us into the otherworldly landscapes of Badlands National Park; a vast wilderness carved over the ages into jagged buttes and spires of red and green rock. Eerily quiet today, with little but the whistles of Say's Phoebes and the trills of Rock Wrens to break the silence. This area is teeming with large mammals and other wildlife in the Miocene. Abundant fossils of oreodonts, brontotheres, and ancient camels make this the richest paleontological site in the world, and we may have a chance to watch scientists at work in the field and the preparation lab.

As we enjoy the birds and the breathtaking scenery, we will have plenty of opportunity to admire the many iconic mammals still common in these environments, including the American Bison, Mule Deer, Pronghorn, and Black-tailed Prairie Dog. June is also wildflower season on the northern Great Plains. By visiting at what is, at these elevations, still the height of spring, we will find everything from harebells and prairie roses to sego lilies in glorious bloom.

The Black Hills is home to a unique mixture of eastern and western bird species and to a few taxa found nowhere else in the world. Granite peaks, red shale canyons, grassy mountain meadows, rushing streams, and pine-spruce forests are inhabited by Pinyon, Blue, and Gray Jays; American Three-toed, Red-headed, and Black-backed Woodpeckers; and Gray Catbirds, Orchard Orioles, and American Dippers. Nesting raptors are especially appealing, with Golden Eagles, Broad-winged Hawks, and American Goshawks all good possibilities, while the high plains surrounding the mountains are the hunting grounds of Prairie Falcons and Ferruginous and Swainson's Hawks. The most desired endemic is the White-winged Junco, currently classified as an extremely range-restricted subspecies of the Dark-eyed, distinctive in its large bill and startlingly white tail.

Our new tour to this captivating part of North America takes us in search of all these specialties and more as we explore the wealth of habitats in the Black Hills and make excursions onto the nearby mixed-grass prairies. As we enjoy the birds, we will also find time to admire the many mammals still common in these environments, including the American Bison, Mule Deer, Pronghorn, Black-tailed Prairie Dog, Yellow-bellied Marmot, and Eastern Fox Squirrel.



Mountain Bluebird. Photo Rick Wright

May 30, Day One: Arrival in Rapid City

Plan your arrival for today at Rapid City Regional Airport (airport code RAP). This pleasant and easily navigated airport is served by a number of airlines offering non-stop flights from Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas / Fort Worth, Denver, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Orlando, and Phoenix. Once you have collected your bags, follow the signs for our hotel's shuttle or take a taxi for the 25-minute ride into Rapid City.

We will gather for the first time as a group in the hotel lobby at 5:30 pm, then have dinner together in the hotel or nearby, a chance to get to know each other and time to talk about our plans and hopes for the next days together.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn & Suites Express Rapid City I-90



Prairie Falcon. Photo Rick Wright



Photo Rick Wright

May 31, Day Two: Rapid City and Elk Creek

After breakfast in our hotel, we will drive ten minutes to Rapid City's Outdoor Campus West, where attractive exhibits introduce the region's main habitat types. Outside, an easy, carefully maintained gravel trail takes us through open woodland to a small wetland. The western component of the Black Hills avifauna is especially prominent here, with Western Wood Pewees, Violet-green Swallows, and Spotted Towhees among the possibilities; Gray Catbirds, Brown Thrashers, Northern Cardinals, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks represent the eastern element.

We will have a quick, simple lunch in the city, then drive half an hour northeast to the Elk Creek area. In wet years, tiny Sevey Lake may attract a good variety of water birds, including Cinnamon Teal or Western Grebes. No matter what the conditions, the drier upland areas are often host to nesting Upland Sandpipers, Eastern and Western Kingbirds, Western Meadowlarks, and Lark Buntings. This is also a prime raptor area, and we are likely to see our first Swainson's Hawks or, with luck, a Ferruginous Hawk as we drive and walk the quiet country roads.

We will have dinner this evening in or near our Rapid City hotel.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn & Suites Express Rapid City I-90



Black-billed Magpie. Photo Rick Wright

June 1, Day Three: Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse Monument

We'll make an earlier start this morning for Mount Rushmore, about 40 minutes away on good, paved highways. This famous and slightly bizarre monument is the most heavily visited site in the Black Hills, but in the morning, we often find ourselves nearly alone, and birding can be good right at the impressive flag plaza overlooking the ponderosa pine forest and clear streams below the sculptured mountain. We will be looking especially for White-winged Juncos, a taxon restricted in the breeding season to the Black Hills and the Pine Ridge; the large size, thick bill, and extensively white tail of this bird are striking, and it is easy to understand why this attractive sparrow was repeatedly described as a distinct species in the nineteenth century. We may also encounter Red-breasted Nuthatches, Pine Siskins, or Red Crossbills during our visit. Rushmore is also a good place to look for the rare and rapidly decreasing Black-backed Woodpecker, which nests in nearby burned-over tracts of forest.

We will have a leisurely breakfast at the National Memorial, then return to Rapid City and check out of our hotel. Our next stop, an hour's drive south, will be the monument to another

American hero, Crazy Horse. This carving of 6,500-foot Mount Thunderhead began in 1948, and can be expected to continue for at least another decade. The face of Crazy Horse was finished in 1998, followed by one hand in the early 2020s. At the time of this writing, there was still no public access to the mountain itself, but even the views from the welcome center are stupefying. The visitor complex also comprises two museums; one focused on the work of the sculptor, Korczak Ziolkowski, and the other housing important Native American art and artifacts.



Upland Sandpiper. Photo Rick Wright

Depending on how long we linger at Crazy Horse, we will have lunch at the memorial's restaurant, Laughing Water, or in Keystone. After lunch, we will check in to our hotel in the unaptly named Custer. Five minutes away is the Harbach Trailhead, an access point to the 109-mile George Mickelson Trail, where those of us who wish to can take a short pre-dinner walk in search of Red-eyed, Plumbeous, and Western Warbling Vireos—that last a recent “re-split” from the Eastern species. We will reassemble in the early evening for dinner in town.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn Express Custer



White-winged Junco. Photo Rick Wright

June 2, Day Four: Roby Canyon and Jewel Cave

Half an hour's drive from Custer is beautiful Roby Canyon on the southwestern edge of the Black Hills where the mountains spill over into the state of Wyoming. After breakfast in our hotel, we will bird our way slowly to the remote canyon, then walk up the road to look for such specialties as the White-throated Swift, Dusky Flycatcher, and Western Tanager. The star species of this unusual pine-juniper community is the Virginia's Warbler, first discovered breeding here, the only known site in South Dakota, in 1998. The warblers are fairly common here, but are more easily heard than seen. Patience and a little luck should give us acceptable views of this species along with a selection of the other half dozen warblers breeding in the canyon, including the Audubon's Yellow-rumped, MacGillivray's, and American Redstart.

We plan to return to Custer for lunch, then double back to Jewel Cave National Monument. Jewel Cave is the fifth-longest known cave anywhere in the world, its walls and ceilings ornamented with crystals, popcorn, boxwork, frostwork, and a whole array of other exotic speleothems. Our easy guided tour will cover only a tiny fraction of the 220 miles of mapped passages. Please see the "Conditions" section below to learn more about what to expect on our Jewel Cave tour.

Caves aren't for everyone, of course, and those of us who would prefer to remain superterranean will find a nice variety of forest birds around the parking lot and visitor center. Red-naped Sapsuckers, Rock Wrens, Townsend's Solitaires, and Western Tanagers are among the species that may be encountered while the rest of us are in the cave.

We'll return to Custer for dinner.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn Express Custer



Custer State Park. Photo Rick Wright

June 3, Day Five: Custer State Park's Lakes and Mountains

After a hotel breakfast, we will begin the day with a visit to one of the most famously beautiful spots in the Black Hills, Sylvan Lake. The spruce-pine forest around the parking lot and the lake itself is among the best places in the Hills to find Gray Jays, Clark's Nutcrackers, and Red Crossbills. Red-naped Sapsuckers, Western Flycatchers, and Ruby-crowned Kinglets are often common and conspicuous here.

The one bird everyone wants to see at Sylvan Lake is the American Three-toed Woodpecker, a not terribly uncommon but reclusive resident of the spruce forest. Three-toeds can occasionally

be seen right from the parking lot, but our chances will improve if we walk the first half mile of the Black Elk Peak Trail. Black Elk, towering to an elevation of nearly 7,300 feet, is not only the highest point in the Black Hills, but the highest point anywhere in the hemisphere between Wyoming and Portugal. The trails to the top are moderately strenuous, but the first segment of the Peak Trail is relatively flat and easy, with plenty of spruce trees to check for this sometimes-elusive bird.

Lunch will be served on the shores of another lovely mountain pond, Legion Lake, where Barn and Violet-green Swallows nest beneath the restaurant eaves. Afterward, we will pay a first visit to the main unit of Custer State Park, more than 70,000 acres of forest, prairie, and riparian vegetation. We will concentrate on the Wildlife Loop, an eighteen-mile paved road that takes us to favored sites for American Bison, Pronghorn, and Black-tailed Prairie Dogs. The bison and the antelope have no serious avian predators, but the abundant prairie dogs make a fine meal for Golden Eagles, and we have a good chance at finding at least one of these splendid raptors along our route.

We will return to Custer, about 45 minutes away, for dinner.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn Express Custer



An American Bison cow and calf. Photo Rick Wright

June 4, Day Six: Buffalo Gap and the Mammoth Site

Today's excursions will take us to the southernmost Black Hills and beyond, out onto the vast mixed-grass prairies of the Buffalo Gap. Breakfast will be early, either at our hotel or in a modest café, followed by an hour and a quarter drive to Limestone Butte, a few miles east of Oelrichs and a scant 20 miles north of the Nebraska border. A small reservoir here attracts a few nesting ducks, sometimes including Cinnamon Teal, but it is the hilly prairie around the lake that is the chief draw for birders.



Limestone Butte. Photo Rick Wright

The most abundant birds along the two-track trail here are Western Meadowlarks and Horned Larks, with Grasshopper Sparrows not far behind. A Killdeer pair is often seen on the muddy shores of the reservoir, but the drier uplands belong to the king of all prairie shorebirds, the Long-billed Curlew. On most visits, hardly have we left the pavement before we see—and hear—the first curlews, females and shorter-billed males singing their eerie songs in flight close overhead. Upland Sandpipers are usually present as well, and it is sometimes possible to have both in flight display in a single binocular field.

We will also be on the lookout for the flash of white that reveals the presence of the Chestnut-collared Longspur, an uncommon prairie bird we are unlikely to see anywhere but here. The

colorful males sing from an exposed perch or in floating song flight, and they and the drabber females often join larks and sparrows feeding on the edge of the track. Even without these gems of the grassland, our visit to Limestone Butte will be an unforgettable experience.

We'll have lunch in the southern Hills city of Hot Springs, then visit the world-famous Mammoth Site on the edge of town. The modern museum structure here encloses a late Pleistocene sinkhole, from which more than 60 mammoths of at least two species have been recovered. Excavations continue, with extinct camels, short-faced bears, and shrub oxen among the other Ice Age mammals found here.



Short-eared Owl. Photo Rick Wright

It is a 45-minute drive back to Custer, where we will have dinner together before retiring to rest up from what will have been an exciting day.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn Express Custer

June 5, Day Seven: Camp Remington and Custer State Park

After yesterday's long outing, we will linger a bit over breakfast this morning, then drive half an hour to Camp Remington Road, a flat and little-traveled road laid out along a narrow stream in a heavily vegetated canyon. Swainson's Thrushes of the russet-backed subspecies, Black-headed Grosbeaks, and an abundance of House Wrens are characteristic species here, and the habitat virtually cries out for an eastern rarity to appear.

After lunch, we will return to Custer State Park, where we will explore burns, riparian woodland, and open meadows in search of more of the park's specialties. With luck and local advice, we may encounter Lazuli Buntings, Vesper and Lark Sparrows, or Sharp-tailed Grouse; if we have not already found them, we will also focus our efforts on the area's less common woodpeckers, the Black-backed, American Three-toed, and Lewis's. There is a good chance of expanding our mammal list, too.

We hope to return to Custer in time for a short break before dinner together.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn Express Custer



Grasshopper Sparrow. Photo Rick Wright

June 6, Day Eight: The Big Badlands

After an early breakfast in our hotel, we will set out on the drive to Badlands National Park. At nearly two hours, this is by far the longest of our drives, but it is well worth it.

We can count on a few birds in the park, especially Rock Wrens and Say's Phoebes. Bighorn Sheep are among the mammals to hope for on the nearly 40-mile paved road connecting the spectacular overlooks. The real draw, though, is the Big Badlands itself, a stark and colorful landscape of layered clay, shale, and ash eroded over the ages into impossibly high, impossibly steep buttes and cliffs. Each turn and each curve opens onto another otherworldly vista.

The Big Badlands are also famous as the largest trove of Oligocene and Miocene fossils anywhere in the world, and much of the notorious academic squabble known as the Bone Wars was waged here. Oreodonts, brontotheres, rhinoceroses, camels, horses, turtles, and saber-fanged cats are among the many vertebrate species found in the clays and shales. A short boardwalk leads visitors into a representative site, where casts of important specimens can be seen and touched. Though visiting hours are irregular, we may also stop at the preparation lab at the Reifel Visitor Center.

Passing from the sublime to the less sublime, we plan to have lunch today in Wall, just north of the Badlands, home to Wall Drug, a nearly century-old tourist attraction that must be seen—once—to be believed.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn Express Custer

June 7, Day Nine: LAK Reservoir and Hanna Campground

We will check out of our Custer hotel just after breakfast then head west into Wyoming. Our first stop will be at LAK Reservoir, a small and seemingly undistinguished fishing lake that has long been a prime birding spot in this part of the state. We'll be looking for everything from American White Pelicans to Yellow-breasted Chats; LAK also serves as a modest migrant trap, and June is peak season for eastern strays here.



Badlands National Park in South Dakota, Photo Rick Wright

After lunch in Newcastle, we will head northeast to re-enter the Dakota Black Hills. As time allows, we will stop at one of the loveliest birding spots in the northern Hills, Hanna. The campground here is a regular nesting site for American Dippers, and the surrounding spruce forest can be good for woodpeckers, including Red-naped Sapsuckers and American Three-toed Woodpeckers.

We will arrive at our lodge in beautiful Spearfish Canyon in time for a short break before dinner.

NIGHT: Spearfish Canyon Lodge & Resort

June 8, Day Ten: Roughlock Falls and Booth Fish Hatchery

Our lodge is ideally placed for a casual early morning walk in the canyon, and those who wish can join the leader for a short stroll before breakfast this morning. After breakfast, we will all make the five-minute drive up to Roughlock Falls, a delightful cascade reached by a walk of just a few yards from the parking area. Pine Siskins and Red Crossbills often feed in the picnic area,

and the lush vegetation around the falls provides nest sites for American Redstarts, Black-headed Grosbeaks, and Western Tanagers. Roughlock is best known as a reliable site for American Dippers, which often hunt and nest just below the falls.



MacGillivray's Warbler. Photo Rick Wright

We will have lunch at our lodge, then make the short drive to the town of Spearfish. The D. C. Booth Historic National Fish Hatchery still produces trout for release in the American West; its chief interest for most visitors, though, lies in the historic buildings scattered across the grounds and the short nature trails along the ponds and through oak and pine forests. Among the birds we can hope to find here are Wood Ducks, Bald Eagles, Ovenbirds, and both Indigo and Lazuli Buntings.

Depending on time and inclination, dinner tonight will be in Spearfish or back at our lodge, half an hour away.

NIGHT: Spearfish Canyon Lodge and Resort



Roughlock Falls. Photo Rick Wright

June 9, Day Eleven: Bear Butte

We will have an early breakfast this morning, then set out on the 50-minute drive to Bear Butte. This fifty-million-year-old igneous intrusion juts 1200 feet above the prairie, a landmark visible for many miles. Sacred to Native Americans, who still use the site for worship and prayer, much of the butte is simultaneously a South Dakota state park, a circumstance that has led to conflict and controversy in the past.

For birders, the small reservoir below the butte is the most interesting area in the park. Lingering waterfowl here may include American Wigeon and Cinnamon Teal, while American Avocets and Killdeer are common nesters when the water levels are right. Upland Sandpipers,

Bobolinks, and Orchard Orioles are among the birds often found breeding on the shrubby grasslands surrounding the lake.

We'll be back at our lodge this afternoon in time for a final walk in Spearfish Canyon, some packing, or just a rest before our final dinner together.

NIGHT: Spearfish Canyon Lodge and Resort

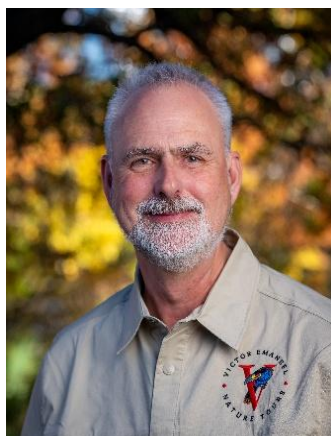
June 10, Day Twelve: Departures

We will have breakfast at our lodge this morning before returning to Rapid City (airport code RAP). The airport is a bit less than two hours from Spearfish; flights should be booked for no earlier than noon to take any delays into account. Airport Shuttle will pick up guests from the lodge and drop them off at (RAP) Rapid City airport.

ESSENTIAL TOUR INFORMATION

TOUR SIZE: This tour is limited to 10 tour participants.

TOUR LEADER(s): This tour is led by **Rick Wright**.



Rick Wright is a widely published author, scholar, and field trip leader whose work unites deep academic insight with an enduring passion for birds. A native of southeast Nebraska, Rick studied French, German, philosophy, and life sciences at the University of Nebraska before briefly attending Harvard Law School. He went on to earn a Ph.D. in Germanic Languages and Literatures from Princeton University in 1990 and spent twelve years in academia, holding faculty positions at the University of Illinois, Princeton University, and Fordham University. His early research produced two acclaimed books on Latin animal literature from the later Middle Ages.

Rick's lifelong interest in birds ultimately led him from the lecture hall to the field. He is the author of The Peterson Reference Guide to American Sparrows and the Field Guide to Birds of New Jersey and Field Guide to Birds of Arizona (second editions), as well as coauthor of Watching Birds in Montclair and Watching Birds in the New Jersey Meadowlands.

Known for his wit, erudition, and gift for making natural history accessible, Rick is a popular speaker and leader at birding events across the United States. He lives in northern New Jersey with his wife, Alison Beringer, and their dog, Quetzal.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: \$7,295 per person based on double occupancy or \$8,750 for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 12, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, all ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does **not** include airfare to nor from the starting/ending city; however, flights within the tour (if any) are included. The fee also excludes laundry, personal expenses, and other items of a personal nature. For information about gratuities, please see the "TIPPING" sub-section below.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: You may register for this tour through the VENT [website](#) or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The deposit for this tour is \$500 per person. We accept MasterCard and Visa

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 120 days (February 1, 2027) prior to the tour departure date.

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

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: Tour prices are based on the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If rates change drastically, it may be necessary to impose 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 have been passed on to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

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

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

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

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

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

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS

CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT:

- **More than 120 days prior to the tour start date:** A refund of all monies paid will be issued, less 50% of the deposit.

- **120 days or fewer prior to the tour start date:** No refund will be provided.
- **Optional add-ons:** Some tours offer optional add-ons that are designated as non-refundable. Any such add-ons are clearly identified as non-refundable at the time of booking. By selecting and purchasing an optional add-on, the participant acknowledges and accepts its non-refundable status. Fees paid for non-refundable add-ons are not refundable under any circumstances, regardless of when the tour is cancelled.

This cancellation policy applies to all participants and all tours. Because unexpected events can occur, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance.

CANCELLATION BY VENT:

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

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

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

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

TRAVEL INSURANCE

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

About Redpoint Travel's Ripcord Plan

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

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

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

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

About Medjet’s MedjetAssist Plan

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

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

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

GETTING THERE & REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

AIR TRAVEL: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per-person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international.* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

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

BAGGAGE: Please limit baggage to one piece of luggage and one carry-on. The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. Please consult your pre-departure materials and/or airline to find out specific weight restrictions.

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

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

PASSPORTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure is not required.

VISAs: Visas are not required for U.S. citizens traveling to this destination. If you hold a passport from another country, please check with your consulate or embassy for the most accurate guidance.

IMPORTANT: Travelers using non-U.S. passports are responsible for confirming any entry requirements that apply to their home country.

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTHING: Informal attire is suitable for entire tour.

- **Pants:** Lightweight textiles are recommended.
- **Long Sleeved Shirts**
- **Waterproof Jacket**
- **Light Jacket or Sweater**
- **Light Gloves**
- **Hat:** Preferably wide brimmed

FOOTWEAR: Sturdy, waterproof hiking boots or good walking shoes are appropriate for trails and roadsides. You may wish to bring a lighter pair of shoes for evenings.

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

- **Sunglasses**
- **Small Flashlight or Headlamp**
- **Notebook & Pens**

Binoculars: We strongly recommend you bring a pair of good binoculars of 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 magnification. Please do not bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because

they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. You will find that 8x32 binoculars are compact and light enough.

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

DESTINATION INFORMATION & TOUR CONDITIONS

CLIMATE & WEATHER: Summer comes late to the high elevations, and it is likely to still be pleasantly cool for most or all of our time in the Black Hills. Daytime temperatures typically reach the mid-70s F, while nights drop to the chilly 40s or even high 30s. Brief afternoon rains, varying from light mist to abrupt downpours, are characteristic of the higher reaches of the Black Hills at this season; most of the time, it is easy enough to simply wait them out. You should be prepared with a raincoat, waterproof footwear, and perhaps a small folding umbrella. Significant storms are infrequent, but lightning and hail are possible at any time. One of the most awesome sights in all of nature is the advance of a large thunderstorm across the prairies—viewed, of course, from a safe distance.

CONDITIONS: This tour stays in three hotels of good standard quality; we have at least two nights in each, reducing the time spent packing and unpacking.

Our days will typically begin with breakfast at 6:00 or 7:00, followed by a morning's birding and lunch in the early afternoon. On most days, our afternoon activities should allow us time for a short break before dinner together, which will be followed by an evening checklist session for those interested.

Western South Dakota and Wyoming are not known as prime culinary destinations, but the food we eat will be satisfying. Our breakfasts will be at the hotel, with possible exceptions on days when we have planned an early start. Because restaurants are widely scattered across the landscape, lunches will occasionally be in the field, consisting of sandwiches purchased that morning or the evening before and kept cool in an ice chest. Dinners will be in Rapid City and Custer during our stays in those cities. Our Spearfish lodge has its own good restaurant, and we plan to eat most or all our evening meals there.

Vegetarians will find that the selection at most restaurants is limited; vegans and others with similarly strict diets are likely to find some menus entirely unaccommodating and should consider bringing a supply of their favorite foods with them.

There will always be snacks and water available in the vehicles. Please bring a wide-mouthed water bottle for refilling in the hotels and from larger bottles in the vans.

Special requirements apply to our guided tour of Jewel Cave. Caves are not for everyone, and you are welcome to stay in or around the visitor center during the short half hour the ranger-led tour takes. Those who do choose to visit the cave must wear tennis shoes or hiking boots; no sandals or other open footwear are acceptable. If you are not wearing suitable shoes, you will be denied access. You should be prepared to spend up to 30 minutes in temperatures below 50° F; a light jacket or sweater is sufficient for most people, but if you are particularly sensitive to the chill, light gloves will also be useful. No backpacks, purses, handbags, hiking sticks, or walking poles are allowed in the cave. Photography is permitted with small cameras or cell phones, but you must not bring long lenses, monopods, tripods, or selfie sticks into the cave. Food, gum, candy, snacks, drinks, and large flashlights are likewise prohibited. On leaving the cave, each of us must walk through a decontamination tray to avoid spreading WNS, the fungal disease that has devastated so many bat populations.

The tour begins and ends with an elevator ride from the visitor center. Once in the first of the cave's large chambers, we will cross a concrete platform and walk down 15 steps. Visitors with difficulty negotiating stairs may remain on the platform above. We will see two types of ornate crystals responsible for the name of the cave. After a short, informative lecture on the formation and discovery of the cave, we will walk back up the 15 steps, cross the concrete platform, and ride the elevator back to the visitor center.

Apart from our cave tour, our birding and sightseeing activities will take place almost exclusively on level, mostly wide roads and trails, some of them paved but most not. The Elk Creek area, Badlands National Park, and Custer's Wildlife Loop will be birded mostly from the vehicle and on roadsides.

Rapid City's Outdoor Campus offers two flat, well-maintained trails for walkers. The walk at Booth Fish Hatchery is on paved paths. There are a few concrete steps up to the flag plaza at Mount Rushmore; an elevator is also available. Most of the trails there, though inviting, are so steep and narrow as to be inappropriate for a group visit, and we will avoid them. The path up Roby Canyon is a little-trafficked road with only a gradual ascent; the most interesting birds here are typically at the very beginning of the trail.

The hiking loops at Jewel Cave are steep at beginning and end, but some may want to explore them briefly while the rest of us stay on the flatter ground around the visitor's center. We will bird Limestone Butte by walking the slowly ascending gravel road to a point above the reservoir, a total distance of about half a mile. The wooden boardwalk through the excavation and preparation areas at the Mammoth Site has a few steps.

Camp Remington Road is a beautiful, gentle road along a narrow stream; only after considerable distance does it begin to get steep. A completely level, one-mile path circles Sylvan Lake. We will also explore the lowermost reaches of the Black Elk Peak trail, notoriously steep at the summit but with only modest slopes down here. French Creek and other hiking areas in Custer State Park can be challenging, but we limit our activities to the lower, more level beginnings of the trails.

Hanna Campground is level and open, with a short wooden footbridge crossing the creek; this bridge is traditionally a favored nest site for American Dippers. Another prime dipper spot, Roughlock Falls, can be viewed from the level parking lot; the trail leading to the pools below the falls is steep in some places, but is outfitted with handrails over much of its length. Bear Butte Reservoir is encircled by an entirely flat path, and it is usually possible to drive to the top of the butte itself for matchless views of the Black Hills and prairie.

At several of our destinations, benches or other structures offer a chance to pause on our walks; it is also possible to remain at the van should a particular site seem too challenging. You will never be required to exert yourself beyond your physical capacity.

IN THE FIELD: Remembering a few helpful practices will make your tour even more enjoyable. Participants must regularly change seats in the vehicle so that everyone has an opportunity to

ride at least once in the “best” places—typically the front seat. If you eat or drink in the van, please be sure to dispose of any wrappers or other garbage in the bags provided.

On our short birding walks, do not go ahead of the leader unless you are told to do so. Stay on paths and try to avoid blocking other participants—especially shorter participants—sight lines.

If you see or hear a bird that the leader appears to have missed, quietly point it out; sometimes he will genuinely not have noticed it, but at other times he will have decided to prioritize a different bird and plans to return by the same route. If you miss a bird, please let the leader know so that he can be sure to get you “on” the next individual of the species.

Part of the pleasure of a birding tour is interacting with other people with similar interests. Quiet conversation is usually no problem at all, for the birds or for other birders, but please pay attention to signals, verbal and non-verbal, from the leader that it is time to be silent when approaching a bird or a promising patch of habitat.

If you need anything during our time afield, a rest or a drink or a band-aid, just let the leader know, and he will do what he can to accommodate you. This is your tour, and you should help us, help you enjoy The VENT Difference in comfort.

ELEVATION: We will be birding at elevations ranging from 3,000 to 6,500 feet. These altitudes are unlikely to cause discomfort in most people, but if you are particularly sensitive or are coming directly from sea level, you may want to arrive in Rapid City a day or two before the tour starts to acclimate. If you have had difficulty before with travel at high elevations, consult your physician before registering for this tour.

INTERNET ACCESS: Each of our hotels offers WIFI connections in the rooms, but their strength can vary with the time of day, weather, and other inscrutable factors.

TIME: 2 Hours Behind Eastern Standard Daylight Time

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry facilities are available at select hotels during the tour, including the Holiday Inn Express & Suites Custer and accommodations in the Savoy Spearfish Lodge. Guests

wishing to do laundry during the tour should plan to use these opportunities as available, and bringing a small amount of travel detergent is recommended.

NATURAL HAZARDS: There are few natural hazards in this part of the world, almost all of them easily avoided by staying alert to your own behavior.

Wild mammals pose little danger in this area. Bobcats and coyotes, both of which are common, are extremely furtive. The same goes for mountain lions, which are present in good numbers in the Black Hills but almost never seen; should you be so fortunate as to encounter one, do not run, but raise your hat or pack high above your head and speak loudly to the cat, which will flee. Continual rumors to the contrary, there appear to be no black bears in South Dakota (grizzly bears were extirpated almost a century and a half ago).

The greatest risk is running into an American bison or a moose. Moose are scarce and rarely seen in the Hills, but it is important if you do see one to avoid coming between a cow and her calf; the best solution is to return immediately to the vehicle or some other type of shelter. Bison are common at some of our sites and are notoriously ill-tempered all year round—especially so when they are calving in late spring. In this case, too, a rapid retreat is called for to avoid conflict with these huge and somewhat oblivious prairie monsters.

The only poisonous reptile found here is the prairie rattlesnake. These handsome snakes are probably not rare, but they are very hard to find. Though South Dakota sees only one or two incidents of snakebite a year, nearly all hospitals keep antivenin on hand. Far more convenient than a trip to the hospital is the habit of simply keeping your hands and feet out of any place you cannot see into. Staying on trails and not shuffling through brush piles and rocks is enough to prevent any unwanted encounters.

Ticks are present throughout the area and are especially common in grassland habitats. The most frequently employed strategy to avoid tick bites is to wear pale clothing and tuck your pants hem into your socks, making it easier to detect and destroy these tiny pests. As in most parts of the world, South Dakota's ticks can transmit disease to humans; it is worthwhile to check for ticks at the end of each day.

HEALTH & SAFETY

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

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over the counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

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

SUN EXPOSURE: The sun’s ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes), even in winter and early spring. Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. 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.

BITING INSECTS: Chiggers, which can be a considerable annoyance at the height of summer, are generally not a problem this early in the season. Staying out of the grass and on the paths and roads is the best way to avoid them.

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

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

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

Insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

- **Permanone® (Permethrin):** is an odorless spray-on repellent that may be used for pre-treatment of clothing, gear, and tents. It should not be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pre-treatment process requires a number of hours to complete and must be done outdoors, so it is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment must be repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.

- **Insect Shield® apparel:** Clothing pre-treated with Permethrin is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

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

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

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

SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION

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

FIELD GUIDES:

Birds

Floyd, T. 2025. *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of the United States and Canada: West*. 2nd ed. Washington, DC: National Geographic Society. Recommended.

Sibley, D. 2014. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. 2nd ed. New York: Knopf. Recommended.

Zimmer, K. 2000. *Birding in the American West: A Handbook*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP. Highly recommended.

BIRDING RESOURCES AND GENERAL NATURE:

Brock, J., and K. Kaufman. 2006. *Kaufman Field Guide to Butterflies of North America*. Boston: Mariner Books.

Farrar, J. 2011. *Field Guide to Wildflowers of Nebraska and the Great Plains*. 2nd ed. Iowa City: U Iowa P.

Froiland, S. 2016. *Natural History of the Black Hills and Badlands*. Sioux Falls, SD: Center for Western Studies.

Gries, J. 1996. *Roadside Geology of South Dakota*. Missoula, MT: Mountain P.

Marrone, G. 2002. *Field Guide to Butterflies of South Dakota*. Pierre, SD: Dept. of Game, Fish, and Parks.

Ostler, J. 2011. *The Lakotas and the Black Hills: The Struggle for Sacred Ground*. New York: Penguin Random House.

Ried, F. 2006. *Peterson Field Guide to Mammals of North America*. 4th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Shepard, L. 1996. *Smithsonian Guides to Natural America: The Northern Plains*. New York: Random House.

CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY APPS & ONLINE RESOURCES:

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

MERLIN BIRD ID: Merlin is an app designed as a birding coach for beginning and intermediate bird watchers. Excellent for use in the field, Merlin asks the observer a series of questions regarding his or her bird sighting, including date and location, and color, size, and behavior of a

bird. Merlin then processes the viewer's responses to present a shortlist of possible identifications, from which the user can choose the likely bird. Species profiles include a brief physical description, photographs, and sound samples. The Photo ID feature allows anyone with a camera to snap a photo and obtain a list of suggestions. Merlin's Sound ID feature allows identification of birds through audible recognition. To use Merlin, download the app, followed by the appropriate regional "pack."

TERMS, CONDITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

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

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

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on August 7, 2026, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

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

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

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

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