GHANA

An Avian Bonanza on Africa's Gold Coast

March 1 - 25, 2027

The near-mythical White-necked Rockfowl (Yellow-headed Picathartes) © B. Cottele

Exotic, extremely friendly, safe, and English-speaking, Ghana is a true mecca for West African birding. Lying along Africa's stunning Gold Coast, this beautiful country—smaller than the state of Oregon—boasts many sought-after West African and Upper Guinea endemics, a broad cross section of African bird families, exciting big game, and a magical kaleidoscope of colorful butterflies. Our route is jam-packed with colorful specialties, including up to five turaco species, ten magical bee-eaters, five rollers, ten kingfishers, and an amazing 20 sunbird species, including the regionally endemic and striking Buff-throated. An acclaimed new field guide makes the identification of Ghana's more than 760 bird species easier and fun. Our comprehensive itinerary explores all the major biomes, from rich lowland rainforest, farm bush, coastal savannas, gallery forest, rich coastal lagoons, and glorious white sand beaches to the arid Guinea and Sudan savannas of the Sahel region in the north. An exciting visit to an impressive canopy walkway lets us see many otherwise inaccessible birds at eye level. March is prime time for good weather and for wintering European songbirds. We expect our list to approach 450 bird species, and there are good photographic opportunities throughout.

The crème de la crème in Ghana are two intriguing and highly sought-after birds, each occupying its own distinct family: the nearly mythical White-necked Rockfowl (or Yellow-headed Picathartes) and the sublimely beautiful Egyptian Plover. Just as coveted is the incomparable Standard-winged Nightjar, the males of which are uniquely ornamented with two amazingly long bare wing shafts that poses a wild looking webbed plume at the tip! These wing feathers that, in flight, follow above and behind them are sometimes described as three birds in one. These nocturnal beauties simply must be seen to be believed!

Male Standard-winged Nightjar and his amazing standards! © Andrew Whittaker

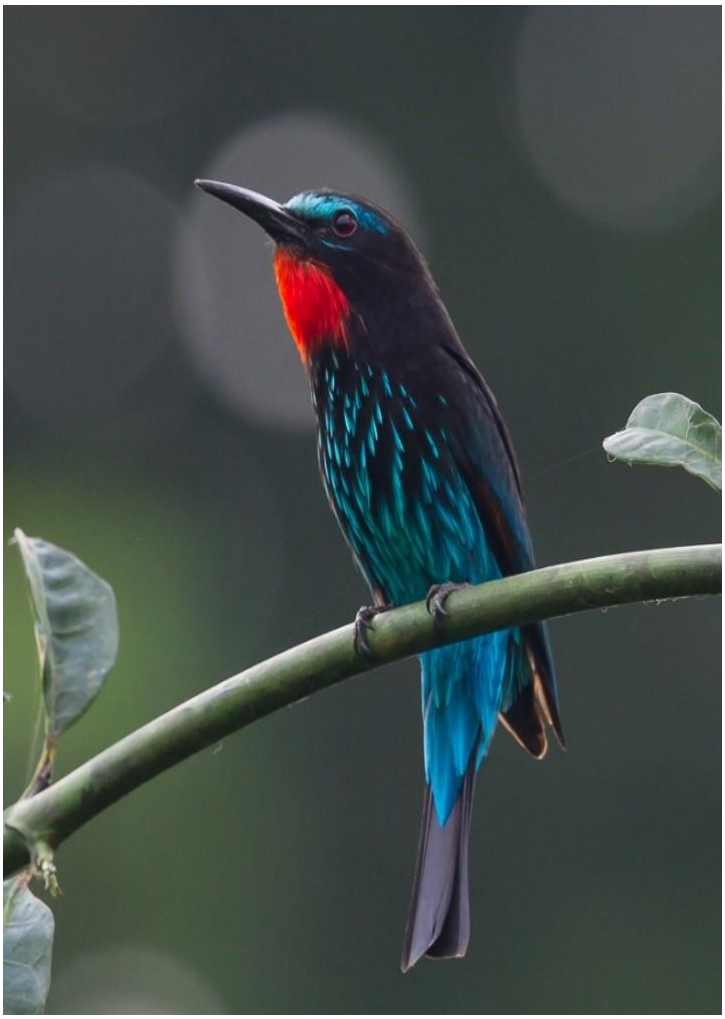
Alongside these avian riches, we will also enjoy an exciting selection of cool mammals, including the Savanna Elephant, Roan Antelope (rare), Kob, Bushbuck, Defassa Waterbuck, Western Hartebeest (rare), Warthog, Slender Mongoose, Olive Baboon, range restricted Lowe's Monkeys and Geoffrey's Pied Colobus monkeys. With luck, we may even encounter the remarkable Bongo, a nocturnal, forest-dwelling antelope. Nighttime excursions will give us a chance at the Blotched Genet, Pel's Anomalure (an incredible flying squirrel–like rodent), the cute Potto, Sengal Galago, or even a rare Pangolin (observed on our previous two tours).

Sacred Monkey the delicate Lowe's Monkey © Andrew Whittaker

Ghana's national parks are justly world-famous. In Kakum National Park, Africa's only canopy walkway allows us to enjoy a plethora of avian treasures in this remarkable rainforest at eye level. The many Upper Guinean endemics we will be looking for include Yellow-casqued and Brown-cheeked Hornbills, Fire-bellied Woodpecker, Copper-tailed Starling, Sharpe's Apalis, and Ussher's Flycatcher. Among the many other notable species here are the Congo Snake-Eagle, Rosy Bee-eater, Yellow-billed Turaco, African Emerald Cuckoo, Black Bee-eater, Blue-throated Roller, Western Yellow-billed Barbet, and Blue Cuckooshrike.

Ankasa Reserve is another natural paradise, where our beautiful lodge nestles in the forest alongside the delightful Ankasa River. Avian gems simply abound, including such sought-after greats as Long-tailed Hawk, African Finfoot, the legendary Nkulengu Rail, Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill, Chocolate-backed Kingfisher, Blue-moustached Bee-eater (rare), Great Blue Turaco, Red-billed Helmetshrike, Red-chested Owlet, Rufous-sided Broadbill, Red-fronted Antpecker, and Orange-breasted Forest Robin. Secluded forest pools hold Dwarf Bittern, Little Heron, Spot-breasted Ibis, White-crested Tiger-Heron, Hartlaub's Duck, and Shining-blue, White-bellied, African Dwarf kingfishers, and Red-headed Malimbe, along with the rare Dwarf Crocodile.

In Abrafo Forest, we will walk to a protected area with a breeding colony of the unique and bizarre White-necked Rockfowl. Like South America's cocks-of-the-rock, this secretive forest-dwelling bird cements its mud nest onto the bare faces of the dry overhangs, granitic boulders, and inselbergs that characterize this landscape. We even stand a chance of encountering the mythical pangolin!



Black Bee-eater © Willie DeVries

Northern Ghana's Sahel region features drier Guinean woodland and savanna and the spectacular Mole National Park, home to almost 100 mammal species and more than 330 species of birds. Our delightful lodge here stands atop an 800-foot escarpment, with breathtaking views out over the park's 1,900 square miles. It is an amazing feeling to sit on the pool terrace or your private balcony watching the antics of African Savanna Elephants bathing in the watering hole below. Among the sought-after birds here are Denham's Bustard, the incredible Standard-winged Nightjar, mind blowing Northern Carmine bee-eater, rare Forbes's Plover, White-throated Francolin, Stone Partridge, Oriole Warbler, Emin's Shrike, and African Spotted Creeper. This area is also home to a mouthwatering assortment of sunbirds and many raptors. Mammals abound, and we hope to see Kob, Bushbuck, Waterbuck, Western Hartebeest, and maybe even the beautiful Roan Antelope.

We will also sample Ghana's history with a visit to the infamous Cape Coast Castle, built in 1653, now a World Heritage Site and a chilling reminder of the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade.

Unique and spectacular Egyptian Plover © Ashanti Tours

March 1–2, Days 1–2: Travel to Accra, Ghana

Participants should plan their flights to arrive in Accra (Kotoka International Airport, code ACC) in time for dinner on March 2 (Day 2). After clearing customs and immigration, you will be met by a representative of our local operator and transferred to our wonderful Labadi Beach Hotel, where a room has been reserved in your name.

We will meet as a group for the first time at 6:30 pm on March 2 in the hotel lobby for a brief orientation followed by dinner. The Labadi Beach Hotel is a true oasis. Situated right on the beautiful Atlantic coast, it's an ideal place to relax before beginning our West Africa adventure. Even better, it is rather birdy, too, with expansive grounds, and the adjacent beach and shaded pools provide a pleasing introduction to the local birdlife. Black Kite, Red-eyed and Laughing doves, Little Swift, Western Reef-Heron, Black Heron, Pied, Malachite and Woodland Kingfishers, White-throated Bee-eater, Green Woodhoopoe, Pied Crow, African Pied Wagtail, African Thrush, Common Bulbul and the odd Piapiac are all here, and we even have a chance of finding a Western Plantain-eater or West African Crested Tern offshore.

Those desiring more time to rest following the lengthy international flight are encouraged to arrive in Accra a day or two early. VENT will be happy to help with extra arrangements on request.

NIGHTS: Aboard international flight (March 1)

Labadi Beach Hotel, Accra (March 2)

Black Heron © Andrew Whittaker

March 3, Day 3: Achimota Forest and Sukumono Lagoon

Today we plan to ease our way into a nice relaxed introduction to Ghana's fascinating avifauna. The delightful nearby Achimota reserve is perfect for our early morning's birding. Some of our target birds include Gray Kestrel, Violet and Guinea Turaco, Double-toothed Barbet, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Yellow-crowned Gonolek, Northern Puffback, Yellow-gorgeted Greenbull, Leaf-love, Brown Babbler, Greater and Lesser Blue-eared Starling and Western Bluebill.

Yellow-crowned Gonolek © Andrew Whittaker

Returning to our hotel for lunch and an afternoon rest before heading out later to Sukumono Lagoon for an enjoyable look at several shorebirds, herons, egrets and songbirds. Wintering Palearctic shorebirds should be prominent with Collared Pratincole, Common Ringed Plover, Wood and Common Sandpiper, Common Greenshank and always with a chance of a surprise vagrant. Residents such as the beady eyed Senegal Thick-knee, smart Spur-winged Lapwing, Kittlitz's Plover, long legged Black-winged Stilts, Yellow-billed Egret, African Jacana and African Swamphen. While Western Yellow Wagtails and our first Little-bee-eaters will add a splash of color. Returning to our beach hotel for the birdlist and another good meal.

NIGHT: Labadi Beach Hotel, Accra

March 4, Day 4: Shai Hills and onto Ho

After a good breakfast, we will leave early for the lovely Shai Hills Wildlife Reserve. This sanctuary's scenic savanna grasslands, open woodland, and scattered rocks and caves offer a nice cross-section of different species. We expect to find several of the exotic-looking species that seem to leap off of the pages of the Ghana field guide, including Blue-bellied and Purple Rollers, Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters, the odd Bearded Barbet, Blue-breasted Kingfisher, Splendid Sunbird, and Senegal Parrott. Among the

many other species possible here are Double-spurred Spurfowl, Black-billed Wood-Dove, Senegal Coucal, African Gray Hornbill, African Barred Owlet, (West African) Helmeted Guineafowl, a possible species-level split, White-crested Helmetcrest, Blackcap Babbler, Senegal Eremomela, Green-backed Cameroptera, Mocking Cliff-Chat and White-shouldered Black-Tit. Following the best hours of birding, we will stop on route for lunch. We plan to arrive at our pleasant hotel in Ho after the late afternoon excursion.

NIGHT: Chances Hotel, Ho

(West African) Helmeted Guineafowl © Andrew Whittaker

March 5, Day 5: Kalakpa Resource Reserve and nearby farmbush

Our birding destination this morning is a small forest reserve teeming with birds. Here, just above the small town of Amedzofe, at an altitude of about 2000 feet, a lovely and lush Guinean forest is crisscrossed by secluded water courses and fresh springs bubble out of the hillside, an essential water supply for the locals. In the early morning, these rich forests echo with the bizarre ringing hoots of stunning Fiery-breasted and Many-colored Bushshrikes. Other species may include the elusive Ahanta Spurfowl, European Honey buzzard, African Green-Pigeon, Levaillant's Cuckoo, Narina Trogon, Blue-

breasted Kingfisher, Blue Malkoha, Speckled Tinkerbird, Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike, Sharps drongo, Red-cheeked Wattle-eye, the range-restricted Baumann's Greenbul, Gray-headed Bristlebill, Green Hylia, Finsch's Flycatcher-Thrush, Brown and Puvel's Illadopses, plus a set of superb sunbirds including collared, green-headed, splendid and superb.

After lunch and a midday break, our late afternoon excursion leads us to explore farmbush until dusk for some nocturnal gems. This open habitat is good for Red-necked Buzzard, Wattled Lapwing, groups of Green Woodhoopoe, West African Pied Hornbill, Broad-billed Roller, migrant European Bee-eater, Yellow-billed Shrike and Moustached Grass-Warbler.

As dusk falls our main target is the incredible Standard-winged Nightjar. These are truly the holy grail in night birds and have to be seen to be believed. Other nightjars should include Fiery-necked (Black-shouldered) and tiny Plain. Another highlight could include the distinctive Northern White-faced Owl.

NIGHT: Chances Hotel, Ho

Northern White-faced Owl © Andrew Whittaker

March 6, Day 6: Kalakpa Resource Reserve, and return to Accra

This morning we'll search another area of the reserve for any species we still require. the localized and skulky Capuchin Babbler. We hope to encounter the localized Benin Tree Hyrax. After an early lunch, we will head back to Accra and the lovely Labadi Beach Hotel. Time permitting, we will bird around the grounds and walk to a nearby lagoon - good for terns, shorebirds, and herons - before a wonderful buffet dinner and a good rest.

NIGHT: Labadi Beach Hotel, Accra

March 7, Day 7: Winneba, Cape Coast Castle, and on to Jukwa

To avoid Accra's morning rush hour, we will leave very early today and head west along the coastal highway, passing tiny food stands (with hilariously grandiose names like Consuming Fire Fast Food), repair shops, traditional medicine stalls, and taxis, which all compete for precious space in this entrepreneurial wonderland. Our first destination is Winneba, consisting of lagoons, mud flats, and saltpans now recognized as a Ramsar site due to its globally important wintering shorebird population. Here we should find a variety of Palearctic plovers and sandpipers, including Black-winged Stilt, Bar-tailed Godwit, Common Ringed Plover, Spur-winged Lapwing, Eurasian Whimbrel (now split from Hudsonian), Marsh and Curlew Sandpipers, Common Greenshank, Common Redshank, and Little Stint. We will keep a keen eye out for the localized White-fronted Plover or a rarity or two: on past tours, we have discovered both Broad-billed Sandpiper (a country first) and even a lost White-rumped Sandpiper!

Large flocks of terns are usually in attendance here too, and we should find the resident race of Little Tern, Roseate and Black Terns, and the recently split West African Crested Tern among the larger Royal Terns. Black-morph Western Reef-Herons, Pied Kingfisher, and Reed Cormorants will be common, while flocks of Black Kites often rest on the beach and colorful Western Yellow Wagtails chase insects across the white sands.

From Winneba, we will continue west, keeping an eye open for Broad-billed Rollers or White-throated Bee-eaters on roadside wires. Arriving at Cape Coast, we will visit the notorious Cape Coast Castle, a World Heritage Site that preserves a chilling reminder of the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade, over the course of which 12 to 20 million West Africans were taken to the New World. This “slave castle,” built by the Swedish in 1653, housed many of those enslaved Africans before they were loaded into vessels bound for the Americas. Our guided tour will visit the dank dungeons and the notorious “Door of No Return.” This is a deep and sobering experience. Always armed with our binoculars as Ethiopian Swallows breed here, and it can be good for terns passing by such as Gull-billed and (Eurasian) Sandwich Tern - a probable future split.

Broad-billed Roller © Andrew Whittaker

We will continue to our hotel in Jukwa, near Kakum National Park. The hotel grounds often turn up Western Plaintain-eaters, Splendid Sunbirds, or Mottled Spinetails hawking insects overhead. There may also be time in the late afternoon to explore an area of scrub and farm-bush nearby. Species could include African Cuckoo-Hawk, Velvet-mantled Drongo, Northern Fiscal, Red-faced Cisticola, Copper Sunbird, Olive-naped and Chestnut-and-black Weaver, Black-winged Bishop, Bronze and Black-and-White Mannikin.

NIGHT: Rainforest Lodge, Jukwa

March 8–9, Days 8–9: Kakum National Park and Antwikwaa

We will have two full days to explore the superb Kakum National Park and adjacent forests. On our first day, after an early breakfast, we will head for the famous canopy walkway, just a fifteen-minute drive away. We aim to arrive just before first light so that we can experience the awakening forest and its lovely tropical voices. To visit during the critical early morning birding hours, we will make special arrangements for the early opening of the walkway, where we will spend the better part of the morning. From this vantage point, 120 feet above the forest floor, we have fairly open viewing, and we can anticipate encountering a good number of canopy species typically seen only from far below. The walkway is well maintained, and its seven observation platforms are large enough for us to use telescopes.

Birding the famous Kakum Canopy Walkway is a true highlight © Andrew Whittaker

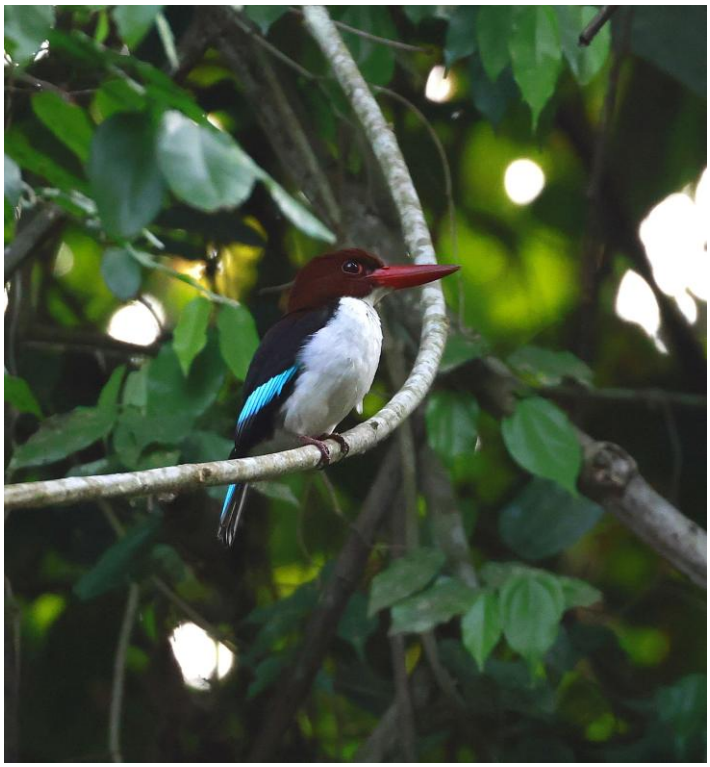
The many species we hope to see include some of West Africa's most highly sought forest jewels; the African Emerald and Klaas's Cuckoo, Blue-throated Roller, Black Bee-eater, Violet-backed Hyliota, and Fire-bellied Woodpecker. Hornbills may include the Western Long-tailed, Western Dwarf, and Brown-cheeked. A wide range of other canopy gems include Naked-faced Barbet, Ussher's Flycatcher, Sharpe's Apalis, Sabine's Puffback, Rufous-crowned Eremomela, and Gray-headed Nigrita. Sunbirds are possible including Fraser's, Little Green, Blue-throated Brown, and Splendid to Red-headed Malimbe, Yellow-mantled and Maxwell's Black Weavers. Be forewarned: the butterflies here can be quite a distraction from even such wonderful birds as these.

The platforms provide a fabulous vista over the forest and forest edge, offering a chance at some impressive raptor watching. The African Harrier-Hawk, Palm-nut Vulture, Congo Snake-Eagle, the rarely seen Cassin's Hawk-Eagle, and the superb Long-tailed Hawk are all possible here. This is also a good place for stunning Rosy Bee-eaters or mixed flocks of spinetails and other swifts such as poorly-known Bates hunting overhead.

As the day heats up, we will take advantage of the hotel's proximity for lunch and a mid-afternoon siesta. During the latter part of the day, we'll visit a different section of the national park to sample a range of microhabitats and their attendant bird species. As always, we will be alert to mixed-species flocks, which often include several understory skulkers. We will make a late afternoon or night excursion to look for Brown nightjars and owls. If we are lucky, we might spot a beady-eyed Potto or hear the wild calls of Demidoff's Galagos.

The spectacular and common African Emerald Cuckoo will certainly be seen © P. Gnodde

Forest edges and dirt roads through these magnificent jungles can be extremely productive, especially early in the morning or late in the afternoon. This more open habitat supports a remarkably different suite of bird species, among many others the shy Ahanta Spurfowl, Yellow-billed Turaco, Hairy-breasted and Yellow-spotted Barbet, Black-casqued Hornbill, Black Cuckoo, Black Goshawk, West African Wattle-eye, Dusky-blue Flycatcher, Black-headed Paradise Flycatcher, Violet-backed and Splendid Starling, Black and classy Rosy Bee-eaters, and wonderous Chocolate-backed Kingfisher.



Chocolate-backed Kingfisher © Andrew Whittaker

West African forests harbor a confusingly rich assemblage of greenbuls. These largely sociable birds inhabit the forest mid-story, typically in noisy mixed flocks, and can present a big challenge to identify. Among the many we might see are the Slender-billed, Golden, Swamp, Honeyguide, Western Bearded-Greenbul, Red-tailed, Yellow-bearded (endangered), Little, Yellow-whiskered, Plain, Gray, Icterine, and Western Nicator (now not always classified as a greenbul).

Rainforest mammals are never conspicuous, but we should see several species of primates, including Lesser Spot-nosed Monkey and Lowe's Mona Monkey. However, we should be able to find several diurnal squirrels, including the African Giant Squirrel and Fire-footed Rope-squirrel.

Birding the interior of these forests is challenging, but the rewards can be marvelous, and the joy of being inside the forest is itself well worth the effort.

Another early start takes us to the Antwikwaa section of Kakum National Park, where we hope to add even more amazing birds to a steadily growing list, perhaps including the White-spotted Flufftail. Some of the more difficult species we'll be seeking are the Ayres's Hawk-Eagle, Tit hylia, and Forest Penduline-Tit.

In the afternoon we will turn our attention to the trails within and surrounding the park, which should prove very productive. Here we hope to find Yellow-billed Turaco, Red-billed and Western Dwarf hornbills, Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo, White-tailed Alethe, and Orange-breasted Forest Robin. We may stay out until dark today to try for any owls and nightjars not yet tallied.

NIGHTS: Rainforest Lodge, Jukwa

March 10, Day 10: Abafro, and to Ankasa Reserve

This morning, we will concentrate on the farmland, scrub, and trails at Abrafo, an area of forested habitat near Kakum National Park. Some of the many birds possible will be familiar friends by now, but others will be new to the trip. We'll be watching for Levaillant's Cuckoo, Speckled Tinkerbird, Rufous-sided Broadbill, Sabine's Puffback, Gray Longbill, Red-faced and Whistling Cisticolas, Fanti Sawwing, Lesser Striped Swallow, Finsch's Flycatcher-Thrush, Pale Flycatcher, Brown Illadopsis, Johann's Sunbird, Black-and-white Mannikin, and a host of others.

We will return to the lodge for lunch before setting off on what should prove a major trip highlight, a visit to Ankasa Reserve. This is the only one of Ghana's wet evergreen rainforests to remain in nearly pristine condition. Along the way, we will make a stop at Boko Marsh home to look for the attractive African Pygmy Goose, Allen's Gallinule, Black Crake, Little Grebe,and, hopefully, breeding Chestnut-and-black or stricking Orange weavers.

Closer to the coast, we will stop at the Ebi River to seek out a mangrove specialist, the Mouse-brown Sunbird, or perhaps Piping Hornbills or our first Hartlaub's Duck or even an African Finfoot.

The magnificent Great Blue Turaco © Andrew Whittaker

The 139 square miles of semi-deciduous and wet evergreen rainforest that make up Ankasa Reserve itself lie in the far western corner of Ghana, on the border with Ivory Coast. This naturalist's paradise is biologically the most diverse rainforest in the country, and one of the most diverse in West Africa, protecting over 800 vascular plant species, almost 650 species of butterfly, and many rare and sought-after bird species including the incomparable Great Blue Turaco.

Rare mammals still found here include the Forest Elephant, Bongo, Diana Monkey, Chimpanzee (rare), and several species of pangolin. Historically, even Western Gorillas were here before being hunted to local extinction.

We will be welcomed by the superb and extremely friendly staff of our delightful, newly constructed lodge, which offers majestic rainforest views right from your private balcony.

The lodge garden is the best site to see the range restricted Reichenbach's Sunbird. Over our three full days here, we will explore this remote forest in four-wheel-drive vehicles, which will take us to the best sites at the best time of day.

NIGHT: Ankasa Reserve Lodge, Ankasa Reserve

March 11–13, Day 11–13: Birding Ankasa Reserve

It is a truly amazing experience to listen to the magical forest awakening all around us. After an early breakfast, we'll set off in our 4x4's deep into the forest in search of birds.

Western Crested Guineafowl are occasionally seen along the road, or we could flush a neat Dwarf Bittern. Quietly waiting at secluded water holes may produce such forest gems as the poorly known

White-bellied Kingfisher or even an endangered Dwarf Crocodile. This is a terrific spot to encounter the odd looking and rarely seen Red-fronted Antpecker, White-crested Tiger-Heron, Spot and Spot-breasted Ibis - both crepuscular. Other stars are multicolored forest gem kingfishers; such as Blue-breasted; African Dwarf and Shining-blue.

Shining-blue Kingfisher © Andrew Whittaker

Walking forest trails, I hope we will observe a true favorite of mine, the incredibly cute Rufous-sided Broadbill. Males produce an unbirdlike metallic rattle as they display to the females by launching into a unique circular display flight showing off their white rump patch and bright orange flanks before returning to their perch.

Rufous-sided Broadbill © Andrew Whittaker

Interior forest birding and along the road can produce such mega birds as Blue-moustached Bee-eater (rare), groups of noisy Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill, Red-chested Owlet, Dusky or Olive Long-tailed

Cuckoo, Thick-billed Cuckoo, Forest Scimitarbill, Yellow-chinned Sunbird, shy Orange-breasted Forest Robin, Rufous-winged and Blackcap Illadopsis, White-tailed Antthrush, Blue-billed Malimbe to Copper-tailed Starling.

Night birding here is rewarding with one of Africa's most sought-after but rarely seen owls, the Akun Eagle-Owl. We will also try for Fraser's Eagle-owl, the African Wood-Owl, the African Palm Civet, and Hammer-headed Bat. Nocturnal primates such as big-eyed and cute Pottos. Demidoff's Galagos are also possible.

Around dusk and in the early hours of darkness, we will try to find the almost mythical Nkulengu Rail. These large rallids roost in trees in the forest understory and emit their loud "Congo-drum" duets mostly after dusk. Our last two tours enjoyed superb studies, thanks to our excellent guide's skill in locating this mega bird. Note this often requires a hike into the forest accompanied by our forest guide which can be exhilarating but worth it.

Our evenings will be spent enjoying good food and discussing the day's birding over cold drinks at the lodge bar.

NIGHTS: Ankasa Reserve Lodge, Ankasa Forest

A family of mythical Nkulengu Rail roosting © Andrew Whittaker

White-throated Bee-eater are common migrants. © B. Cottele

March 14, Day 14: Ankasa Reserve, Brenu Akyinim & to Jukwa

We will have a final morning of birding at this wonderful location, perhaps walking trails nearby to find any species we may have missed. Open areas are good for Sabine's and rarer Cassin's Spinetails sallying for insects overhead.

After a delightful lunch, we will return toward Kakum National Park. Along the way, we will visit the coastal savanna at Brenu, where special birds may include the wondrous Guinea Turaco, Blue-headed Coucal, Great-spotted Cuckoo, Viellot's Barbet, large Rufous-chested Swallow, Red-winged Prinia, Yellow-crowned Gonolek, to Pin-tailed Whydah or Bar-bellied Firefinch, and Marsh, Brown-crowned or Black-crowned Tchagras.

Later, we will backtrack to nearby Jukwa and our hotel of a few nights earlier, to relax and reflect on another great day's birding.

NIGHT: Rainforest Lodge, Jukwa

March 15, Day 15: Abrafo (Kakum National Park), Pra River to Yellow-headed Picathartes Reserve at Bonkro

We will check out after an early breakfast to bird some nearby farm brush in search of the striking Red-cheeked Wattle-eye and the amazing White-spotted Flufftail. Large colonies of Pruss's Swallows nest under the bridges.

After what should be an excellent morning in the field, we'll set off for the Ashanti region, stopping along the way at the Pra River for Rock Pratincoles, which roost and breed here on large boulders. We may see the colorful White-throated Blue Swallows swooping after insects, and, If we are very lucky, we could even find a cool-looking White-crowned Lapwing.

We'll continue to the remote village of Bonkro, set among low rolling hills in proximity to a small rainforest. We'll check in to the Picathartes Guesthouse which was built by our excellent, conservation-minded tour operator, Ashanti African Tours, and donated to the communities surrounding the forest, along with a restaurant and a school that now offers education to 300 children. After lunch, we will have time for a rest in our rooms.

Our visit to this area is a unique opportunity to see one of the world's truly bizarre birds, the blackish ghost of these West African rainforests, the White-necked Rockfowl (also known as the Yellow-headed Picathartes). This shy and extremely local bird, one of only two species in the family Picathartidae, is endemic and extremely localized to primary forests from Guinea to Ghana which have large rock formations. They nest in tiny colonies, and there are 12 to 16 active nests around Bonkro, all reached by walking through these enchanting, protected forests.

The walk through this beautiful forest, which takes, depending on one's fitness level, 45 to 60 minutes, is an important part of the experience and only adds to the almost mythical cachet enjoyed by the bird.

As we approach the nesting site, we need to be very quiet. We take our seats on benches built for our comfort as we wait, sometimes a couple of hours, for the birds to return from foraging for snails, frogs, and insects. As these birds are shy forest dwellers it's important for us to wear dull colors and remain seated and still. The overhanging rock face before us and the small cave with the birds' mud

nests create an impressive backdrop as we wait patiently. At some stage later, these remarkable birds will appear almost like magic from the understory, hopping and jumping yards at a time, bouncing between rocks or vines, stopping to preen, often just a few feet from our eyes—no telescope needed - before retiring to roost! Truly one of my most magical birding experiences ever!

White-necked Rockfowl © Andrew Whittaker

Once we have enjoyed good views, we'll leave the rockfowl in peace and set off back through the forest to our accommodations and a well-deserved cold drink. Our hosts will have prepared a wonderful celebratory meal, and we'll enjoy our evening reflecting on this day. Staying in this remote local community, meeting the locals, and relaxing in this quiet setting will be a definite highlight of our time together.

VENT is proud to use this site, as our visit helps this important ecotourism project provide financial incentives for the locals to protect their forest and its wonderful rockfowl.

Following dinner we will offer an optional night walk (weather permitting) in search of the mythical Pangolin. With strictly no hunting here and great conservation, this area offers an exceptional chance for the two species of pangolin; Long-tailed (Black-bellied) and White-bellied. With the luck and some expert trackers on our side, we do stand a good chance. Last year we were incredibly fortunate to observe a Long-tailed sleeping during the daytime in a tree!

NIGHT: Picathartes Guest House, Bonkro

Sleeping Long-tailed (black-bellied) Pangolin © Andrew Whittaker

March 16, Day 16: Bonkro Forest and Bobiri Butterfly Sanctuary

We'll enjoy a slightly more relaxed breakfast this morning. The bird community here is similar to that of Kakum, which means opportunities to search for any species we may have missed. One of the factors that can make lowland forest birding frustrating is that although the species diversity is high, many occur at low density, and individuals are therefore infrequently encountered. But even the hardest-to-find species can appear at any moment, so the golden rule is to maximize our time in the field. Species we may see here include Long-tailed Hawk, Black-throated Coucal, Western Long-tailed Hornbill, Western Yellow-billed Barbet, Red-fronted and Brown-necked parrots, Yellow-throated Cuckoo, Buff-throated Sunbird, Chestnut-winged Starling, Tessmann's Flycatcher, Preuss's Weaver, Red-tailed and Gray-headed bristlebills, and Gray-throated Tit Flycatcher.

We will enjoy an early lunch in Bonkro before setting off toward Kumasi. En route, we will take time to bird Bobiri Butterfly Sanctuary, the last forest location on our itinerary before we head into drier Guinean woodland and savanna habitats. Target species here include Gray Parrot, Black Cuckoo, Tit-hylia, Copper-tailed Starling and cute Chestnut-capped Flycatcher. Dazzling sunbirds could include Johanna's, Olive-bellied, and Green-headed. Overhead, we will look out for the uncommon Black Spinetail and a soaring or perched raptor such as Red-thighed Sparrowhawk.

After another wonderful afternoon, we'll continue to Kumasi and check in to our hotel and enjoy a fine meal and rest.

NIGHT: Royal Basin Hotel, Kumasi

March 17, Day 17: Bobiri Forest Reserve & Butterfly Sanctuary

Today we will enjoy this exceptional lowland forest for both birding and butterflying! Well known worldwide by lepidopterists for its concentrations and amazing variety of colorful butterflies.

Blue Diadem © Andrew Whittaker

This glorious lowland forest reserve is dissected by a secluded flat dirt road ideal for birding. Huge towering emergent trees and the large gaps between them make it perfect to clearly observe raptors, parrots and hornbills and other large forest dwellers through the scope. One of our main targets is the fabulous male Narina Trogon. Here we find a stunning subspecies *constantia* which is extremely distinct looking possessing large bright yellow wattles making it look more like a Bare-cheeked Trogon! Other cool species we could encounter are; Blue-spotted Wood-Dove, Blue-headed Coucal; Long-tailed Hawk, Congo Snake-Eagle, African Cuckoo-Hawk, African Harrier-Hawk, Black Goshawk, Tambourine Dove, Blue Cuckooshrike, Black-winged Oriole, Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, Melancholy Woodpecker, African Piculet, rare Yellow-footed Honeyguide, Red-billed Helmetshrike, Velvet-mantled Drongo, Kemp's Longbill, Little and Ashy Flycatcher, African Forest-Flycatcher, Black-and-white Shrike-Flycatcher, Yellow-browed Camaroptera, Honeyguide Greenbul, Green Hylia, Buff-throated Sunbird or Splendid Starling.

We'll head back to our lodge for lunch and a break; in preparation for our long travel day tomorrow.

NIGHT: Royal Basin Hotel, Kumasi

March 18, Day 18: Mole National Park via the Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary

After an early breakfast, we will commence the long journey north to Mole National Park, Ghana's premiere national park. The nearly ten-hour drive, with lunch en route, takes us on a gradual transect of semi-evergreen forest and woodland, which becomes increasingly drier as we transition into Guinean savanna. The birdlife changes noticeably, too: African Gray becomes the default hornbill, and new raptors may include Beaudouin's Snake-Eagle (rare), Long-crested Eagle, Grasshopper Buzzard, or Dark Chanting-Goshawk.

Blue-bellied Roller © Andy Whittaker

We plan to break up the drive with a visit to the Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary, which occupies an 86-acre patch of semi-deciduous forest. The sanctuary is unique as the

only place where two different species of monkeys regarded as sacred and protected, Campbell's Mona and Geoffroy's Pied Colobus, live together in the same habitat and in harmony with the locals. This is one of the few areas in the world where we have a real chance to see these animals, and for the photographers among us, a unique opportunity to photograph these attractive animals at very close range.

After this welcome break, we will continue north to Mole National Park, Ghana's largest, arriving in the late afternoon at our exclusive safari lodge, one of West Africa's finest. Our hotel, beautifully situated on an 820-foot-high escarpment, overlooks a seemingly endless vista of broad-leaved woodlands and wetlands. After checking in, we can relax with a cold drink and enjoy this amazing African scene from the swimming pool or your private balcony. The African Savanna Elephants of Mole are renowned for their tolerance, and it is possible to get very close to them on foot as they come to the water holes to bathe, drink, and play well below the lodge.

Savanna Elephant © Andrew Whittaker

The woodland surrounding our lodge is a superb place to begin birding. Seedeaters abound, and we should find Double-spurred Spurfowl, Vinaceous Dove, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver, Lavender Waxbill, Red-cheeked Cordonbleu, Wilson's Indigobird, Northern Gray-headed Sparrow, and Yellow-fronted Canary. This rocky escarpment is also home to the stunning Senegal Parrot, Red-throated Bee-eater, Broad-billed Roller, Violet Turaco, Gray-headed Kingfisher, Bronze-tailed Starling, family groups of noisy Stone Partridge , Rock-loving cisticolas, Familiar Chat, White-fronted Black-Chat, and colorful Pygmy Sunbirds

Nighttime around the lodge often turns up the local Blotched Genet, a beautiful cat-like spotted carnivore. After our own scrumptious evening meal, the delightful sounds of the African bush outside our doors will send us peacefully to sleep with African Scops Owl and Plain Nightjars calling.

NIGHT: Zaina Lodge, Mole

March 19-21, Day 19–21: Mole National Park

Mole is a nature lover's paradise, and we are in for a real treat over the next three days as we immerse ourselves in the exceptional West African birds and mammals found here. Covering 1870 square miles, Mole is Ghana's second most-visited protected area, after Kakum. The broad-leaved woodland here superficially resembles the miombo woodlands of south-central Africa, and it is likewise inhabited by a wonderful assemblage of good-looking species, many of them sister-species to their south-central counterparts.

The handsome Kob is an antelope occurring throughout

We will begin our safari excursions very early each day, but will always take a midday break back at our delightful lodge before we set off again mid-afternoon. From the lodge's viewing platform early in the morning, we can scan the water hole to for handsome Kob and for interesting water birds including Saddle-billed or Wolly-necked Storks, and Hamerkop or Squacco Heron.

Within the park, perennial streams, gallery woodland, and scattered pools and wetlands are home to several special birds. In particular, we will search for two highly desirable species; Oriole Warbler, a unique and odd-looking warbler with a tremendously loud, beautiful song and African Spotted Creeper considered to be in its own, distinct family, Salpornithidae. Colorful birds abound, with the likes of Red-throated and exotic Northern Carmine bee-eaters, Abyssinian and Purple rollers, and Purple, Long-tailed, and Lesser Blue-eared starlings just a few of the many possibilities.

Abyssinian Roller © Andrew Whittaker

Of particular interest, too, are several rare, range-restricted and near-endemic species, including the massive Abyssinian Ground Hornbill, Denham's Bustard, White-headed Vulture, White-throated Francolin, Forbes's Plover, Emin's Shrike and Tongo Paradise-Whydah.

As thermals begin to form, we will turn our eyes skyward, as raptors and vultures are particularly common in Mole. Regularly encountered species include White-headed, Hooded, and White-backed vultures, Bateleur, Beaudouin's and Brown Snake-Eagles, Martial Eagle (big enough to take small antelopes), Wahlberg's Eagle, Lizard Buzzard, Ayres's and African hawk-eagles, African Hobby, and Lanner Falcon.

The stunning Red-throated Bee-eater is one of an incredible ten bee-eater species possible! © Andrew Whittaker

Waterholes become a magnet in these arid landscapes and can provide an incredible spectacle as hordes of species frequent them almost lining up to drink while others fish or search for food. Such avian bonanzas could produce African Green Pigeon, Vinaceous Dove, Black-billed and Blue-spotted Wood-Doves, Black Crake, Greater Painted Snipe, Green Sandpiper, Malachite and Blue-breasted Kingfisher, African Paradise-Flycatcher, Black-headed Weaver, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-weaver, flocks of Red-billed Quelea and Black-winged Bishops, Bronze Mannikin, Orange-cheeked Waxbill, Bar-breasted, Black-faced and Red-billed Firefinch and Gosling's Bunting to name a few.

Brushland holds a few more challenging species for us to coax out such as two stunning Robin-Chat with Snowy-crowned and White-crowned being targets, Black-crowned Tchagra, Pearl Spotted Owlet, Striped Kingfisher and both Gray-headed and Sulphur-breasted Bushshrikes. Taller gallery forest harbors Northern Red-billed Hornbill, African Gray and Brown-backed Woodpecker, African Cuckoo, Black Scimitarbill, White-breasted Cuckooshrike, Gambaga Flycatcher, White-shouldered Black-Tit, African Golden Oriole, Blue-bellied Roller, Brubru, Scarlet-chested Sunbird and Brown-rumped Bunting.

Open clearings short grass and shrubbery are home to Rufous and Dorst's Cisticola, large Rufous-rumped Lark to small Sun Larks while the unusual displays of Flappet Larks wing flapping can be heard above in the deep blue skies.

We will also venture out on a couple of nocturnal excursions to look for nightjars, especially the spectacular Standard-winged Nightjar, the incomparable male of which has two long wing feathers that follow above and behind when the bird is in flight. The area is also productive for owls, and we will be looking for Grayish Eagle-Owl, African Scops Owl, and the stunning Northern White-faced Owl before we retire for the night.

NIGHTS: Zaina Lodge, Mole

March 22, Day 22: The Volta region to Bolgatanga with afternoon birding in the Tongo Hills and Bolgatanga

After an early breakfast and a short hour of birding around the hotel looking for anything we still desire to see, we'll say goodbye to this delightful lodge and its great staff. This time we are headed north-northeast, toward the northern outpost of Bolgatanga, located on the historic trans-Saharan trade route just south of the border with landlocked Burkina Faso.

Birding en route, we plan to stop off in Tomale for lunch before arriving at our pleasant lodgings. After a rest, we will venture out midafternoon south of Bolgatanga where the Gambaga Escarpment forms the southern boundary of the Upper East Region. Our birding destination is found within these spectacular cliffs, the Tongo Hills. These fascinating granite outcrops harbor Fox Kestrel, Mocking Cliff-chat (the distinctively white-crowned *coronata* subspecies, a possible split), Gosling's Bunting, and Rock-loving Cisticola. This is another excellent area for raptors such as Booted Eagle, Dark Chanting-Goshawk, and Red-necked and Lanner falcons.

The local tribespeople of this infrequently visited region are Gur-speaking Frafra, who raise millet, guinea corn, beans, and rice. Their unique circular homesteads, which we may see, are sometimes decorated with geometric signs.

NIGHT: Blue Skies Hotel, Bolgatanga

March 23, Day 23: Sapelliga, Volta River, and Tono Dam

We will depart early to bird the banks of the White Volta River in search of the stunning Egyptian Plover, one of the most highly sought-after birds on the continent. These strange and beautiful shorebirds are also known as crocodile birds, from the belief that they will enter a crocodile's mouth to pick out food stuck in its many teeth; alas, as *Birds of the World* reminds us, there is no credible evidence of such behavior. All the same, we will make a concerted effort to track down this beautiful species, the sole member of the family Pluvianidae.

Northern Carmine Bee-eater © Andrew Whittaker

The rich river banks hold a multitude of desired new species too including the mega Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Bearded and Vieillot's Barbet, Speckled Pigeon, Bruce's Green-Pigeon, Namaqua Dove, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Red-chested and African Red-rumped Swallow. Moving away into the drier Guinea Savanna and thorn scrub we will look for Yellow Penduline-Tit, Senegal Eremomela, Chestnut-bellied Starling, White-billed Buffalo-Weaver, Speckle-fronted Weaver, striking Cut-throat, African Silverbill and rare White-rumped Seedeater.

We will return to the hotel for lunch and a break before heading out in the late afternoon to nearby Tono Dam. Key species here are the attractive Four-banded Sandgrouse that come into drink late afternoon, the delightful African Green Bee-eater, and the Black-backed Cisticola. We may also encounter large flocks of White-faced Whistling Ducks and the kind-of-ugly Spur-winged Goose; other

birds can include the African Darter, Yellow-fronted Canary, and, with luck, the very cool-looking Zebra Waxbill. This northern area of Ghana is located just south of the Sahael region a major wintering area for Palearctic migrants. We can therefore expect a surprise or two. Last year we registered a male Eurasian Blackcap. More common migrants should include Willow Warbler, Greater Whitethroat, Western Olivaceous Warbler and Melodious Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher and European Pied Flycatcher.

NIGHT: Blue Skies Hotel, Bolgatanga

March 24, Day 24: Tomali and flight to Accra

After breakfast, we will retrace the three-hour drive back towards Tomali to catch our flight back to the capital. If we have time along the way, we will stop briefly at Nasia bridge to look for the odd Quailfinch, Winding Cisticola, and Black-rumped Waxbill.

On our arrival in Accra, we will be picked up and transferred to our lovely beach resort, where rooms will be reserved for us. We will enjoy a final checklist session followed by a scrumptious last dinner before we say our fond farewells.

Homebound flights from Accra should be scheduled to depart after 10 pm tonight or the next day. Most international flights departing from Ghana depart late at night or early in the morning. Private airport transfers will be provided for all with enough time to check in for your international flights.

PLEASE NOTE: Those not desiring or not able to depart Ghana tonight may depart on the morning of March 25.

DAYROOM or NIGHT: Labadi Beach Hotel, Accra

March 25, Day 25: Departure Home

Essential Tour Information

TOUR SIZE: This tour is limited to 8 tour participants.

TOUR LEADER: This tour will be led by **Andrew Whittaker** and a local leader.

Andrew Whittaker was born in the UK and began his birding passion at the early age of seven (thanks to his parents) but resides in Brazil. Andy is also a true all-around naturalist with an innate fascination for all aspects of the natural world and simply loves sharing in the field his intimate bird, wildlife, and orchid knowledge in a fun and enthusiastic manner. A senior member of the VENT staff, Andy has led VENT tours worldwide since 1993 from dense South and Central American rainforests to the great White Continent of Antarctica, and throughout Europe to the deserts of the Middle East. More recently Andy can be found leading in the bird-rich rainforests of West Africa, the mammal-rich savannas of East Africa, or observing the cute Red Panda or exotic tragopan in the mighty Himalayas of Nepal. In 2024 Andy was able to show over 2,000 bird species to VENT clients on his tours! Andy is an excellent communicator and calm tour organizer who loves nothing better than hearing, finding, and sharing a rare, poorly known skulker, or telling one of his many fascinating and fun birding and travel stories. His enthusiasm in the field is simply contagious, and a combination of these traits has made him a favored leader amongst participants. Although born in England, Andy considers himself Brazilian, having lived more than 30 years in this mega biodiverse country, first working for the Smithsonian Institution, studying Amazonian rainforest birds in Manaus, as well as leading expeditions to remote corners of the Amazon; he feels privileged to have worked with the incredible Kayapo Indians. Andy is widely considered an authority on Amazonian birds, having authored numerous technical publications on the region's avifauna. He is well recognized for his amazing hearing and intimate knowledge of South American bird vocalizations. This trait has enabled him to discover several exciting new bird species (such as the Cryptic Forest-Falcon in 2002), as well as rediscover others thought to be extinct such as the White-tailed Tityra while on a VENT tour in 2006! He loves recording birds, too, with over 800 hours of recordings housed in the British Library Sound Archive. Andy is a qualified ringer/bander trained by the late Dr. Clive Minton (fondly known as the father of shorebird studies). His lifelong fascination with bird migration has seen Andy working around

the globe at several top bird observatories: Eilat, Israel; Long Point, Canada; and in the UK at Sandwich Bay and on Fair Isle, Scotland, as well as researching shorebirds in Borneo on their East Asian flyway. Andy had the honor of working with Sir David Attenborough in Brazil as a consultant for the prestigious BBC *Life of Birds* series. At present, Andy is working with Kevin Zimmer on a comprehensive field guide to the birds of Brazil to be published by Princeton University Press. Andy is an associate researcher at the Museum Goeldi, Belem, an active conservationist, and loves bird photography and taxonomy. He is also an avid football/soccer fan of Birmingham City FC and Real Madrid due to its worldwide mega star Jude Bellingham coming from his home team. Andy lives near Porto Alegre, Southern Brazil with his partner, Jaqueline, and their many orchids.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: The fee for the tour is **$12,125** per person in double occupancy or **$13,875** for a person requiring single accommodation from Accra. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 through dinner on Day 23, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, an internal flight from Tamale to Accra, entrance fees, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Accra and return, airport departure taxes, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based on group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: You may register for this tour through the VENT website or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The initial deposit for this tour is **$1,000** per person. At 180 days VENT will collect a second deposit that brings the total deposit amount to 40% of the tour price. We accept MasterCard and Visa for both deposits.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date (November 1, 2026).

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can

very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: 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 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.

Most major credit cards are accepted at the larger hotels, but often nowhere else. Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

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 (including initial and second 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 (Pre-Tours and Extensions are considered self-contained tours separate from the main tour). 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

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE/PROTECTION REQUIREMENT: This tour visits remote locations where immediate access to primary medical care may not be available. For this reason, travel insurance/travel protection which covers you for emergency evacuation is required for participation on this tour. This coverage is included in the Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™ program. Alternatively, comparable service can be obtained through Medjet and its MedjetAssist plan. If you choose not to purchase insurance/travel protection through Ripcord or Medjet, you are required to obtain it through another provider. Please refer to the TRAVEL INSURANCE/TRAVEL PROTECTION section for additional information.

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 or call 1-800-527-7478. Pricing is based on type and term of membership.

GETTING THERE & REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

AIR TRAVEL: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: $50 domestic; $75 international.* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. **Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be held responsible for any air ticket penalties.**

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

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

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:

PASSPORTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure date is required for United States citizens to enter Ghana. **If it is not valid through this period, you need to get it renewed.** You will also want to make sure that you have at least one blank page 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 https://state.gov/travelers/ for information on how to get or renew a passport.

As a safety measure, photocopy the first two pages of your passport and keep the photocopies in a safe place, so that 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 airports, so please **do not pack it in your checked luggage.**

VISAS: A valid entry visa is required of anyone visiting Ghana. Visas are obtained through the Embassy of Ghana website (https://ghanaembassydc.org/visa/) and must be procured prior to arrival. On the homepage, please click the Visa Application button in the middle of the page and follow the directions.

There are two types of entry visa: Single Entry and Multiple Entry. You will need the Single Entry type, which is valid for three months and must be used within three months from the date of issue. Among the conditions required of applicants, as stated on the website, "tourism applicants (=we) must provide a letter of invitation from their host in Ghana, proof of a roundtrip ticket, and show proof of sufficient funds for the duration of their stay in the country." The wording and meaning of these items can cause confusion. For this reason, the VENT office provides assistance with navigating the application process. Upon completion of the application, you will mail your passport with the printed copy of the application, one current passport-size photograph, and all the required supporting documents, including payment receipts, to the embassy.

Visas may be obtained either through Standard Service or Rush Service. A Standard Service application will take 15–20 business day to process. The cost is $60.00. The processing period for Rush Service applications is seven business days. The cost is $100.00.

Visa requirements can change without notice, and you should check the latest requirements as far in advance as possible in order to allow time to obtain a visa should that be necessary.

PROOF OF VACCINATION: Yellow Fever vaccination is required for all travelers to Ghana over the age of nine, regardless of nationality. We strongly recommend carrying a copy of your vaccination record in your carry-on bags or luggage.

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTHING: This program is a very casual birding and natural history trip. Field-type clothing and casual attire are appropriate for all occasions. The following items are recommended:

- **Field Clothing:** Lightweight, **dull-colored field clothing is recommended throughout the tour**. Outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI carry field clothing that many birders find appealing. Pants and shirts made of lightweight, durable, and dull-colored materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular. Please do not wear white or brightly colored clothes, including hats or raingear.

- **Pants:** A couple of 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.
- **Shirts:** Three long-sleeved t-shirts in addition to other comfortable styles suitable for warm weather. We do not recommend short-sleeved shirts, as they offer no protection from biting insects or the sun.
- **Shorts:** Good to have a pair along to wear around the hotels and lodges or in your rooms.
- **Outerwear:** A water-repellent poncho, jacket, or umbrella is essential in the event we encounter rain when in the field. Please avoid nylon or plastic jackets and/or rainwear of similar materials; noisy clothing is annoying to others and may frighten birds and animals.
- **Socks**: Long socks are very useful so that you can tuck in your pants and avoid biting insects.
- **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.
- **Swimsuit:** Several of our accommodations have very nice swimming pools.
- **Footwear:** Although there will be no rigorous walks or serious uphill jaunts, we may infrequently encounter mud, slippery surfaces, and stony ground. Add the fact that you are on your feet for much of the day, and you'll realize that it is most important to have suitable protection and support for your feet and ankles. We recommend a light hiking boot (waterproof or Gore-Tex) when in the field. Boots that rise to the ankle and have a good lug-sole are ideal. Many people are apprehensive that these will be too heavy; this is not true. The protection, grip, and day-long comfort that such boots afford are far superior to the seemingly comfortable sneakers/training shoes. Athletic shoes do not provide as much traction or ankle support and will not keep your feet dry. Athletic shoes or other casual footwear may be preferred for downtimes or when traveling between destinations. Rubber boots are not necessary.

EQUIPMENT: One of the most important aspects of having an enjoyable travel experience is proper equipment. You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc.). As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please do so.

The following items will come in handy during your trip to Ghana:

- **Daypack or beltpack:** For carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, 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 & Accessories:** lenses, memory cards, and extra batteries
- **Collapsible walking stick:** highly recommended 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:** Bottled water will be available throughout the trip, but we suggest bringing your favorite refillable water bottle to cut down on waste.
- **Plastic bags or "dry bags":** These items are very useful if we get caught in the rain while birding. They provide an excellent means of keeping sensitive items like optical equipment dry.
- **Hand sanitizer/towelettes:** Hand sanitizer and/or packets of moist towelettes, especially the antiseptic type, can be a pleasant way to keep refreshed and clean, and are very useful for hand-washing before meals.
- **Tissue packs**
- **Small flashlight or headlamp:** Very useful for our early morning starts and evening nightbird excursions.
- **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 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 specification. Do not bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like "minis" because they are small and lightweight, but they have an extremely narrow field of view and very poor light-

gathering power. Trying to find a bird 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 standard 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.

DESTINATION INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS

CLIMATE & WEATHER: The combination of low altitude and proximity to the Equator gives Ghana a typical tropical climate. Daytime temperatures are high throughout the country, approaching or topping 90° F on most days. Temperatures do drop at night. All but one of our accommodations have air-conditioning. In some areas, it may be very hot, especially in the north, around Mole. Please note that we will make good use of the best birding times (early mornings), with early starts to avoid, as much as possible, birding in the hottest times of the day, when bird activity stops. On many days, expect to return to our air-conditioned lodges for a break during the hottest times of the day. In the rainforest areas in the south, the humidity will be high and uncomfortable. If you are not used to humid tropical climates, you may find, especially during the first few days of the tour, that the heat and humidity are a little uncomfortable. Although we have timed our tour to avoid the period of heaviest rainfall, we can expect to encounter some rain during the tour.

SUN EXPOSURE: The sun's ultraviolet rays are dangerous; under prolonged exposure sunburn can take 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.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS AND PACE: In general, this is an easy to moderately paced tour and one that is not especially physically demanding. All our walking and hiking will be on level or slightly hilly

ground, paved and unpaved roads, tracks, and forest trails, but nothing overly strenuous. Our approximately two-mile walk through the forest to the picathartes site ends with a slightly steepish clamber of about 300 yards up to a cave and benches where we wait. Walking sticks may be useful here, but there will always be a helping hand. Walks will always be at a gentle pace, with regular stops. At certain times, there may a bit of standing around; a collapsible stool can be very useful.

We will spend an early morning along the canopy walkway at Kakum National Park, which is very safe and extremely well looked after. Getting to the walkway involves a 700-yard uphill walk on an uneven, stepped track. The walkway itself is about 40 yards above the forest floor, and has several very stable observation platforms linked by stretches of rope and board walkway where we stop and bird with enough room for our scopes.

At all the sites we visit, it will be important to be in the field before dawn to hear birds sing as the day begins. This may be our only way to discover if certain key species are present. Additionally, the very early morning can be a good time to detect the occasional nightjar, owl, forest-dwelling rail, francolin, or even a nocturnal mammal. Typically, when possible, we will return to our hotel or lodge for lunch and a break before going out again in the late afternoon. These breaks do not waste good birding time because bird activity is virtually nil during the heat of the day. By recharging our batteries and concentrating our efforts on the optimal times of day, we will be in good shape to properly enjoy whatever comes our way later in the afternoon.

If there is any doubt as to your physical fitness to travel, consultation should be sought with your doctor, bearing in mind that there may be a fair amount of walking and standing in warm to hot and humid conditions. The temperatures in West Africa are warm throughout the year. Please be prepared to spend several hours outdoors in temperatures that may reach into the 90s. Dust may pose problems for people with respiratory conditions.

FOOD & WATER: Sanitation throughout Ghana is relatively good compared to most tropical areas of the world; however, it is advisable to treat water outside of the large, modern hotels with caution. Ideally, stick to bottled drinks, tea, and coffee. All raw food is subject to contamination, particularly in areas where hygiene and sanitation are inadequate; travelers should avoid salads,

uncooked vegetables, and unpasteurized milk and milk products such as cheese, and eat only food that has been cooked and is still hot or fruit that has been peeled by the traveler personally. Cooked food that has been allowed to stand for several hours at ambient temperature can be a fertile medium for bacterial growth, so if you sample local delicacies from a street vendor, be sure that the food is cooked in front of you.

Drink only bottled or boiled water and canned or bottled beverages. Avoid drinks with ice.

Everyone is encouraged to bring along their own bottle of liquid hand sanitizer and/or packs of moist towlettes or handwipes, to ensure the highest standards of personal hygiene.

Please note that your tour leaders will let you know at every location whether the food and water are safe.

OFFICIAL CURRENCY: The official currency of Ghana is the Ghanian Cedi (GHS). The name is pronounced "seedy," after the Tiwi name for cowry shell. Cent-like divisions are called pesewas. You can check the latest currency conversion rate by visiting xe.com/.

TRANSPORTATION: Travel will be aboard an extremely comfortable, air-conditioned bus (probably a 19-seat Coaster or similar), with lots of space and excellent large windows for viewing and photography. There will be some lengthy drives in order to reach the best areas for birds, including the drives to Mole National Park and to the Volga Tanga area. We will make regular and appropriately timed rest-stops, and many of our drives are also broken by birding stops along the way. There will be plenty of drinking water and snacks on board. Traffic in certain urban areas can be complex and slow, with traffic jams especially around Accra in the rush hour.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Characteristically, photographing wildlife, birds in particular, is difficult in the tropical forest; however, there will be several times when we are in more open country when the lighting and photographic opportunities are better. For non-wildlife subject matter, Ghana has some wonderfully striking people and attractive scenery. When photographing people, it is courteous to ask first (a smile helps), but please do not force the issue if the subject declines.

ELECTRICITY: The electric current in Ghana is 230V at 50 hertz (cycles). Electrical outlets are of types D and G. The type D plug has three round pins arranged in a triangular pattern, while the

type G plug has three rectangular blades arranged in a triangular pattern. At the very least, you will want to bring adapter plugs to accommodate these outlet styles. Additionally, a voltage converter may also be necessary. To avoid the risk of damage to your electrical devices while using them in Ghana, please make sure that you understand their voltage limitations and requirements before departing your home.

INTERNET ACCESS: Wi-Fi is available at all of the hotels and lodges on our tour route. The strength and consistency of the internet signal will vary throughout the trip. In some of our accommodations, the internet signal may be confined to the hotel lobby. Please be prepared for poor internet service in some of the smaller or remoter places we'll visit.

LANGUAGE: English is the official language of Ghana. At least 46 African languages are spoken; among the more frequently heard are Twi, Fante, Ewe, Ga, Dagomba, and Halisa.

TIME: At the time of this tour, Ghana is four hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time (EDT).

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is available at some of our accommodations. Additional charges apply.

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.

BITING INSECTS: Biting insects such as mosquitoes can occasionally be a problem. However, our past trips have had no problems at all—in fact, I could count the number of mosquitos I noted on one hand! The possibility of biting insects is best dealt with by wearing long-sleeved shirts of sufficient thickness and density of weave that insects cannot bite through, long trousers tucked into long socks, and liberal coatings of insect repellent.

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 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

DISEASE PREVENTION: The CDC strongly recommends taking proper precautions against the mosquito transmitted diseases **Yellow Fever**, **Malaria**, and **Dengue**.

- **Yellow Fever:** Yellow Fever is present in all areas of Ghana and presents a legitimate threat to unvaccinated travelers to this country. Yellow Fever vaccination is required for all travelers to Ghana over the age of nine, regardless of nationality.
- **Malaria:** Malaria is present in all areas of Ghana and presents a legitimate threat to travelers to this country, but mostly around Accra. The strains of malaria present in Ghana include the chloroquine-resistant types. To reduce the risk of contracting this disease, travelers are strongly urged to take an antimalarial regimen. Recommended anti-malarial drugs include atovaquone/proguanil (Malarone), doxycycline, mefloquine (Lariam), or tafenoquine. Some travelers may experience side effects from antimalarial drugs. Please consult with your physician to determine the best preventative medication.
- **Dengue:** Dengue is present in all areas of Ghana. There is no vaccination against Dengue, but while it can cause painful illness, it is usually not fatal.

Note: There are a number of simple precautions you can take to prevent mosquito bites. We strongly recommend wearing long-sleeved shirts, pants, and a hat, particularly between dusk and

dawn. Keep windows closed while you sleep, and make sure that your insect repellant contains DEET.

- **Meningitis:** Meningitis is an infection of the fluids surrounding the brain and spinal cord and is caused by the meningococcus bacterium. Meningitis is spread by respiratory secretions through close contact with an infected person.
- **Typhoid:** Typhoid is a disease of contaminated food or water and is caused by the bacteria *Salmonella typhi*. It is common in the developing world, where hand washing is less frequent and sanitation and water systems are less advanced. Depending on which vaccine a person receives, immunity is conferred for 2–5 years. Thereafter, a booster will be needed.

The CDC also recommends vaccination against Meningitis and Typhoid.

- **Rabies:** Rabies is a viral infection that is mainly spread by a bite from an infected animal. Street dogs represent the most frequent risk for bite exposure to travelers. Tour participants are instructed not to approach these animals and to be aware of their surroundings so that they do not surprise a dog in a confined space. Although rabies is relatively rare, pre-exposure prophylaxis should be considered. Please consult with your physician to determine whether the rabies prophylaxis is right for 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

Borrow, Nik, and Ron Demey. 2022. *Birds of Ghana*. 2nd ed. Helm Field Guides. The most important resource for this tour.

Mammals

Kingdon, Jonathan. 2015. *The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals*. 2nd ed. Princeton University Press. A fabulous field guide, beautifully illustrated.

History

Ahlman, Jeffrey. 2023. *Ghana: A Political and Social History*. Zed Books. A well-received treatment of the social history and culture of Ghana from the 18th to the 20th centuries.

CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY APPS & ONLINE RESOURCES:

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

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

TERMS, CONDITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

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

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

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on July 10, 2025 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant's Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for

any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

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

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