



PANAMA

Bocas del Toro Archipelago

March 6 - 15, 2027



Snowy Cotinga © Michael O'Brien

Panama is without doubt one of the premier birding destinations in the Neotropics. It is famous for its rare combination of easy access to extensive, high-quality habitat, good food and water, comfortable to luxurious accommodations, and high diversity of birds—all within a compact geographic area. While ideal for those new to the Neotropics, western Panama's Bocas Del Toro Province offers numerous local specialties for those who have birded elsewhere in the country. Some of the special birds that we'll search for on this itinerary include Short-tailed Nighthawk, Spot-fronted and White-chinned swifts, 10+ hummingbirds, Uniform Crake, Collared Plover, Red-billed Tropicbird, five kingfishers, Prong-billed Barbet, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Collared Araçari, Yellow-throated & Keel-billed toucans, Black-chested Jay, four parakeets & six parrots, manakins, Pied Puffbird, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Snowy Cotinga, 20+ tanagers, Nicaraguan Seed-Finch, and many more species.



Golden-collared Manakin © Michael O'Brien

Among the pleasures of a visit here is the opportunity to stay at the wonderful Tranquilo Bay Eco Adventure Lodge, co-owned by Jim & Renée Kimball and Jay Viola. Located amidst 110 acres of mangroves and spectacular rainforest on Bastimentos Island and next to Bastimentos National Marine Park, Tranquilo Bay offers a chance to hear the dawn chorus, gaze upon seldom-seen denizens of the forest, and remain in beautiful surroundings without sacrificing amenities. There are nine deluxe cabanas, each with air-conditioning, large walk-in shower, full-size water heater, local hardwood floors, fine linens, and handcrafted beds. Each cabana has a covered porch with a hammock and Adirondack chairs. This innovative venture is known for providing one of Central America's very finest ecotourist experiences.

Except for picnic lunches, all meals will be served in the main lodge, which includes a nice sitting area, bar, and Wi-Fi. Hors d'oeuvres are offered during cocktail hour preceding dinner, and these may be taken to the porch while watching the sunset. The second story porch covers two sides of the building and is high enough to overlook the canopy to views of the Caribbean Sea. Tranquilo Bay has nearly a mile of Caribbean coastline covered with coral gardens teeming with tropical fish, which offer great opportunities to swim, snorkel, kayak, and fish. In addition to walks on site, many outings will be via boat rides through peaceful waters to access other wonderful birding areas.



View from the tower at Tranquilo Bay © Michael O'Brien

Our specific day-to-day itinerary will be kept flexible, allowing us to take advantage of local weather and birding conditions. The locations and ecosystems described below will all be visited during our tour, but the sequence may differ from that listed.

March 6, Day 1: Arrival in Panama City and Transfer to the Radisson Hotel Panama Canal

Participants arriving in Panama City (Tocumen International Airport) anytime this afternoon or evening will be met and transferred to the Radisson Hotel Panama Canal where a room will be reserved in your name. Those arriving with some daylight may wish to bird around the hotel grounds, which often harbor a good variety of birds including such possibilities as Pale-vented Pigeon, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Yellow-headed Caracara, Orange-chinned Parakeet, Yellow-crowned Parrot, Social Flycatcher, Tropical Kingbird, Blue-gray Tanager, and Saffron Finch. We will have a meeting at 6 pm this evening in the hotel lobby, followed by dinner.

NIGHT: Radisson Hotel Panama Canal, Panama City

March 7, Day 2: Flight to Bocas del Toro on Isla Colón; Transfer to Tranquilo Bay Eco Adventure Lodge

We will take an early flight to Bocas del Toro on Isla Colón and transfer to Isla Bastimentos by motorboat. Upon arrival at Tranquilo Bay Eco Adventure Lodge, we'll be shown to our cabanas, and be given time to unpack.

We will then meet and bird the grounds around the cabanas and main lodge before lunch. After lunch and a short siesta, we will continue to explore this wonderful 110-acre property that is adjacent to Isla Bastimentos National Marine Park and within the La Amistad Biosphere Reserve. The lodge's veranda, private cabanas and canopy observation tower provide elevated decks for a birds-eye view of the extraordinary wildlife found here. Several kilometers of hiking trails, in addition to the lodge's grounds, are home to more than 200 species of birds. Huge, spectacular Montezuma Oropendolas fly past the second story balcony of the main lodge and throughout the grounds. Fruiting trees planted near the balcony attract many frugivorous species, as well as other birds searching for insects, and feeding flocks that happen to move through. Feeders with bananas and papaya can be swarming with Prothonotary and Tennessee warblers, Bananaquits, and other species. From the balcony one can enjoy the view of the Caribbean Sea just beyond the mangrove forest between the lodge and the dock. Near our cabanas there is a wonderful Golden-collared Manakin lek and one forest trail leads to a pool where one can sit on benches and watch birds come to bathe. In addition to birds, the lodge's grounds and trails often provide encounters with Two and Three-toed sloths, White-faced Capuchin, Panamanian Night Monkey, Northern Raccoon, Central American Woolly Opossum, and Northern Tamandua. We will plan to be up on the deck of the six-story high observation tower near our cabanas by 5:00 p.m. this afternoon. This structure provides us with a view of the treetops in the surrounding forest as well as the mangroves and Caribbean Sea. Small birds feeding in the canopy of adjacent tall trees are much easier to see from up here. Some of the Red-lored Amazons going to roost often fly so close we could almost touch them.

NIGHT: Tranquilo Bay Eco Adventure Lodge, Isla Bastimentos



Red-lored Parrots © Michael O'Brien

March 8, Day 3: Palo Seco Protection Forest

After breakfast we will travel by motorboat to Punta Robalo, a small town on the mainland. A coaster bus will await us, and we will begin exploring the 167,00 hectare Palo Seco Protection Forest in the lowlands and foothills of the Talamanca Range (sea level to 600 meters). This incredible area, one of the most vital portions of La Amistad Biosphere Reserve, consists of wet Atlantic forest, foothills, and watersheds. We'll begin by birding the lowlands between Punta Robalo and Punta Peña, exploring marshes, cattle pastures, small woodlots, and an occasional pond. Here, we'll keep an eye out for Collared Aracari, Keel-billed Toucan, Crimson-fronted Parakeet, Red-fronted Parrotlet, Cinnamon and White-winged becards, Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant, Black-chested Jay, Olive-crowned Yellowthroat, and Crimson-collared and Scarlet-rumped tanagers. Depending on conditions, we may also see some early season raptor migration through this area. Thousands of Turkey Vultures are already moving at this season, and we may see numerous Swallow-tailed Kites as well as the season's first few Swainson's and Broad-winged hawks on the move. As we get higher into the foothills, possible species include Green Thorntail, White-bellied Mountain-gem, Barred Hawk, Lattice-tailed Trogon, Sulphur-

winged Parakeet, Spotted Woodcreeper, Scaly-breasted Wren, Tawny-capped Euphonia, Buff-rumped Warbler, and numerous tanagers including Speckled, Bay-headed, Emerald, and Silver-throated. Mammal sightings on this action-packed day might include sloths, Mantled Howler Monkeys, and Red-brocket Deer.

NIGHT: Tranquilo Bay Eco Adventure Lodge, Isla Bastimentos



Crimson-collared Tanager © Michael O'Brien

March 9, Day 4: Isla Popa and Tranquilo Bay

This morning we'll take a short boat ride to Isla Popa, the second largest island in the archipelago. Dense mangroves surround a rich gallery forest on this beautiful island, which has a higher diversity of species than other islands due to its proximity to the mainland. As we cruise the edge, we'll keep an eye out for the very local Snowy Cotinga, which often perches up on dead snags. A short walk through the forest may yield Long-billed Hermit, Uniform Crake (very hard to see), Crested Guan, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Yellow-throated Toucan, Crimson-fronted Parakeet, Pale-billed and Lineated woodpeckers,

Mangrove Cuckoo, Plain Xenops, and Golden-hooded Tanager. We'll return to the lodge in time for lunch and a siesta. In the afternoon, options will include snorkeling, kayaking, or more birding around the lodge area.

NIGHT: Tranquilo Bay Eco Adventure Lodge, Isla Bastimentos

March 10, Day 5: Snyder Canal, San San-Pond Sak Wetlands, and Swan Cay

This morning, we will travel by boat to the San San-Pond Sak Wetlands, designated as a wetlands of international importance, and part of the La Amistad Biosphere Reserve. The rich habitats in this area include Atlantic wet lowland forest, Raphia palm swamp, mangrove swamp, and ocean beach. We'll begin by traversing the historic Snyder Canal (Panama's first canal). Originally created to bring bananas down from Costa Rica and parts of Panama, it's now a quiet waterway providing miles of excellent habitat on both sides. All six species of American kingfishers can be seen along this waterway, and we'll search carefully for regional specialties such as Great Potoo, White-collared Manakin, Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Canebrake and Black-throated wrens, Olive-backed Euphonia, Black-cowled Oriole, and the very local Nicaraguan Seed-Finch. We'll also watch the sky for the enigmatic White-chinned and Spot-fronted swifts. Lowland species abound on both sides of the canal, and we will proceed very slowly, with many stops, as we bird our way up to the mouth of the Changuinola River.

At the river mouth, we will find marsh, pasture, tidal flats, and a whole new set of birds. Various herons and egrets will be numerous here, and with luck, we may see a Least or Pinnated bittern or White-throated Crake lurking in the grass. In the adjacent open country, we are likely to find the stunning Red-breasted Meadowlark, and various raptors including both Yellow-headed and Crested caracaras. There are often numerous shorebirds on the sandy beaches, including the very local Collared Plover. Various ducks, terns and gulls are also present here, giving us opportunities to search for uncommon or rare species. And in the waters, we'll keep an eye out for West Indian Manatee, Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphin, and Neotropical River Otter.



Red-billed Tropicbird © Michael O'Brien

We'll depart the Changuinola River by mid-afternoon and head out to Swan Cay, a tiny, picturesque island a mile off the north coast of Isla Colón. Small alcoves and crevices provide nesting habitat between September and March for Brown Boobies and 50-75 pairs of Red-billed Tropicbirds. Although not far offshore, other seabirds such as Brown Noddy and Pomarine or Parasitic jaeger occasionally pass by to investigate this thriving colony. We cannot land on Swan Cay but will circle the area to see the spectacular tropicbirds with their long tails rippling in the breeze as they fly past us.

NIGHT: Tranquilo Bay Eco Adventure Lodge, Isla Bastimentos

March 11, Day 6: Tierra Oscura and Tranquilo Bay

After an early breakfast, we'll travel by boat eight miles to the town of Hope Well and explore a new road (Buena Esperanza Road) through the Tierra Oscura Corregimiento, providing access to a long list of birds. In this area, the overstory trees are very tall and old, and the new road edge provides access to a rich array of forest and edge species. Some of the many birds we may find along this road include Pied Puffbird, Yellow-throated and Keel-billed toucans, Pale-billed and Lineated woodpeckers, Wedge-billed and Cocoa woodcreepers, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Masked and Black-crowned tityras, Cinnamon and White-winged becards, Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant, Long-tailed Tyrant, Black-chested Jay, Montezuma and Chestnut-headed oropendolas, Giant Cowbird, and Thick-billed Seed-Finch. This

is also a good area to find the beautiful Green-and-black Poison Dart Frog as well as a wonderful variety of butterflies, and often sloths. We will return to the lodge for lunch and siesta. In the afternoon, we'll have options to bird trails on the property, do some snorkeling on the wonderful coral reefs, kayak around the mangroves and reefs, visit the bat cave, or simply relax on the cabana porches.

NIGHT: Tranquilo Bay Eco Adventure Lodge, Isla Bastimentos



Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth © Michael O'Brien

March 12, Day 7: Fortuna Forest Reserve and the Continental Divide

We'll return to the town of Punta Robalo this morning, and travel about two hours up to the Continental Divide of the Talamanca Range (~4200 feet). Fortuna Forest Reserve, established in 1976, is a nearly pristine montane cloud forest and is one of Panama's premier birding and wilderness areas. It is home to many regional endemics and restricted range species, and our visit here is sure to produce some outstanding sightings. While we are unlikely to find all of these species, some of the many possibilities include Purple-throated and White-bellied mountain-gems, White-tailed Emerald, Collared (Orange-bellied) Trogon, Prong-billed Barbet, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Sulphur-winged Parakeet, Silvery-fronted Tapaculo, Red-faced Spinetail, Azure-hooded Jay, Orange-billed and Slaty-

backed nightingale-thrushes, Tawny-capped and Elegant euphonias, Common and Yellow-throated chlorospingus, Tropical Parula, Slate-throated Redstart, and numerous tanagers including Blue-and-gold, Spangle-cheeked, Bay-headed, and Silver-throated. We will enjoy a picnic lunch overlooking the beautiful Lake Fortuna, giving us the chance to watch the sky for raptors. We will return to the lodge by late afternoon, in time to enjoy drinks and appetizers on the veranda as we discuss our favorite sightings of the day.

NIGHT: Tranquilo Bay Eco Adventure Lodge, Isla Bastimentos



Common Chlorospingus © Michael O'Brien

March 13, Day 8: Tranquilo Bay

Today, our schedule will be a flexible one, with opportunities to enjoy the amenities of our wonderful lodge, walk some of the extensive trails, go snorkeling or kayaking, or possibly revisit a favorite site.

NIGHT: Tranquilo Bay Eco Adventure Lodge, Isla Bastimentos

March 14, Day 9: Morning at Tranquilo Bay; Flight to Panama City

After a morning at leisure, we will catch a midday flight to Panama City and transfer to our hotel, where we will enjoy a farewell dinner together.

NIGHT: Crowne Plaza Panama Airport, Tocumen

March 15, Day 10: Departure for Home

Participants can use the hotel's complimentary shuttle service to Tocumen International Airport for morning or afternoon flights home.

ESSENTIAL TOUR INFORMATION

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 12 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: Michael O'Brien and Louise Zemaitis



Michael O'Brien is a freelance artist, author, and environmental consultant living in Cape May, New Jersey. He has a passionate interest in bird vocalizations and field identification, and a serious addiction to migration and nocturnal birding. His travels have taken him throughout North and Central America and beyond. At home in Cape May, Michael serves as an Associate Naturalist with Cape May Bird Observatory for whom he conducts numerous workshops, and, for many years, conducted a fall songbird migration count. He is co-author of *The Shorebird Guide*, *Flight Calls of Migratory Birds*, and *America's 100 Most Wanted Birds*, and is primary author of *Larkwire*, an online and handheld application for learning bird sounds. His illustrations have been widely published in books and field guides, including the *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America* and the new *Peterson field guides*. Michael also has an intense interest in butterflies, leads several "Birds & Butterflies" tours with his wife, Louise Zemaitis, and is coordinator of the Cape May Butterfly Count.



Louise Zemaitis is an artist and naturalist living in Cape May, New Jersey where she is a popular field trip leader teaching birding workshops as an Associate Naturalist with New Jersey Audubon's Cape May Bird Observatory. She also enjoys leading birding groups and lecturing at birding festivals and is known for her enthusiasm for all natural history subjects. Louise and her husband, Michael O'Brien, have been guiding young birders at birding events and conferences for many years. In addition to leading,

Louise is field coordinator of the Monarch Monitoring Project in Cape May, served as compiler of the Cape May Christmas Bird Count for over 20 years, and owns Swallowtail Studio at West End Garage in Cape May. An honors graduate of Temple University's Tyler School of Art, she enjoys working as a freelance artist and her illustrations have been widely published. Her proudest accomplishment has been the raising of her two sons, Bradley, a biologist and artist, and Alec, a philosopher and musician.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: \$7,495 per person based on double occupancy or \$8,385 for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 through dinner on Day 9, 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 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. If the minimum group size is not met, each participant will be charged a small-group supplement—shared equally and communicated in advance—to allow the tour to proceed.

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, 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 (November 6, 2026) prior to the tour departure date.

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

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 (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

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. **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: 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. On our internal Air Panama flights, there will be a limit of **one carry-on bag with a weight restriction of 8.8 lbs** and **one checked bag with a weight restriction of 39 lbs.**

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 \(TSA\)](#) for information pertaining to permissible carry-on items.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

PASSPORTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Panama is 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: The visa details above are current for U.S. citizens as of August 20, 2026. Because entry requirements can change without notice, we kindly remind all participants to double-check the latest information before traveling. Travelers using non-U.S. passports are responsible for confirming any entry requirements that apply to their home country.

CLOTHING: As is the case for all our tropical tours, lightweight field clothing is the norm for Panama. This includes several pair of lightweight field pants, along with cool and comfortable long-sleeved shirts. A hat and sunscreen are recommended for protection from the sun. Lightweight and comfortable walking shoes are recommended, since some days we will spend a good bit of time on foot. A small umbrella and/or rain gear are essential as well.

FOOTWEAR: **Waterproof boots are essential, as the trails can be muddy.**

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a binocular that is in good condition, along with a belt pack or day-pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, camera, etc.). As a precaution, it's a good idea to pack your binocular, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leaders will have spotting scopes, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. As we will be spending a good amount of time on boats, a lightweight waterproof backpack is a good idea to keep optics dry.

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 & LOCAL CONDITIONS

TRANQUILO BAY ECO ADVENTURE LODGE ACCOMMODATIONS: There are deluxe cabanas, each with private bathrooms, air-conditioning, large walk-in shower, full-size water heater, local hardwood floors, fine linen and handcrafted beds. Coffee makers, hair dryers and snack baskets are also located within the bathroom. Each bedroom features a bed or beds, handcrafted for Tranquilo Bay, made from local hardwoods and topped with an orthopedic mattress. Each cabana has a covered porch with a hammock, Adirondack chairs and a ceiling fan.

CLIMATE & WEATHER: The climate in northwestern Panama is usually warm, with mornings in the 70s and afternoons in the 80s. Conditions at midday can be humid and very warm, with temperatures reaching into the lower 90s. Rainstorms may occur at any time of year but are more likely during the rainy season. The two seasons with the least amount of rain are in February/March and September/October. When we travel up to 4,200 feet near La Fortuna, the temperatures will be lower and may even be cool. Clouds and overcast skies frequently prevail in higher areas, leading to damp conditions.

CONDITIONS: This tour requires a moderate level of physical activity from participants. No walks are particularly long, but many will involve trails with uneven terrain or obstacles such as roots, rocks, or mud. There are numerous steps around our lodge, including a 100-foot tower that we'll visit multiple times. There will be several longer days with earlier starts (5:30 breakfast and 6:15 departure) always with shorter days in between. Except for our activities around the lodge, all outings involve boat rides from as little as ten minutes to a bit over an hour. On several outings, restrooms are primitive. On most days we will provide forty-five minutes to an hour of down time before dinner.

FOOD & WATER:

CURRENCY & SPENDING: The U.S. Dollar is the official currency of Panama. VISA and American Express are most commonly used, but MasterCard is also accepted. Departure Tax - US \$40 (included in the price of your air ticket).

ELECTRICITY: Electricity is available at all of our lodging 24 hours a day. Wall outlets are provided in each room/cabaña and electrical appliances may therefore be used at any time day or night. No adapter is needed. 120 volts; plugs are the flat 2-pin American type.

INTERNET ACCESS: Wi-Fi will be available at the Radisson Hotel Panama Canal, Crowne Plaza Hotel and in the main building of the Tranquilo Bay Eco Adventure Lodge.

LANGUAGE: The official language is Spanish, but English is spoken.

TIME: Eastern Standard Time

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Free laundry service is available at the Tranquilo Bay Eco Adventure Lodge, but we recommend you leave something in the tip box for this service on our last morning.

HEALTH & SAFETY

HEALTH: Currently, no vaccinations are required to enter Panama. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta advise that there is some risk of malaria in parts of the country. The areas visited on this tour are not at risk. The CDC is recommending precautions for travelers going out of these main areas. Your Polio and yellow fever vaccinations should be current. The water is drinkable in Panama and the food is safe.

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. 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.

BITING INSECTS: Remove if not a concern, otherwise expand on it.

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>

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:

Ridgely, Robert S. and John Gwynne. ***A Guide to the Birds of Panama***. (Second Edition). Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

George R. Angehr and Robert Dean. ***The Birds of Panama: A Field Guide***. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010. The most useful guide for this tour.

Mammals:

Emmons, Louise H. ***Neotropical Rainforest Mammals: A Field Guide***. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Butterflies:

Glassberg, Jeffrey. ***A Swift Guide to the Butterflies of Mexico and Central America***. Sunstreak Books Inc., 2007.

Background Reading:

Natural History:

Chapman, Frank. ***My Tropical Air Castle***. New York: Appleton and Company, 1929. Fun reading by an early ornithologist in Panama. Out of print; try www.abebooks.com.

Chapman, Frank. ***Life in an Air Castle***. New York: Appleton-Century Co., 1938. Out of print; try www.abebooks.com.

Forsyth, Adrian and Ken Miyata. ***Tropical Nature***. New York: Charles Scribner, 1987. Excellent introduction to many fascinating aspects of the tropical rainforest.

Hilty, Steven. 1994. ***Birds of Tropical America***. Shelbourne, VT: Chapters Publishing, 1994. Subtitle: "A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity."

Kricher, John C. ***A Neotropical Companion***. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. An excellent introduction to the rainforest.

Human History:

McCullough, David. *A Path Between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999. An excellent history of the construction of the Panama Canal.

SUGGESTED APPS:

eBird. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. 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. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Merlin is an app designed as a birding coach for beginning and intermediate birdwatchers. Excellent for use in the field, Merlin asks the observer a series of questions about 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. Free "Bird Packs" need to be downloaded for each region; the Panama bird pack is 971.8 MB. Highly recommended.

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 1, 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.

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