TOTALLY TANGIER SOLAR ECLIPSE

Morocco & Spain

&

CHEFCHAOUEN–RIF MOUNTAINS PRE-TRIP

July 28 – August 6, 2027
July 23 – 29, 2027



Total Solar Eclipse; Leon, Spain; August 12, 2026; VENT's Totally Spain Solar Eclipse Tour
Photograph by Rob Broeren, VENT Staff Astronomer

At Gibraltar, Europe and Africa come closer than anywhere else. Separated only by a water passage of less than nine miles, southern Spain and northern Morocco are surprisingly similar in some respects—and fascinatingly different in many others. In 2027, Victor Emanuel Nature Tours for the first time combines these two captivating destinations in a single tour, a very special natural history and cultural event created around a total eclipse of the sun. Our time together on both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar begins in storied Casablanca and concludes on the shores of Spain's sparkling Costa de Sol. Along the way, our group will share fine birding and outstanding cultural and culinary experiences, in Spain and in Morocco, with VENT tour leaders Barry Lyon and Rick Wright and expert Spanish guides Manu Mojarro and Javier Elorriaga.

The 2027 eclipse has been called the “Eclipse of the Century” because of its exceptional length. From our carefully selected viewing site in Tangier, totality will last an astounding four minutes and fifty-one seconds, as the moon’s shadow completely obscures the disk of the sun. For comparison, totality in Texas during the 2024 eclipse lasted just over four minutes at its maximum, while the duration varies considerably from one location to another along the path of totality.

For the eclipse, we have carefully selected a viewing site in Tangier. VENT is pleased to once again welcome Rob Broeren, an expert astronomer and skilled communicator, who will deliver informative presentations on the sun, the mechanics of a total solar eclipse, and the night sky. Rob will also provide interpretation throughout the eclipse itself on August 2.

Thanks to its extraordinary length and morning timing, the 2027 eclipse presents an exceptional opportunity for photographers. Rob will have a telescope-to-iPhone adapter available for those who wish to photograph the event with their phones. Participants who want to bring their own cameras to photograph the sun’s corona are encouraged to do so. For those interested in eclipse photography, Rob will also prepare a supplementary presentation, *Eclipse: What to See*.

On each of our days together, on both sides of the strait, those who wish to can join birding outings that take us to sites ranging from coastal marshes to semi-arid grasslands and mountains. A particular highlight will be a half-day whale watch off Tarifa, Spain, where the Mediterranean and the open Atlantic are home to an amazing assortment of cetaceans, including Sperm Whales and Orcas; we should also see a selection of marine birds including European Shag, Balearic and Scopoli’s shearwaters, and the stunning and scarce Audouin’s Gull.

By building our tour around this can’t-miss celestial event, we will find ourselves in Morocco at a date when birding can be good but not overwhelmingly productive. Nevertheless, our terrestrial outings on the main tour and our mountain pre-trip take us to some of the best areas to search for such fine regional specialties as the rare Northern Bald Ibis, Laughing Dove, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Little and Pallid swifts, Maghreb Magpie, African Blue Tit, African Chaffinch, and House, Cirl, and Rock buntings. We also have a chance at encountering both Levaillant’s and Iberian

Green woodpeckers, a handsome pair of endemics that nicely illustrate the process of speciation across the Strait of Gibraltar.



Levaillant's Green Woodpecker, a North African Specialty © Javier Elorriaga/Birding the Strait

That narrow band of water, so easy for us to cross by ferry, poses a notable obstacle to southbound birds each autumn. By early August, the raptor migration for which Gibraltar is so famous may already be underway, and from a notable watchpoint in Tarifa, on the Spanish side of the strait, we will hope to witness the earliest flights of European Honey Buzzards, Short-toed Snake Eagles, Booted and Bonelli's Eagles, and Montagu's Harriers during our time together.

As thrilling as the eclipse and the birds will be, this is also a rich cultural landscape, with roots reaching back thousands of years. Alongside our natural history activities, we will also take advantage of the opportunity to explore the splendid cityscapes of northern Morocco, with their vibrant mix of Islamic and Andalusian architecture and art. Across the strait, in Gibraltar itself, the great rock is riddled with caves and tunnels, and architectural highlights include everything from medieval castles and fortresses to inviting streets and alleyways lined with high-end boutiques.

Our program has been specially designed to take full advantage of the astronomical, cultural, and natural historical riches of this unique intercontinental region. If you would like to spend even more time exploring the cultural treasures of Morocco, we encourage you to join the Chefchaouen-Rif Mountains Pre-trip. Again, July birding in this part of Morocco necessarily concentrates on specialties and endemics rather than large numbers of birds. Our pre-trip takes

us to world-famous Talassemtane National Park and to the astonishing Eleonora's Falcon concentration on Morocco's northern coast. Please note that the pre-trip itinerary is published separately.

Offering a captivating view into the nature and cultures of the Mediterranean, our tour is also a precious opportunity to forge new friendships on our field trips and during social hours and meals. We are sure that you will take away fond memories of every aspect of this unrepeatable event.

July 28–29, Days 1–2: Departure for Casablanca, Morocco; transfer to Rabat

Participants should plan to arrive in Casablanca no later than 3:00 pm on July 29th. Nonstop flights depart from the US and Canada in the evening and arrive at Casablanca's Mohammed V International Airport (airport code CMN) late the next morning. Flights requiring connections typically arrive in Casablanca in the late afternoon of the day after departure.

On arriving at the airport, please follow the signs, which are in Arabic and in English, through the brightly lit hall to passport control. Restrooms are available just before passport control. At passport control, a Fast Track lane is available for first-class and business-class passengers. Once your passport has been verified, continue to the baggage claim area, where you will collect your bags and continue to customs (your bags may be screened by customs officials, apparently at random). A currency exchange desk and ATMs are found right outside the baggage area.

Immediately on exiting the baggage claim, you will be met by a representative of our local ground agent, who will be waiting with a sign with the VENT logo and your name on it. Our representative will accompany you and your bags on the private transfer to our five-star hotel, the **Conrad Rabat Arzana by Hilton**, where a room has been reserved in your name. The hotel is located south of the city center in Rabat, about 60 minutes north of the airport.

After checking in, you have the rest of the day free to settle in or to do some preliminary exploring on your own. At 6:00 pm, we will assemble for the first time in a private dining room

in the hotel, where we will enjoy welcome drinks and a brief orientation to our tour activities before dinner together at 7:00.

Travel notes: Casablanca, the arrival city for this tour, is served by a range of nonstop flights from North American airports, including Los Angeles, Toronto, Montreal, Miami, New York City, and Washington, DC. Other options include flying to Paris or another large European airport and connecting there with a flight to Casablanca.

Arrival in Casablanca: If you need a Sim card for your cell phone, it can be purchased at a counter in the baggage claim area; you can also exchange money into local currency here.

If you are concerned about the length of your journey or the shift in time zones or simply want additional time to rest after the overnight flight, we recommend that you arrive in Casablanca a day or two before the start of our tour to adjust. If you would like assistance in making arrangements for extra hotel nights, please contact the VENT office at least sixty days before departure; we will be happy to help.

NIGHTS: aboard international flight (July 28)

Conrad Rabat Arzana by Hilton, Rabat (July 29)

July 30, Day 3: Birding Rabat, or a guided city tour; group transfer to Tangier

One of the pleasures of traveling with VENT is the wide span of experiences and interests tour participants bring to the group. Our itinerary is designed to accommodate that range of interests. This morning, after breakfast in our hotel, we offer the choice of two guided outings, one focused on the history and culture of Rabat and the other taking us to some of the area's most productive birding spots. After lunch together, we will all make the three-hour drive to the city of Tangier in our comfortable coaches with professional drivers.

Option 1: Birding around Rabat and Sidi Boughaba, 7:30 am–1:00 pm. We will depart the hotel after breakfast for a full morning of birding around Rabat and points north. We will visit two or

three sites this morning around the Moroccan capital, seeking a range of resident birds and some of the first southbound migrants of the fall season. A number of the birds we'll seek are common, widespread species while others are North African specialties. The Botanical Garden of Rabat and Maâmora Forest are two possible locations we'll visit, where a representation of birds possible includes Great Spotted and Levaillant's Green woodpeckers, Eurasian Hoopoe, Maghreb Magpie, Great Gray and Woodchat shrikes, African Blue Tit, and African Chaffinch among many others

Around mid-morning we'll make our way to Sidi Boughaba Biological Reserve, thirty minutes north of Rabat. This long coastal lake is famed as the best place in Morocco to look for such rarities and regional specialties as the White-headed and Marbled ducks and Red-knobbed Coots. Among the gulls are often a few Audouin's Gulls; once among the world's rarest larids, this handsome species' populations are increasing rapidly around virtually the entire Mediterranean. In wet years, long-legged waders to be seen here may include good numbers of Western Swamphens, Greater Flamingos, and European Spoonbills. Drier roadsides are home to Black-winged Kites and the recently re-split Maghreb Magpie. If time and the warming weather allow, we may check the beach here for gulls, terns, and shorebirds; the patchy scrub above the beach sometimes harbors a few Barbary Partridges.



Marbled Duck © Brian Gibbons

With a full morning of birding behind us, we will meet the rest of our group at 1:00 for lunch in a traditional restaurant.

Option 2: Rabat city tour, 8:30 am–1:00 pm. After breakfast, we will set out on an expertly guided tour of the historic city of Rabat, Morocco's largest city and its principal Atlantic port. In the cooler beginning of the morning, we will explore on foot, then shift to our private coach as the day begins to warm.

Occupying a commanding position above the mouth of the Bouregreg River, the Kasbah of the Udayas is a beautifully preserved fortress dating mostly to the twelfth century, with more modern expansions constructed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This massive UNESCO World Heritage Site encloses a royal pavilion, a fine mosque from around 1150, and formal gardens laid out in the early twentieth century.

Rabat's Hassan Tower was commissioned in the late twelfth century by the famous caliph Yaqub al-Mansur, whose quarter-century reign was marked by a blossoming of architecture, science, and scholarship, a high point in the distinguished history of medieval Islamic culture. Intended to serve as the minaret to the world's largest mosque, both structures were incomplete at the time of Al-Mansur's death in 1199, leaving the enormous base of the minaret and some 350 columns of the unfinished mosque standing. The historical and cultural significance of this imposing site is made clear by the choice of King Mohammed V to have his family mausoleum built opposite the tower. Completed in 1971, the building is especially notable for its reliance on the materials and methods of traditional Moroccan craftsmanship, a particular interest of the king and his successors.

Far older is the Chellah, site of a Phoenician trading outpost as early as 1000 BC. This facility was replaced by a Roman town, and then, by the high Middle Ages, the Chellah was taken over for use as a royal cemetery, with elaborate tombs, mausoleums, and mosques built in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The spectacular walls surrounding the complex were completed in the mid-1300s, and the famous main gate takes the form of a high horseshoe arch elaborately ornamented with foliage motifs and inscriptions.

At the conclusion of our tour of Rabat's World Heritage Sites, we will drive to meet the rest of our group for lunch in a traditional restaurant.

After our lunch together, the entire group will board our private coaches for the move north to Tangier, where the Mediterranean Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean. We will break the three-hour drive north with a stop for restrooms or a snack, and plan to arrive at our Tangier hotel in the early evening. A bit after checking in to our rooms, we will gather again for dinner in one of our hotel's private dining rooms.

NIGHT: El Minzah Hotel, Tangier



Hassan Tower, Rabat © CGST26/Shutterstock

July 31–August 1, Days 4–5: Tangier, and birding northern Morocco

Thanks to its location right on the Strait of Gibraltar, the port city of Tangier has linked Europe and Africa since the days of the Phoenicians some three thousand years ago. Still a commercial

powerhouse and cosmopolitan crossroads, Tangier is especially well known to visitors for its Old City, the medina, where artisans work with traditional materials and methods to produce handicrafts in wood or precious metals, leather products from custom-made shoes to exquisite purses and briefcases, and cool, comfortable clothing in natural fibers.

Today and tomorrow will find us divided into three groups, one group diving into the delightful complexity of Tangier's history and rich culture, and the other two groups exploring two very different birding habitats, one each day. You have the option of taking part only in birding activities or in birding one day with cultural sightseeing the other.

Option 1: Coastal birding south of Tangier and the ruins of Lixus, 7:00 am–4:00 pm. After breakfast in our hotel, we will make an early start for the wetlands and woodlands south of the city. Fifty miles south of Tangier, the salt pans near Larache and freshwater wetlands along the Lower Oued Loukkos can offer some of the most productive birding in northwestern Morocco. White and Black storks, Eurasian Spoonbill, Greater Flamingo, and Squacco and Purple herons are all worth looking for here. Red-knobbed Coots are at least seasonally common. Cetti's, Savi's, Common Reed, and Great Reed warblers all breed here, as does Zitting Cisticola. Nearby cork oak woodlands provide habitat for Black-shouldered Kite, Booted Eagle, and Northern Hobby. In the town of Larache itself, both Pallid and Little swifts nest, though the young may have fledged by the time of our visit.

We will take our lunch break today in Asilah or in Larache, then visit one of Morocco's best-known archaeological parks. The site of the ancient city of Lixus was occupied as early as the Bronze Age; beginning in the 8th century BC, Phoenician settlers made the city into a hub of coastal trade. Lixus became part of the Roman Empire at the turn of the eras, when the city was famous throughout the Mediterranean world as a producer and exporter of fish sauce. The new museum here offers interpretation of life in Lixus from the Phoenician period to the fourteenth century; Morocco's only known Roman amphitheater is here, next to a large bathhouse with impressive mosaic floors.

Option 2: Inland birding south of Tangier, 7:00 am–4:00 pm. After breakfast in our hotel, we will make an early start for the hills and steppes south of the city. Here, particularly in the vicinity of the small village of Briech, is the Moroccan stronghold of the Great Bustard, one of the heaviest flighted birds in the world. By the time of our visit, the males will have long since stopped displaying for the year, but any encounter with these spectacular and often very elusive giants is a memorable one. Another nearby site to look for these birds on the fallow fields they prefer is near the military communications station at Had Gharbia.



Booted Eagle © Brian Gibbons

Around El Hajra, we can look for other typical birds of wide-open country including Crested Lark and European Stonechat. European Bee-eaters from nearby nesting colonies may be seen hunting over the grasslands here. This is also good habitat for the colorful European Roller and for the *elegans* subspecies of the Great Gray Shrike, a distinctively pale bird with more white on the wings and tail than most of the other races of this widespread species.

We will break for lunch today in Asilah before returning to Tangier.

Option 3: Tangier and its Medina, 8:30 am–3:30 pm. This program, which will be offered to participants on both days, is devoted to exploring Old Tangier in a series of leisurely-paced tours by foot and coach with an expert cultural guide.

Among the sites we may visit is the more than 100-year-old Café Hafa, perched atop a cliff with a stunning view out over the Mediterranean; inside, the café still looks as it did on its opening in 1921. Not far away is an even more venerable site, the Phoenician tombs carved into the rock above the Strait of Gibraltar. Dating to the fifteenth century BC, this necropolis of some 100 graves looks out across the strait, and it is a favored vantage point out over the wide Atlantic.



Great Bustard © Pedro Marques

Tangier's Kasbah, a gigantic fortress complex built beginning in the tenth century AD, perches high at the top of the steep streets and winding alleys of the city's medina. There, artisan workshops, tiny boutiques, local restaurants, and cafes are the setting for a bustling scene of shoppers, children, and even the occasional snake "charmer."

Set in one of the maze of streets and alleyways is the majestic Dar el Makhzen, a palace once serving as the residence of the sultans of Morocco and now housing the Museum of Moroccan Arts and Antiquities. A superb example of Moroccan-Andalusian architecture, constructed beginning in the seventeenth century, the majestic building itself is one of the many highlights of a visit here, with elegant courtyards and beautifully ornamented interiors. The actual exhibits trace northern Morocco's art and culture from prehistoric times to the present, from ancient steles erected by seafaring Phoenicians to the exquisite ceramics, detailed woodwork, and artistically ornamented tools and weapons produced during the Islamic Middle Ages; particularly interesting in this segment of the museum is the collection of scientific instruments, eloquent testimony to the sophistication of Muslim thought in the period.

In the heart of the busy medina, the museum of the Fondation Lorin occupies one of the oldest synagogues still standing in Tangier. Dedicated to the city's twentieth- and twenty-first-century history, the holdings include photographs and paintings illustrating Morocco's modern cultural history.

The tallest of Tangier's many minarets belongs to the Mohammed V Mosque, dedicated to the memory of the Moroccan king who in April 1947, speaking from the nearby Grand Socco square, proclaimed his country's independence from France. Covering more than 48,000 square

feet, this jewel of traditional Islamic architecture was completed in 1983 and now forms the core of a complex of religious, educational, and administrative structures. The minaret towers over the city, easily visible from as far away as the Strait of Gibraltar.



Dar el Makhzen, Tangier © Mitzo/Shutterstock

We will take a break from the wonders of Tangier in a café or at one of the city's almost innumerable souks or open-air markets. Lunch will be in a good local restaurant.

On both of these days, all three groups will return to our hotel in time for a break before we dive into our astronomical activities, led by Rob Broeren.

On July 31, we will reconvene at 6:30 p.m. for some social time and an hour-long illustrated presentation, *How the Sun Works*.

On August 1, we will visit an outdoor location where Rob will administer a solar telescope for us to safely view sunspots and other phenomena, a fitting introduction to the star player in tomorrow's eclipse. So that everyone has an opportunity to fully experience this activity, we will participate in two 60-minute shifts, the first beginning at 4:00 and the second at 5:00 p.m. In preparation for the great event the next morning, we will gather in the hotel at 6:30 p.m. for

another presentation by Rob, in which he will outline the C*elestial Mechanics of the Eclipse*; he will also introduce us to the range of extraordinary astronomical phenomena we may witness in connection with the eclipse, discuss the possible responses of the natural world, and review the procedures required to safely view the sun. The phenomena we may experience include solar prominences, the solar corona, Bailey's Beads, the "diamond ring effect," and shadow bands.

A buffet dinner in one of the hotel's private dining rooms will be held each night at 7:30 p.m.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Photographing the sun and/or the eclipse will be a priority for some of our guests. To accommodate this interest, we will gather again after dinner for a 30-minute presentation by Rob, *How to Photograph the Sun and the Eclipse*. This activity will likely be of lower interest to many of our guests, and we emphasize that attendance is optional.

NIGHT: El Minzah Hotel, Tangier

August 2, Day 6: The total solar eclipse, and across the Strait of Gibraltar to Spain

We will devote this morning to one of the most awesome phenomena in all of nature. This year's total eclipse of the sun is only the second visible in southernmost Europe and northern Africa this century—and Morocco and southern Spain last lay in the path of totality in 1912.



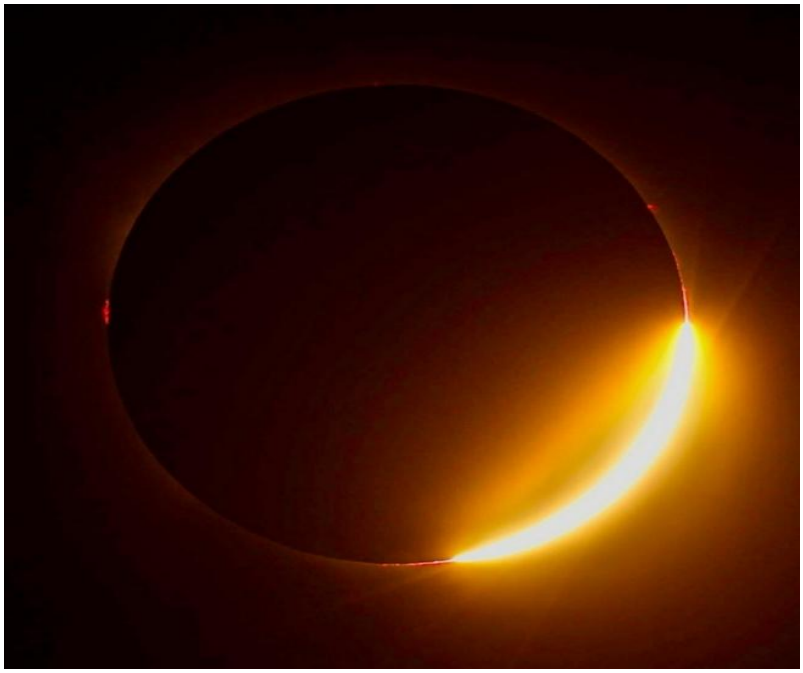
Image of sun through solar telescope; León, Spain; August 2026 © Rob Broeren

Any eclipse is spectacular, of course, but this one, already being hailed by some astronomers as the eclipse of the century, will feature the longest period of totality readily visible to land-based observers until June 2114. At our observation site here in northwestern Morocco, the moon will entirely obscure the sun for almost a full five minutes, surpassing all of this century's events but the eclipse of 2009. As

an important bonus, atmospheric conditions in northern Africa on this date are as close to perfect as possible, with Tangier recording clear skies 93% of the time on August 2s past.

We will leave our hotel at 6:15 am, then move to our observation point in time for breakfast and, most importantly, for the onset of the eclipse at 7:40 am, an hour and a quarter after sunrise. The moon will block out more and more of the sun until totality is attained at 9:47; it will persist for a remarkable four minutes and 51 seconds, an eerily beautiful span in which nocturnal birds and other creatures may be fooled into activity. This notably long duration is the result of the moon being near perigee—its closest point to Earth—at the same time as the sun approaches aphelion—its most distant point; thus, the moon will appear large enough to block the entire disk of the sun for longer than would otherwise be the case.

Rob Broeren's evening lectures will have provided excellent preparation for us to not only enjoy but understand the eclipse. During the event itself, Rob will also help us see such phenomena as solar prominences, the solar corona, Bailey's Beads, the diamond ring effect, and shadow bands. A telescope-to-iPhone adapter will be available for those who wish to take photos of the event with their phones. Participants who want to bring their own cameras to take pictures of the sun's corona are urged to do so.



Solar eclipse moments after totality; León, Spain; August 2026 © Rob Broeren

Please remember that **at no time** *except full totality should you look at the sun without solar viewing glasses meeting the ISO 12312-2 standard. Normal sunglasses do* **not** *meet this standard. VENT will provide appropriate viewing glasses for all participants. You are also welcome to bring your own as long as they are fully intact, with no scratches, cracks, or tears.*

Given cooperative weather, our viewing site should yield superlative views of the entire progress of the eclipse, from the first visual contact of moon and sun to final contact at 10:00, marking the end of the eclipse at our location.

The excitement continues after lunch as we board the passenger ferry for the one-hour crossing to Tarifa, Spain. On arrival, we will be met by our private transportation service and driven directly to our hotel. Once we've checked in and caught our breath, we will gather for a cash bar social, with dinner to follow in one of our hotel's private dining rooms.

NIGHT: Hotel Fairplay and Spa Resort, Tarifa, Spain

August 3, Day 7: Migration in Tarifa and an afternoon's whalewatch; or a guided excursion to Gibraltar

Today and tomorrow, we offer a choice between birding and a cultural visit to Gibraltar and its famous rock. You can select two birding days, one birding and one cultural day, or two days in Gibraltar. The birding groups will visit a different site each day, while our Gibraltar city itinerary will remain essentially identical on both days.

Option 1: Migration over Tarifa and whale-watching, 7:30 am–7:00 pm. The nine miles of open water separating Spain from Morocco at Gibraltar pose enough of an obstacle to southbound migrants that even the largest and most powerful fliers among them hesitate to cross. The concentration of raptors, storks, and other broad-winged soaring birds that results is famous among birders world-wide, who come to southern Spain every autumn to witness one of the greatest migration events anywhere, involving some 35 million birds each fall—among them more than a million birds of prey.

By the beginning of August, migration is gearing up for several of the regularly observed species in the vicinity of Tarifa. Especially notable are the White Storks and Black Kites, flocks of thousands of which are sometimes seen as early as July. European Honey Buzzards, too, may be seen passing over, often accompanied by smaller numbers of Montagu's Harriers, Lesser Kestrels, or Egyptian Vultures. Conveniently, raptor movements tend to be strongest in the morning, making it easy to enjoy the show. West winds typically produce the largest numbers, while east winds can provide the best views as birds are forced low over our observation point.



Migrating White Storks © Slava 81/Shutterstock

After lunch in Tarifa, this group will then board a chartered boat for a three-hour whale-watching excursion onto the strait itself, where the waters of the Atlantic and the Mediterranean mingle. No fewer than seven species of cetacean are regularly seen here. Pilot Whale and Atlantic Bottlenose, Short-beaked Common, and Striped dolphins are present all year. In late summer, at the time of our visit, the waters are also plied by Fin and Sperm whales and Orcas. At this season, the Orcas prey mainly on bluefin tuna, which are passing through the strait on their own migration. A network of research vessels and fishing boats keeps track of the whales, making it more likely—though not, of course, guaranteed—that we encounter Orcas or either of the great whale species.

A number of seabird species are also possible while we are offshore. The late summer may produce a variety of shearwaters including Manx, Cory's, Scopoli's and Balearic. A number of migrating terns are possible as well, including Black, Common and Whiskered terns.

Once back on terra firma, we will return to the hotel, where we'll gather for a social time followed by dinner at 7:30 pm.

Option 2, Gibraltar, 8:30 am–3:30 pm: We will be accompanied by a local guide on a morning's exploration of Gibraltar, with its bustling shopping streets, ancient limestone caverns, and comical monkeys. The cession of the Rock to the British in the early eighteenth century would assume an unexpected significance a hundred years later, when Gibraltar became a vital base in the Peninsular War, which eventually drove Napoleonic France out of Spain.

Less than ten miles from the coast of Africa, Gibraltar has been occupied for some fifty thousand years, with the earliest residents finding shelter in the many caves. Today, the Territory has its own parliament and enjoys a unique self-governing status within the UK. The same privileged geographic position that attracted the area's first prehistoric residents, and that has made the rock a highly contested military position for millennia, today makes Gibraltar a true international crossroads, a vital link between the UK and Europe and between Europe and Africa just across the strait. This English-speaking exclave is now a very popular destination for visitors from across the world, with tourism following only finance and shipping as a source of its wealth. Today, in spite of continual Spanish efforts to re-annex the area, Gibraltar is still a British Overseas Territory, the only part of the United Kingdom with a direct line of sight to Africa.



Gibraltar © Alex Tihonovos/Shutterstock

Our visit today will take in the Rock's complicated and multicultural history, its impressive caves, and, inevitably, its notorious Barbary Macaques, apes introduced from Morocco sometime before 1492 and now zealously protected by sentiment and superstition: it is said that Great Britain will control Gibraltar only for as long as these importunate blond primates survive there.

We will start today's visit at the southernmost spot in continental Europe, within sight of the Moroccan coastline. After we meet our expert local guide, a six-minute cable car ride takes us to the top of the Rock of Gibraltar, where the views from nearly 1300 feet above sea level are nothing short of spectacular.

Over the ages, the Rock's Jurassic limestone has been slowly dissolved by contact with rainwater, creating large caverns connected by long passages. St. Michael's Cave is one of the largest of the 150 known such systems; the room known as the Auditorium can seat an audience of more than 100 people for concerts and other events. The portions of the cave accessible to the public are fully illuminated, letting us admire the otherworldly stalactites, stalagmites, "curtains," and other features created by centuries of seepage and deposition. Tourism here has a long tradition, as evidenced by pottery and wall paintings found in the cave dating back as far as 20,000 years before the present.

Above it all is the castle, built on orders of the rock's Moorish conquerors, beginning perhaps as early as the eighth century. The most imposing surviving portions of this massive fortress, including the famous square Tower of Homage, have come to be



Barbary Macaque © Andrej Prosicky/Shutterstock

emblematic of the complex history of Gibraltar, even appearing on the territory's banknotes.

One of Gibraltar's most famous attractions is a colony of some 300 Barbary macaques residing around St. Michael's. Introduced from Morocco centuries ago, the plush-looking apes have grown utterly accustomed to human visitors, and they are easier to see here than anywhere in their native range across the straits in northern Africa. The only wild-living apes anywhere in Europe, they are now under the care of the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society, which feeds and monitors the animals; each of the 300 or so macaques is tattooed and microchipped, and they are regularly captured for medical examination and "fertility regulation." The monkeys are used to human admiration and sometimes take advantage of that familiarity to beg for food or even to climb onto visitors' laps, two behaviors that are to be strenuously discouraged, for their safety and for yours.

After lunch, we will have some free time for exploration on our own in this fascinatingly cosmopolitan city. The grand scale and graceful architecture of Casemates Square leads into pedestrian avenues filled with high-end shops and boutiques. There are plenty of cafes and bars to offer respite to visitors overcome by the frenzy of shoppers in search of Gibraltar's famously low prices on jewelry, watches, electronics, alcohol, cosmetics, and perfumes.

We will be back at our hotel with time for a break before gathering for a cash bar social hour at 6:30, followed by dinner at 7:30 with the entire group.

NIGHT: Hotel Fairplay and Spa Resort, Tarifa

August 4, Day 8: Birding La Janda and Barbate; or a guided excursion to Gibraltar

Today, we once again offer the choice between a birding outing and a cultural visit to Gibraltar and its famous rock.

Option 1: Birding La Janda and the Barbate Estuary, 7:30 am–5:30 pm. Today we offer a full day of birding at two of the most productive lowland sites in Cádiz. La Janda, once the site of a large saline lagoon, is now a checkerboard landscape of pasture, woodland, grain fields, canals, and

rice paddies, each habitat attractive to a different suite of bird species at different times of the year. In fall migration, La Janda can be especially good for raptors, which roost, feed, and rest here before undertaking the flight across the strait. Both Spanish and Bonelli's eagles are regularly seen here, taking advantage of the abundance of small prey found in agricultural habitats. Black and Black-winged kites are also possible here, and there are even records of such rarities as Rüppell's Vulture and Long-legged Buzzard, both more frequently encountered on the Morocco side. Orchards and sparsely wooded pastureland are home to characteristic birds of dry habitats, including Little Owl and European Roller.



Eurasian Spoonbill © Robert Warren

We are likely to see a few migrant shorebirds at La Janda, but numbers and diversity alike are usually higher at the Barbate Estuary. Before we start birding in earnest here, though, we will partake of a genuine specialty for lunch. Barbate is one of the last places in Spain where bluefin tuna are fished, and the delectable meat is prepared in any number of ways in a range of fine local restaurants.

Physical hunger assuaged, we will turn back to the birds. Among the regular species we will be looking for here after lunch are the Collared Pratincole, Black-winged Stilt, Common

Greenshank, Dunlin, Curlew Sandpiper, and Kentish Plover; early in the migration season, some adults will still be wearing their breeding plumage. Taller waders may include European Spoonbill and Greater Flamingo, while Mediterranean and Audouin's gulls and Caspian Terns can often be found fishing the ponds and canals. This is not the best season to see passerines, but we will keep a careful eye out for such specialties as Greater Short-toed Lark or Western Yellow Wagtail.

The real prize in the Barbate area, though, is the Northern Bald Ibis, one of Europe's rarest (and most comical-looking) birds. At La Barca de Vejer, these bizarre wading birds nest on the cliff face above the road, just as they did over much of southern Europe five hundred years ago. The first reintroductions here were in 2008, and the local breeding population now comprises at least 40 pairs. Unlike some other European populations of ibis, the La Barca birds are relatively sedentary, and we can look for them not just around the breeding rock but on pastures, wetlands, and golf courses throughout the area.

Option 2, Gibraltar, 8:30 am–3:30 pm: We will be accompanied by a local guide on a morning's exploration of Gibraltar; after lunch, we have the opportunity for shopping or independent sightseeing in this fascinatingly complex city. We will be back at our hotel with time for a break before gathering for a social hour at 6:30 pm, followed by dinner with the entire group. *For more details, see the full description of Day 7, Option 2, above.*

After our return to the hotel, we will reconvene at 6:30 for a final presentation from Rob, *Astronomy 101*, that offers a general overview of the night sky. Dinner will be at 7:30.

NIGHT: Hotel Fairplay and Spa Resort, Tarifa

August 5, Day 9: Casares, and on to Málaga

After breakfast in our hotel, we will leave for Málaga at 8:00 am. Halfway to Málaga is the small town of Casares, one of the famous *pueblos blancos,* "whitewashed settlements," for which Cádiz is so well known. We will make a stop or two here to admire the town itself, centered on a Moorish castle, and to look for such montane specialties as Black and Western Black-eared

wheatears, Blue Rock-Thrush, and even Red-billed Chough. White-rumped Swifts are known to have nested under the castle eaves, and Lesser Kestrels are sometimes seen perched on the rooftops of the village's older buildings.

We will have lunch together in Casares, then push on to Spain's Costa del Sol and Málaga, where we will spend the final night of our tour in a beachfront hotel near Málaga Airport (airport code AGP). We will enjoy a final celebratory Spanish dinner featuring delicious tapas and drinks in our five-star Moorish Revival hotel.

August 6, Day 10: Departures

Our tour ends this morning after breakfast with private transfers to nearby Málaga–Costa del Sol Airport (airport code AGP). Participants may depart Málaga at any time today.



Black Wheatear © Brian Gibbons

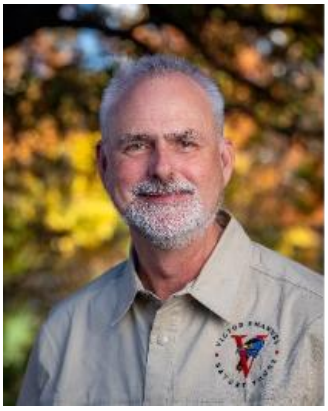
Essential Tour Information

TOUR SIZE: This tour is limited to 30 participants.

TOUR LEADER(s): This tour is led by **Barry Lyon**, **Rick Wright**, **Manu Mojarro**, **Javier Elorriaga**, and expert local guides in Morocco and Spain. **Rob Broeren** will serve as staff astronomer.



Barry Lyon's passion for the outdoors and birding has its roots in his childhood in southern California. During his teenage years, he attended several VENT/ABA youth birding camps, which ultimately led to his professional involvement with Victor Emanuel Nature Tours. He holds a B.A. from the University of Arizona at Tucson, where he studied history and political science, with an emphasis on environment and development politics. Barry joined the VENT team as a tour leader in 1995 and embarked on a travel-based career that has taken him to an array of worldwide destinations. He has lived in Austin, Texas, since 2004, when he joined our office staff as an administrative assistant. In 2014, he was named Chief Operating Officer (COO), reflecting his increased experience and responsibilities. In 2023, Barry became VENT's Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Although Barry still leads two or three trips a year, these days his work is geared almost entirely toward business, customer relations, and the management of the company. Barry's background and his knowledge of natural history have provided him with a strong interest in conservation. He is a former board member and past president of Travis Audubon Society, which emphasizes conservation through birding and outdoor education for children. Barry resides in South Austin with his wife, Brooke Smith.



Rick Wright is a widely published author and sought-after lecturer and field trip leader. A native of southeast Nebraska, Rick studied French, German, philosophy, and life sciences at the University of Nebraska before making a detour to Harvard Law School. He took the Ph.D. in Germanic languages and literatures at Princeton University in 1990, then spent a dozen years as an academic, holding successive appointments as assistant professor of German at the University of

Illinois, reader in Art and Archaeology at Princeton University, and associate professor of Medieval Studies at Fordham University. His numerous scholarly publications include two books on the Latin animal literature of the later Middle Ages. Among Rick's recent books are second editions of his *ABA Field Guide to Birds of New Jersey* and his *ABA Field Guide to Birds of Arizona*; his *Peterson Reference Guide to American Sparrows* was published in 2019. Especially interested in the history and culture of birding, he is hard at work on a study of hummingbird collecting in France from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. In his spare time, he teaches Latin courses online for the Paideia Institute. Rick lives with his wife, Alison Beringer, and their jet-black lab, Quetzal, in northern New Jersey.



Manu Mojarro has been a wildlife enthusiast virtually from birth, and he has been organizing professional birding tours and events for more than 20 years. Over that period, Manu has taken thousands of people afield. He is an enthusiastic participant in local bird banding and monitoring efforts.



Javier Elorriaga is a native of Bilbao who has lived in Tarifa since 2008. After four years' scientific study of the raptor migration across the Strait of Gibraltar, Javier has dedicated himself to leading birding tours professionally, a job that lets him combine his experience as a field ornithologist with his interests in sustainable tourism and conservation. His busy schedule finds him leading numerous tours each year across Spain and in Morocco.



Rob Broeren has been an amateur astronomer for over 30 years, traveling with telescopes throughout the United States, Peru, and New Zealand, and he has published articles in *Astronomy Technology Today.* Professionally, he works in the aerospace industry. Early in his career, he worked on the International Space Station, specializing in thermal propulsion, and then on the Delta

Rocket program that launches satellites. His rocket scientist journey has continued in his current work on the NASA Space Launch System Program, whose goal is to make a permanent moon colony and eventually land the first astronauts on Mars. Rob has a degree in physics (astronomy/cosmology) from UC Irvine and mechanical engineering degrees from Oregon State University and UCLA. An avid bird photographer, he currently lives in Huntsville, Alabama.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: **$12,450** per person based on double occupancy or **$13,025** for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 through breakfast on Day 10, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, all ground (and ferry) transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does **not** include airfare to nor from Casablanca/Malaga; however, flights within the tour (if any) are included. The fee also excludes laundry, personal expenses, and other items of a personal nature. For information about gratuities, please see the "TIPPING" sub-section below. 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 (March 30, 2027) prior to the tour departure date.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early (Casablanca) or extend your stay (Malaga), 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.

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.

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

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

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

PASSPORTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure date is required for entry into **Morocco**. The passport must have at least one blank page for the entry stamp. U.S. citizens entering **Spain** as tourists must have a passport that is valid for at least three months after your planned departure date. The passport must have at least two blank pages for entry and departure stamps. Passports are required for all visitors to the British Overseas Territory of **Gibraltar**, except for EU nationals in possession of a valid national identity card. Your passport or travel document must be valid for at least three months after your planned departure date.

VISAs: At the time of writing, citizens of the United States or Canada do not need a tourist visa to enter Morocco, Spain, or Gibraltar, but Spain requires EES and Gibraltar the UK ETA; see below for instructions for obtaining those electronic authorizations. Rules and regulations for citizens of other countries may be different; please check with the consulates or embassies of each country.

EES: The EU's Entry/Exit System (EES) is an automated IT system for registering non-EU nationals travelling for a short stay, each time they cross the external borders of most of the EU countries. If your personal information has not already been stored in the EES, it will be collected from you on arrival in Spain. Passport control officers will take a photo of your face and/or scan your fingerprints. This information will be recorded in a digital file. Your passport will not be stamped.

Citizens of countries other than the United States should consult their local Moroccan, UK, and Spanish consulates or embassies for information about entry requirements.

If you do not have a passport, or your passport does not satisfy the requirements above, you must obtain one or renew 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 can also visit state.gov/travel for information on how to get or renew a passport.

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

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTHING: We want you to be comfortable throughout the tour, so please be prepared for variable conditions. Lightweight warm-weather apparel is recommended for the entirety of this trip. Though rain is unlikely at this season, you should also bring a light rain jacket—particularly if you will be participating in our whale-watching excursion. Dress is casual throughout, but for our evening meals, you may feel more comfortable in slightly dressier clothes. In Morocco, modes of dress tend to be conservative, and visitors wearing sleeveless shirts or dresses will not be admitted to some sites.

The following items are recommended:

- Pants: A couple of pairs of pants are essential. Many people prefer lightweight pants of cotton or other material; denim is likely to prove uncomfortably hot. On our visits to restaurants, churches, and museums, neat but still informal clothing will be best.
- Field clothing: Pants and shirts made of lightweight, durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular and can prove especially useful in the very warm temperatures we anticipate on at least some days of this trip.
- Shirts: Several comfortable shirts suitable for warm to hot weather. Long sleeves are preferable, to protect against sun and insects.

- Hat: A broad-brimmed hat for protection from the sun is essential. Please bring a baseball-style cap at the very least.
- Outerwear: On any late evening activities and on our excursions to the coast, you may find layering a light jacket over your shirt useful. Rain is unexpected, but you should bring a water-repellent jacket for our whale-watching trip.

To further help you pack, please read the **CLIMATE & WEATHER** section above carefully.

FOOTWEAR: A light hiking boot or trail shoe is appropriate for our birding outings. In the cities and at evening meals, a comfortable walking shoe may be preferred. A lighter shoe, such as an athletic shoe, will come in handy in the hotels or on cultural excursions.

EQUIPMENT: One of the most important aspects of an enjoyable travel experience is the proper equipment. The following will come in handy during your trip to Morocco and Spain:

- Backpack for extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment
- Notebooks and pens
- Travel alarm clock
- Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection
- Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions
- Insect repellent
- Personal toiletries
- Cameras, lenses, memory cards, extra batteries
- Collapsible walking stick – highly recommended for those who have trouble walking
- Tissue packs
- Refillable water bottle – Bottled water will always be provided, but you should bring your own favorite refillable bottle as well.
- Tissue packs and moist towelettes
- Small flashlight or headlamp

- Snacks – a supply of your favorite snack items from home is always a good idea, especially if you have dietary restrictions. Snacks will also be available on the vehicles during each of our excursions.

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 or 8x42 binoculars are compact and light enough.

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

Solar Glasses: VENT will provide each participant with a pair of high-quality, fit-over-eyeglasses solar glasses for viewing the eclipse. These glasses meet the international standard for safe viewing, ISO 12312- 2. Participants are also welcome to bring their own solar glasses, provided that they confirm that they meet the same standard. There are right ways and wrong ways to look at the sun, and in preparation for the eclipse, Rob Broeren will provide instruction for safe viewing.

DESTINATION INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS

CLIMATE & WEATHER: both Morocco and Spain, temperatures can be expected to be hot, ranging into the 80s or 90s °F or higher, and falling only into the high 60s overnight. Humidity at the coast can be noticeable, but it is typically lower anywhere away from the immediate shore. Rain is not expected at this season, but it is best to be prepared for a brief shower anyway. Skies are clear over Tangier about 93% of the time in early August, an essential factor in our decision to view the eclipse from that area.

CONDITIONS

ACCOMODATIONS: We will be staying in four excellent hotels during this event: one night in Rabat, followed by three nights in Tangier, three nights northwest of Tarifa, and a final night in Málaga.

The Conrad Rabat Arzana by Hilton features lush gardens and ocean views in an elevated waterfront location. In addition to a spa and swimming pools, the hotel has a bar, a tea lounge, and four restaurants serving Moroccan, French, Asian, and international cuisine.

Our Tangier hotel, the El Minzah Hotel, was established in 1930, and for nearly a hundred years has been one of the most prestigious hotels in northern Africa. The rooms are elegant but in some cases dated in decor. Period woodwork, oriental carpets, and intricately carved arched doorways are featured in the lobby, a comfortable space for a traditional Moroccan tea or almond cookie. At the heart of the hotel is a patio with a magnificently carved sandstone gate, iron-studded doors, and endless Old World charm; we have alfresco options here for morning and evening meals. Almost all of the hotel's rooms and suites have splendid views of the garden, courtyard, or the Mediterranean. The hotel's restaurants serve both Moroccan specialties and international cuisine; wine and beer are served with dinner. There are three bars, one overlooking the swimming pool and gardens for a classic northern African view. Among the other amenities are a health club offering fitness activities and spa treatments; guests can also relax in the sauna, steam bath, or Turkish bath, or take a swim in the hotel's private swimming pool. Internet is available at no charge in all rooms and public areas.

North of Tarifa, we will be staying at the Hotel Fairplay Golf and Spa Resprt, surrounded by Alcornocales Natural Park. The hotel's architecture is modeled on the "white villages" of Cádiz. A spa, pool, and fully equipped gym are available, and guests also have access to a lounge, a library, and a quiet reading room. The coffee shop and hotel restaurants pride themselves on a broad variety of regional, national, and international dishes.

Malaga's Hotel Castillo de Santa Catalina will be our home for the final night of the tour. This five-star accommodation is set among lavish gardens screening an outdoor infinity pool for guests. There is a bar, and the hotel's restaurant offers a wide range of cuisines, with menus for celiacs and vegetarians.

MEALS: As cosmopolitan cities, both Rabat and Tangier are home to a host of restaurants offering international cuisine from Korean to TexMex. But we will not make the mistake of

passing up the opportunity to sample some of the delicious specialties prepared in traditional ways using local ingredients.

Incorporating the influences of Arab, Berger, Andalusian, and African cooking, the Moroccan kitchen has historically relied on beef, mutton, chicken, and seafood, often prepared as a stew, or tajine, seasoned with a wide selection of imported and home-grown spices and flavorings. Locally harvested seafood includes sole, swordfish, tuna, shrimp, eel, lobster, and a variety of clams and other mollusks.

Vegetarians are also well catered for here. Salads, usually served at the beginning of the meal and in generous portions, can be hot or cold, and feature eggplant, tomato, green pepper, olives, spinach, and fresh spices such as parsley, cilantro, and garlic.

The breakfasts in our hotels may also feature some local specialties, but are generally weighted toward European tastes; eggs, bread, cereal, cheese, and pastries are usually on offer, along with fresh juices and tea.

On the other side of the strait, in southernmost Spain, seafood is prominent on most menus; one well-known specialty of Cádiz is the tortillita de camarones, a sort of fritter of tiny and delicious shrimp.

Our visit coincides with the movement of bluefin tuna between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, and the fresh catch is available prepared in many ways, even as sushi. A very special experience will be our meal of fresh bluefin in a Spanish restaurant.

Ortiguillas, deep-fried sea anemones, are also a local delicacy that deserves to be tried. Unlike Morocco, Spain is a major producer and consumer of pork, and roasted pork belly may be the closest approximation to a “national dish” in Cádiz. If it is too hard to choose, most restaurants offer a wide selection of tapas, making it easy to sample many different dishes in the course of a single meal.

Please remember that Mediterranean countries are famous for their late-hour meals, and it is difficult to arrange dinner for much earlier than 7:30 pm.

FOOD & WATER: The classic drinks in Morocco are mint tea and fresh-squeezed orange juice. Water quality in Morocco is variable, and it is best for foreign visitors to drink only bottled or purified water. Most travelers have no trouble drinking tap water in Spain.

Wherever we are, adequate hydration is very important at this season, and you should bring a water bottle and fill it continually, from either purified water sources in the hotels or the large containers of purified water carried in our vehicles.

Wine and beer are available in our hotel restaurants in Morocco. In Spain, there are many local specialties to try, chief among them the vast assortment of sherries produced in the Sherry Triangle of Cádiz.

EVENT PROGRAM: This special tour offers an eclipse viewing, expertly guided cultural tours, and special presentations by our astronomer, Rob Broeren. The main celestial event is supplemented by excursions to some of northern Morocco's and southern Spain's best birding sites. Some of our activities are optional, making it possible for participants to take free time for shopping, sightseeing, or simply relaxing.

FIELD TRIPS: It is important to remember that July and early August are not traditionally prime season for birding visitors to Morocco. This tour has been designed with the total solar eclipse as its centerpiece, supplemented by opportunities to explore a number of characteristic habitats at some of northern Morocco's best-known sites. In general, our outings will focus not on seeing large numbers of birds or a great diversity of species, but rather on the search for endemics and regional specialties—even some of those birds can be challenging in early August, but we have made a point of scheduling trips to the most likely sites.

In Spain, early August sees the beginning of the southbound migration, especially of large soaring birds such as raptors and storks. Seabirding is often excellent at this date, as we hope to find on our whale watch.

Season and climate notwithstanding, over the course of the event, every participant will have the opportunity to experience each birding destination and to spend time in the field with your VENT leaders and local guides. Travel will be aboard coach-style buses and coasters. On both

our birding excursions and our cultural outings, bottled water and snacks will be available at all times.

The boat we have chartered for our whale-watching excursion on Day 7 is a mid-sized and stable vessel used solely for wildlife watching. Our group will be the only guests on board. The boat has covered areas for protection from the sun and indoor spaces with air conditioning. As always, cold drinks and snacks will be provided during our approximately three-hour sailing.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS: On our birding trips, we will always walk at a slow "birder's pace," taking plenty of time to relish each sighting as we move along. At some sites, there will be some short steep stretches along the way, but with multiple leaders and a leisurely pace, you will not feel left behind. If you are uncertain about your ability to walk up to a mile at a time on sometimes uneven surfaces, the birding component of this tour may not be enjoyable for you—but be assured that you will never be asked to exert yourself beyond your physical capacities.

Our cultural excursions will take us into cities and villages, where there are often more stairs, curbs, uneven surfaces, and other obstacles than we may be used to. Streets can be narrow and quite steep for short stretches, but again, you will not be expected to walk faster or work harder than you think you are comfortably able to.

On all of our outings, a walking stick may be useful in keeping your balance and ascending and descending slopes. You may also find a folding stool helpful if you are unable to stand comfortably for several minutes at a time.

BIRDING SKILLS: It is a common misperception that all participants in group tours are highly skilled and experienced birders. In fact, our tours are designed to accommodate birders at all levels, whether they have been birding for years or are just taking up this captivating hobby. We don't race to see every bird possible, or dedicate disproportionate time to tracking down any one "target" bird, but rather seek to have the fullest, most satisfying experiences possible. We take ample time to enjoy each species we encounter, taking the opportunity to inform participants about the lives of the birds and the demands of their environments; our goals are improving your birding skills and deepening your appreciation of birds, their behaviors, and

their habitats. Our leaders meet your skills where they are, serving as resources to answer questions and enhance your birding experience with individualized attention and instruction.

CURRENCY & SPENDING: Your trip fee includes all necessary expenses; however, you may want to have a supply of local currency, at least some of it in small denominations, for personal expenses such as gifts, laundry, gratuities, meals on your own, cash bars, and personal items. U.S. dollars may be accepted by some establishments in large cities, but that will not be the case everywhere, and the exchange rate in shops and stores is usually unfavorable.

The official currency of Morocco is the Moroccan dirham (plural darahim). ATMs and banks are available in all large cities here, including Tangier, Rabat, and Casablanca, and in airports and many hotels. Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted in Morocco, American Express less so. At the time of writing, it is illegal to export darahim from Morocco.

The official currency of Spain is the Euro. ATMs and banks are available in all large cities in Spain, and exchange desks are also located in airports and some hotels. Major credit cards are widely accepted.

The official currency of Gibraltar is the Gibraltar pound; pound-denominated notes issued by the Bank of England are also accepted at their face value. Many stores and other businesses in the city of Gibraltar accept US dollars, euros, and major credit cards in payment. ATMs and banks are widely available.

Whenever you travel, check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information about banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

The latest exchange rates are available at xe.com.

ELECTRICITY: The electrical current in Spain, Gibraltar, and Morocco is 230V (110–120V in the US). Most electrical outlets in Spain and Morocco accept plugs of the C and F types, with two round pins; you will need to bring type C or type F plug adapters to use American devices or appliances. Should you need to use an electrical outlet in Gibraltar, you will need a type E adapter, with three flat pins arranged in a triangle.

For more than 30 years, most small appliances (for example, cell phones, laptop computers, camera battery chargers) have been designed to operate on both North American (110V) and European (220–230V) voltages. If you have appliances that will not run on 230V, you will also need a transformer to convert the higher voltage.

INTERNET ACCESS: Wi-fi is available in all of our hotels. At times, the signal may be weak in certain rooms, but is always stronger in the public areas of the hotel.

LANGUAGE: Spain (Castilian) is the official language of Spain, and English that of Gibraltar. Morocco has two official languages, standard Arabic and Moroccan Berber; the most common second language here is French, followed by English, and Spanish is widely used in Tangier. Members of the desk staff of our hotels have good English, as do the owners and employees of many businesses in the larger cities.

TIME: Spain and Gibraltar observe Central European Summer Time (CEST) in August. CEST is six hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) and nine hours ahead of Pacific Daylight Time (PDT). In 2026, Morocco officially changed its clocks to observe Greenwich Mean Time all year. This means that Morocco is four hours ahead of EDT and two hours behind CEST.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is available at additional charge to you at all of our hotels, but we recommend that you pack enough clothing to get you through the trip without this service.

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.

SUN EXPOSURE: The sun's ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes), especially in the summer. 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. Bring and wear a broad-brimmed hat, long-sleeved shirts and long pants.

BITING INSECTS: n wetter years, mosquitos and gnats can be an annoyance at some of our birding sites. We recommend a good repellent containing DEET or pyrethrin, in lotion or roll-on form. Please do not bring sprays, as their use can result in dousing other participants in repellent; in addition to the annoyance, DEET is known to contribute to the deterioration of rubber fittings and optical coatings. There are also clothing lines with shirts and pants already treated with insect repellent that persists through repeated washings.

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.

Birds

Mullarney, K., L. Svensson, and D. Zetterström. *Birds of Europe.* 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023. Published in the UK as *Collins Bird Guide,* 3rd ed. (2022), and in Spain as *Guía de Aves*, 3rd ed. (2022). This, the best field guide to the birds of Europe, also covers all of the areas we will visit in Morocco. If you bring a different field guide, it should be in addition to, not in place of, this fine work.

Mammals

Aulagnier, S., et al. *Field Guide to Mammals of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East.* 3rd ed. London: Bloomsbury, 2025.

Reptiles and Amphibians

Martínez del Mármol, G., et al. *Amphibians and Reptiles of Morocco.* Frankfurt: Edition Chimaira, 2019.

Speybroek, J., et al. *Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Britain and Europe.* London: Bloomsbury, 2016.

Butterflies

Tennent, J. *The Butterflies of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia.* Geoffrey Morton, 1996.

Tolman, T., and R. Lewington. *Collins Butterfly Guide.* 3rd ed. London: HarperCollins, 2009.

Dragonflies and Damselflies

Smallshire, D., and A. Swash. *Europe's Dragonflies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020.

Wildflowers

Colwell, A. *Common Wildflowers of Spain*. Santana, 2008.

Schönfelder, P., and I. Schönfelder. 2018. *Wild Flowers of the Mediterranean.* Oxford: John Beaufoy, 2017.

Thorogood, C. *Field Guide to the Wild Flowers of the Western Mediterranean.* Kew: Royal Botanical Gardens, 2021.

History and Culture

Menocal, M. R. *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain.* Repr. New York: Back Bay, 2003.

Miller, S. G. *A History of Modern Morocco.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Pennell, C. R. *Morocco Since 1830.* New York: NYU Press, 2021.

Phillips, W. D., Jr. *A Concise History of Spain.* 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Tremlett, G. *Ghosts of Spain: Travels through Spain and its Silent Past.* New York: Walker and Company, 2008.

CLO 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. To use Merlin, download the app and the appropriate regional "pack." Highly recommended. For this trip, download the pack for the Western Palearctic. 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 November 3, 2026 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

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

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

View the complete Terms and Conditions on our website.

TTSE:20270728

11/2/2026 - BL

11/4/2026 – PS/DE

Publish Date: 11/6/2026

CHEFCHAOUEN–RIF MOUNTAINS PRE-TRIP

July 23 – 29, 2027



Moussier's Redstart, Morocco © Brian Gibbons

Culturally, historically, and ornithologically, Morocco is one of the most fascinating and most varied landscapes on earth. While our main tour concentrates on the most productive birding sites of the country's northwest coast, our short pre-trip takes us into the Rif Mountains in the interior. Our base, a bit more than four hours northeast of Rabat, is Chefchaouen, a beautifully preserved and handsomely maintained city dating to the late fifteenth century, with a captivatingly complex history and culture informed by waves of settlement by Muslim, Christian, and Jewish immigrants and refugees from Spain and Africa alike.

From our lovely five-star ryad, or traditional inn, in Chefchaouen, we will make morning excursions into the mountains and nearby lowlands in search of specialties and endemic species such as African Chaffinch, African Blue Tit, Moussier's Redstart, and House Bunting. These outings are also our chance to encounter wild Barbary Macaques. While our main tour is almost certain to see individuals of the introduced population in Gibraltar, meeting up with these apes

in their native range is a very different experience, a rare chance to see an African primate species in the wild at the very edge of its range.



Barbary Macaques, Morocco © hecke61/Shutterstock

Our pre-tour concludes in Rabat, where we will join the other members of our larger group to set off on our main tour together. First, though, our smaller cohort will spend a final morning at the cliffs of the Atlantic Ocean, where the elegant and rare Eleonora's Falcon nests and feeds safe from human intrusion—the perfect ending to our excursion and an exciting complement to the main tour to follow.

July 23–24, Days 1–2: Departure for Casablanca, Morocco; transfer to Rabat

Participants should plan to arrive in Casablanca no later than 4:00 pm on July 24th. Nonstop flights depart from the U.S. and Canada in the evening and arrive at Casablanca's Mohammed V International Airport (airport code CMN) late the next morning, July 24. Flights requiring connections typically arrive in Casablanca in the late afternoon of the day after departure.

On arriving at the airport, please follow the signs, which are in Arabic and in English, through the brightly lit hall to passport control. Restrooms are available just before passport control. At passport control, a Fast Track lane is available for first-class and business-class passengers. Once your passport has been verified, continue to the baggage claim area, where you will collect your bags and continue to customs (your bags may be screened by customs officials, apparently at random). A currency exchange desk and ATMs are found right outside the baggage area.

Immediately on exiting the baggage claim, you will be met by a representative of our local ground agent, who will be waiting with a sign with the VENT logo and your name on it. Our representative will accompany you and your bags on the private transfer to our five-star hotel, the Conrad Rabat Arzana by Hilton, where a room has been reserved in your name. The hotel is located south of the city center in Rabat, about 60 minutes north of the airport.

After checking in, you have the rest of the day free to settle in or to do some preliminary exploring on your own. At 6:30 pm, we will assemble for the first time in the hotel lobby, where we will join a brief orientation to our tour activities before dinner together at 7:00.

Travel notes: Casablanca, the arrival city for this tour, is served by a range of nonstop flights from North American airports, including Los Angeles, Toronto, Montreal, Miami, New York City, and Washington, DC. Other options include flying to Paris or another large European airport and connecting there with a flight to Casablanca.

Arrival in Casablanca: If you need a Sim card for your cell phone, it can be purchased at a counter in the baggage claim area; you can also exchange money into local currency here.

If you are concerned about the length of your journey or the shift in time zones, or simply want additional time to rest after the overnight flight, we recommend that you arrive in Casablanca or Rabat a day or two before the start of our tour to adjust. If you would like assistance in making arrangements for extra hotel nights, please contact the VENT office at least sixty days before departure; we will be happy to help.

NIGHTS: aboard international flight (July 23)

Conrad Rabat Arzana by Hilton, Rabat (July 24)

July 25, Day 3: Dawn birding at Aïn Sferjla and on to Chefchaouen

An early start this morning will give us an opportunity to look for some of northwestern Morocco's most interesting birds during the coolest and most active part of the day. Leaving our hotel at 6:00 a.m., we will travel to the area of the royal hunting reserve at Aïn Sferjla, where we will spend the early morning exploring accessible woodland edges, scrub, and wetland viewpoints.



Black-crowned Tchagra, Morocco © Brian Gibbons

One of our principal targets will be the Black-crowned Tchagra, a handsome but often elusive bushshrike whose ringing, musical whistles may reveal its presence long before we see it. We will listen carefully, then watch for a bird emerging briefly from cover or moving between low perches. The Double-spurred Spurfowl is another special attraction. This ground-dwelling bird can be difficult to find once the day warms, making our early arrival particularly worthwhile. We will also keep an eye on tracks and open patches for Barbary Partridges, hoping to encounter a small party feeding before retreating into thicker vegetation.

The surrounding trees and scrub offer further opportunities to become acquainted with the birds of the Maghreb. African Chaffinches and African Blue Tits will be among the species we seek, while a scan of exposed perches and the countryside beyond may reveal a Black-winged Kite. With its pale plumage, dark shoulder patches, and buoyant flight, this elegant little raptor is always a pleasure to watch.

Where water levels and access permit, we will also check the small lakes for Ferruginous Duck and Squacco Heron. The rich chestnut plumage of the duck can be surprisingly difficult to pick out against bankside vegetation, while a resting Squacco Heron may seem to disappear among the reeds until it takes flight, revealing striking white wings. Our precise stops will depend on conditions and local advice, and we will balance the search for these special birds with time to enjoy whatever else the morning brings.



Ferruginous Duck © Zoran Orcik/Shutterstock

As the day warms, we will return to our hotel for breakfast before collecting our luggage and setting off for Chefchaouen at the base of the western Rif Mountains, our comfortable home for the next three nights. The drive to this “Blue Pearl of Morocco,” so called for the traditional blue walls lining its streets and alleyways, will be broken by lunch in Ouazzane and, if time permits, a

brief birding stop along the way. We expect to arrive in the late afternoon, with time to settle into our accommodation and enjoy a short rest before gathering again for dinner together.

NIGHT: Hotel Lina Ryad and Spa, Chefchaouen, Morocco

July 26, Day 4: Birding the Rif Mountains

We will leave the hotel this morning at 6:30 for the hour-long drive to famous Talassemtane National Park. If we have not breakfasted in our hotel, we will enjoy a good field breakfast here before starting our exploration of the park's rich birdlife.

The 225 square miles of Talassemtane contain the last stands of Spanish Fir in Morocco, along with no fewer than 47 plant species endemic to the Rif Mountains. Mammals are also a special feature of these landscapes, most notably the Barbary Macaque; these apes are shyer and wilder here than their carefully managed cousins in Gibraltar, making for an entirely different experience.



Levaillant's Green Woodpecker © Javier Elorriaga/Birding the Strait

Much of the park is difficult to access, but the best birding is not far from the main park entrance. We will leave our vehicles here to make short walks into the woodlands and clearings in search of Levaillant's Woodpecker, Moussier's Redstart, and Black Wheatear, among other classic North African mountain species. There are also sites nearby where, time permitting, we will look for the Maghreb Magpie—recently split from its European sister species—and even the colorful and uncommon Black-crowned Tchagra, the only bushchat species in this part of Africa.

We will return to Chefchaouen at midday, where we will have lunch together, followed by an opportunity to rest or to have a first look at the city's traditional architecture and inviting shops before we meet again for dinner.

NIGHT: Hotel Lina Ryad and Spa, Chefchaouen, Morocco

July 27, Day 5: Birding the Rif Mountains and an evening tour of Chefchaouen

A slightly later departure this morning will find us driving half an hour to one of Chefchaouen's local birding sites. The forests of Jbel Bouhachem offer another chance to encounter Barbary Macaques, and recent years have seen several records here of the Rüppell's Vulture, still very rare but probably increasing in northern Morocco and Spain. Among the other specialties we will be seeking are the beautiful but shy Barbary Partridge, Levaillant's Woodpecker, Short-toed and Booted Eagles, Thekla's and Crested larks, Blue Rock-Thrush, and Rock and House buntings.



Barbary Partridge, Todra Gorge, Morocco © Brian Gibbons

Even closer to central Chefchaouen is Ras el-Maa, a site we may visit today or tomorrow morning, depending on time and temperature. Here we will keep our eyes open especially for Little and Pallid swifts overhead, Common Bulbul, Eurasian Nuthatch, and Spotless Starling.

We will be back in Chefchouaen for lunch and some time off before dinner at 7:00 or 7:30 pm.

After dinner, as evening sets in and temperatures fall, we will meet a local cultural guide for an optional walking tour of the city. Over the course of our 60- to 90-minute stroll through Morocco's "Blue Pearl," we will learn about the history of this place that has been home to Muslims, Christians, and Jews over the past nearly four centuries. The city's layout, its houses, landscaping, and even its rich musical life still show the clear influence of immigrants and refugees from Andalusia and Portugal.



A typical scene from Chefchaouen, Morocco's "Blue Pearl" © David Lonut/Shutterstock

The oldest structure in Chefchaouen is the kasbah, or citadel, dating to the fifteenth century and boasting no fewer than ten defensive towers. It is now a museum dedicated to local history and culture. A special feature is the city's fountains, once a vital water supply for its inhabitants.

Lavishly decorated, they are now some of the most delightful gathering spots in this thoroughly enchanting town.

NIGHT: Hotel Lina Ryad and Spa, Chefchaouen, Morocco

July 28, Day 6: Birding Chefchaouen; return to Rabat

Today marks the end of our time in the Chefchaouen area. The bulk of the day will be occupied with the return to Rabat, thus we will plan for a leisurely schedule. For those who prefer a bit of additional birding, we'll offer an optional pre-breakfast walk to the Mezquita Española, a short distance from our hotel.

The Mezquita Española, or Spanish Mosque, has been called a monument to unfulfilled ambition. Built during the Spanish Protectorate with Spanish funding, this hilltop mosque was constructed in the 1920s but never completed due to local opposition from Chefchaouen residents who objected to foreign religious influence in their sacred city. While never functioning as a place of worship, these atmospheric ruins have become Chefchaouen's premier viewpoint. The mosque's elevated position at 564 meters above sea level provides unobstructed 360-degree views of the city, the Rif Mountains, and the distant Mediterranean coastline on clear days.



Mezquita Espanola © James Andrews/Shutterstock

Following our bird walk and breakfast, we'll depart the city around 10:00. We'll break up the drive with lunch in a local restaurant, and plan to arrive at our Rabat hotel between 4:00 and 5:00 pm, in plenty of time to unpack and settle in. Dinner will be in our hotel's fine restaurant.

NIGHT: Conrad Rabat Arzana, Rabat

July 29, Day 7: A morning with Eleonora's Falcons; return to Rabat

Our pre-trip concludes today with an excursion north of Rabat to visit a seaside colony of the scarce and almost unbelievably elegant Eleonora's Falcon.

The Eleonora's Falcon, named for a fourteenth-century Sardinian judge and queen, is restricted to a few coastal sites and island cliffs in the Mediterranean Sea; the entire world's population winters in Madagascar and adjacent coastal Africa. In addition to its beauty and unsurpassed falconid elan, this species is famous for delaying breeding each year until late summer, when passerine migrants from the north flow through to guarantee a steady food supply for the young. Several years ago, the ornithological world was shocked to learn that some pairs capture southbound songbirds, then store them alive in cracks and crevices on the breeding cliffs until the hungry nestlings need them.



Eleonora's Falcon © WorldbySavvas/Shutterstock

Some of the most impressive concentrations in the species' limited range are found here in northern Morocco, hidden from prying eyes by the inaccessibility of the sheer rock faces they breed on. Our visit to one of these colonies may involve a walk of up to a mile each way, through clifftop fields, but any encounter with this dashing falcon is the highlight of a birding day—or even of an entire birding career.

We will have lunch in nearby Kenitra or back in Rabat, and return to our hotel at about 3:00 pm, when our pre-tour officially concludes.

Please refer to the itinerary for the main tour for information about evening plans.

Essential Tour Information

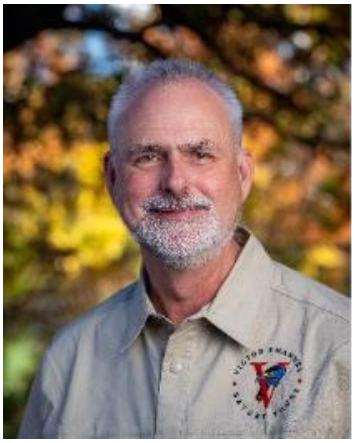
TOUR SIZE: This tour is limited to 12 participants.

TOUR LEADER(s): This tour is led by Barry Lyon, Rick Wright, Manu Mojarro, and Javier Elorriaga.



Barry Lyon's passion for the outdoors and birding has its roots in his childhood in southern California. During his teenage years, he attended several VENT/ABA youth birding camps, which ultimately led to his professional involvement with Victor Emanuel Nature Tours. He holds a B.A. from the University of Arizona at Tucson, where he studied history and political science, with an emphasis on environment and development politics. Barry joined the VENT team as a tour leader in 1995 and embarked on a travel-based career that has taken him to an array of worldwide destinations. He has lived in Austin, Texas, since 2004, when he joined our office staff as an administrative assistant. In 2014, he was named Chief Operating Officer (COO), reflecting his increased experience and responsibilities. In 2023, Barry became VENT's Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Although Barry still leads two or three trips a year, these days his work is geared almost entirely toward business, customer relations, and the management of the company. Barry's background and his knowledge of natural history have provided him with a

strong interest in conservation. He is a former board member and past president of Travis Audubon Society, which emphasizes conservation through birding and outdoor education for children. Barry resides in South Austin with his wife, Brooke Smith.



Rick Wright is a widely published author and sought-after lecturer and field trip leader. A native of southeast Nebraska, Rick studied French, German, philosophy, and life sciences at the University of Nebraska before making a detour to Harvard Law School. He took the Ph.D. in Germanic languages and literatures at Princeton University in 1990, then spent a dozen years as an academic, holding successive appointments as assistant professor of German at the University of Illinois, reader in Art and Archaeology at Princeton University, and associate professor of Medieval Studies at Fordham University. His numerous scholarly publications include two books on the Latin animal literature of the later Middle Ages. Among Rick's recent books are second editions of his *ABA Field Guide to Birds of New Jersey* and his *ABA Field Guide to Birds of Arizona*; his *Peterson Reference Guide to American Sparrows* was published in 2019. Especially interested in the history and culture of birding, he is hard at work on a study of hummingbird collecting in France from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. In his spare time, he teaches Latin courses online for the Paideia Institute. Rick lives with his wife, Alison Beringer, and their jet-black lab, Quetzal, in northern New Jersey.



Manu Mojarro has been a wildlife enthusiast virtually from birth, and he has been organizing professional birding tours and events for more than 20 years. Over that period, Manu has taken thousands of people afield. He is an enthusiastic participant in local bird banding and monitoring efforts.



Javier Elorriaga is a native of Bilbao who has lived in Tarifa since 2008. After four years' scientific study of the raptor migration across the Strait of Gibraltar, Javier has dedicated himself to leading birding tours professionally, a job that lets him combine his experience as a field ornithologist with his interests in sustainable tourism and conservation. His busy schedule finds him leading numerous tours each year across Spain and in Morocco.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: **$7,075** per person based on double occupancy or **$7,895** for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 through lunch on Day 7, 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 start/end cities; however, flights within the tour (if any) are included. The fee also excludes laundry, personal expenses, and other items of a personal nature. For information about gratuities, please see the "TIPPING" sub-section below. 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 (March 30, 2027) prior to the tour departure date.

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

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.

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.

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: Please limit baggage to one piece of luggage and one carry-on. The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the

personal responsibility of each participant. Please consult your pre-departure materials and/or airline to find out specific weight restrictions.

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

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

PASSPORTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure date is required for entry into Morocco. The passport must have at least one blank page for the entry stamp.

VISAs: At the time of writing, citizens of the United States or Canada do not need a tourist visa to enter Morocco. Rules and regulations for citizens of other countries may be different; please check with the consulates or embassies of each country.

Citizens of countries other than the United States should consult their local Moroccan consulate or embassy for information about entry requirements.

If you do not have a passport, or your passport does not satisfy the requirements above, you must obtain one or renew 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 can also visit state.gov/travel for information on how to get or renew a passport.

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

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTHING: We want you to be comfortable throughout the tour, so please be prepared for variable conditions. Lightweight warm-weather apparel is recommended for the entirety of this trip. Though rain is unlikely at this season, you should also bring a light rain jacket—particularly if you will be participating in our whale-watching excursion. Dress is casual throughout, but for our evening meals, you may feel more comfortable in slightly dressier clothes. In Morocco, modes of dress tend to be conservative, and visitors wearing sleeveless shirts or dresses will not be admitted to some sites.

The following items are recommended:

- Pants: A couple of pairs of pants are essential. Many people prefer lightweight pants of cotton or other material; denim is likely to prove uncomfortably hot. On our visits to restaurants, churches, and museums, neat but still informal clothing will be best.
- Field clothing: Pants and shirts made of lightweight, durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular, and can prove especially useful in the very warm temperatures we anticipate on at least some days of this trip.
- Shirts: Several comfortable shirts suitable for warm to hot weather. Long sleeves are preferable, to protect against sun and insects.
- Hat: A broad-brimmed hat for protection from the sun is essential. Please bring a baseball-style cap at the very least.
- Outerwear: On any late evening activities and on our excursions to the coast, you may find layering a light jacket over your shirt useful. Rain is unexpected, but you should bring a water-repellent jacket for our whale-watching trip.

To further help you pack, please read the **CLIMATE & WEATHER** section below carefully.

FOOTWEAR: A light hiking boot or trail shoe is appropriate for our birding outings. In the cities and at evening meals, a comfortable walking shoe may be preferred. A lighter shoe, such as an athletic shoe, will come in handy in the hotels or on cultural excursions.

EQUIPMENT: One of the most important aspects of an enjoyable travel experience is the proper equipment. The following will come in handy during your trip to Morocco and Spain:

- Backpack for extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment
- Notebooks and pens
- Travel alarm clock
- Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection
- Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions
- Insect repellent
- Personal toiletries
- Cameras, lenses, memory cards, extra batteries
- Collapsible walking stick – highly recommended for those who have trouble walking
- Tissue packs
- Refillable water bottle – Bottled water will always be provided, but you should bring your own favorite refillable bottle as well.
- Tissue packs and moist towelettes
- Small flashlight or headlamp
- Snacks – a supply of your favorite snack items from home is always a good idea, especially if you have dietary restrictions. Snacks will also be available on the vehicles during each of our excursions.

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 or 8x42 binoculars are compact and light enough.

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

DESTINATION INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS

CLIMATE & WEATHER: In Morocco, temperatures can be expected to be hot, ranging into the 80s or 90s °F or higher, and falling only into the high 60s overnight. Humidity at the coast can be noticeable, but it is typically lower anywhere away from the immediate shore. Inland,

temperatures may reach into the 90s. Rain is not expected at this season, but it is best to be prepared for a brief shower anyway.

CONDITIONS:

ACCOMODATIONS: The Conrad Rabat Arzana by Hilton features lush gardens and ocean views in an elevated waterfront location. In addition to a spa and swimming pools, the hotel has a bar, a tea lounge, and four restaurants serving Moroccan, French, Asian, and international cuisine.

The Lina Ryad and Spa in Chefchaouen is a luxurious traditional Moroccan inn, nestled in the heart of the city's medina. High-speed internet is available at no charge in each room. The large roof terrace and many of the bright, spacious rooms offer views of the Atlas peaks with their ever-shifting colors and patterns. The spa features a heated indoor pool and traditional Oriental baths. The hotel's fine restaurant serves Moroccan and international specialties in an elegant setting.

MEALS: Apart from the first and last evenings, when we will dine in our hotels, each dinner of this pre-tour will be in a different local restaurant. Our lunch destinations include Moroccan chain restaurants; surprisingly, these are often located at gas stations, a modest setting that belies the excellent quality of the food and drink offered. In fact, these are the dining establishments of choice for many Moroccans celebrating a family dinner together.

Moroccan cuisine draws on a rich heritage of Mediterranean, Arab, and European influences. Fruits and vegetables are the dominant ingredients in many traditional dishes; the most common meats are beef, goat, and lamb. Seafood is also an important part of many meals, especially mackerel and sardines. Vegetarians will find a wide range of imaginative salads, with ingredients including eggplant, tomato, bell pepper, spinach, parsley, cilantro, olives, and spices.

As in most Mediterranean regions, meals are taken late here. Lunch is not typically available before 1:30 pm, and dinner most evenings is served no earlier than 7:30. We always carry a good supply of snacks in our vehicles, and you should make a point of indulging whenever you feel hungry.

FOOD & WATER: The classic drinks in Morocco are mint tea and fresh-squeezed orange juice. Water quality in Morocco is variable, and it is best for foreign visitors to drink only bottled or purified water. Most travelers have no trouble drinking tap water in Spain.

Wherever we are, adequate hydration is very important at this season, and you should bring a water bottle and fill it continually, from either purified water sources in the hotels or the large containers of purified water carried in our vehicles.

Wine and beer are available in our hotel restaurants in Morocco. In Spain, there are many local specialties to try, chief among them the vast assortment of sherries produced in the Sherry Triangle of Cádiz.

Bottled water and snacks will be available at all times.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS: On our birding trips, we will always walk at a slow "birder's pace," taking plenty of time to relish each sighting as we move along. At some sites, there will be some short steep stretches along the way, but with multiple leaders and a leisurely pace, you will not feel left behind. If you are uncertain about your ability to walk up to a mile at a time on sometimes uneven surfaces, the birding component of this tour may not be enjoyable for you—but be assured that you will never be asked to exert yourself beyond your physical capacities.

Our optional cultural evening walk will take us through Chefchaouen, where there are more stairs, curbs, uneven surfaces, and other obstacles than we may be used to. Streets can be narrow and somewhat steep for short stretches, but again, you will not be expected to walk faster or work harder than you think you are comfortably able to.

On all of our outings, a walking stick may be useful in keeping your balance and ascending slopes. You may also find a folding stool helpful if you are unable to stand comfortably for several minutes at a time.

BIRDING SKILLS: It is a common misperception that all participants in group tours are highly skilled and experienced birders. In fact, our tours are designed to accommodate birders at all levels, whether they have been birding for years or are just taking up this captivating hobby. We don't race to see every bird possible, or dedicate disproportionate time to tracking down any

one “target” bird, but rather seek to have the fullest, most satisfying experiences possible. We take ample time to enjoy each species we encounter, taking the opportunity to inform participants about the lives of the birds and the demands of their environments; our goals are improving your birding skills and deepening your appreciation of birds, their behaviors, and their habitats. Our leaders meet your skills where they are, serving as resources to answer questions and enhance your birding experience with individualized attention and instruction.

CURRENCY & SPENDING: Your trip fee includes all necessary expenses; however, you may want to have a supply of local currency, at least some of it in small denominations, for personal expenses such as gifts, laundry, gratuities, meals on your own, cash bars, and personal items. US dollars may be accepted by some establishments in large cities, but that will not be the case everywhere, and the exchange rate in shops and stores is usually unfavorable.

The official currency of Morocco is the Moroccan dirham (plural darahim). ATMs and banks are available in all large cities here, including Tangier, Rabat, and Casablanca, and in airports and many hotels. Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted in Morocco, American Express less so. At the time of writing, it is illegal to export darahim from Morocco.

Whenever you travel, check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information about banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

The latest exchange rates are available at xe.com.

ELECTRICITY: The electrical current in Morocco is 230V (110-120V in the US). Electrical outlets in Morocco typically accept plugs of the C and F types, with two round pins. You will need to bring type C or type F plug adapters to use American devices or appliances.

For more than 30 years, most small appliances (for example, cell phones, laptop computers, camera battery chargers) have been designed to operate on both North American (110V) and European (220–230V) voltages. If you have appliances that will not run on 230V, you will also need a transformer to convert the higher voltage.

INTERNET ACCESS: Wi-fi is available in all of our hotels. At times, the signal may be weak in certain rooms but is always stronger in the public areas of the hotel.

LANGUAGE: Morocco has two official languages, standard Arabic and Moroccan Berber; the most common second language here is French, followed by English, and Spanish is widely used in Tangier. Members of the desk staff of our hotels have good English, as do the owners and employees of many businesses in the larger cities.

TIME: In 2026, Morocco officially changed its clocks to observe Greenwich Mean Time all year. This means that Morocco is four hours ahead of EDT and two hours behind Central European Summer Time.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is available at additional charge to you at all of our hotels, but we recommend that you pack enough clothing to get you through the trip without this service.

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.

SUN EXPOSURE: The sun's ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes), especially in the summer. 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. Bring and wear a broad-brimmed hat, long-sleeved shirts and long pants.

BITING INSECTS: In wetter years, mosquitos and gnats can be an annoyance at some of our birding sites. We recommend a good repellent containing DEET or pyrethrin, in lotion or roll-on form. Please do not bring sprays, as their use can result in dousing other participants in repellent; in addition to the annoyance, DEET is known to contribute to the deterioration of rubber fittings and optical coatings. There are also clothing lines with shirts and pants already treated with insect repellent that persists through repeated washings.

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.

Birds

Mullarney, K., L. Svensson, and D. Zetterström. Birds of Europe. 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023. Published in the UK as Collins Bird Guide, 3rd ed. (2022), and in Spain as Guía de Aves, 3rd ed. (2022). This, the best field guide to the birds of Europe, also

covers all of the areas we will visit in Morocco. If you bring a different field guide, it should be in addition to, not in place of, this fine work.

Mammals

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Reptiles and Amphibians

Martínez del Mármol, G., et al. Amphibians and Reptiles of Morocco. Frankfurt: Edition Chimaira, 2019. Speybroek, J., et al. Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Britain and Europe. London: Bloomsbury, 2016.

Butterflies

Tennent, J. The Butterflies of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. Geoffrey Morton, 1996.

Tolman, T., and R. Lewington. Collins Butterfly Guide. 3rd ed. London: HarperCollins, 2009.

Dragonflies and Damselflies

Smallshire, D., and A. Swash. Europe's Dragonflies. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020.

Wildflowers

Colwell, A. Common Wildflowers of Spain. Santana, 2008.

Schönfelder, P., and I. Schönfelder. 2018. Wild Flowers of the Mediterranean. Oxford: John Beaufoy, 2017.

Thorogood, C. Field Guide to the Wild Flowers of the Western Mediterranean. Kew: Royal Botanical Gardens, 2021.

History and Culture

Menocal, M. R. The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain. Repr. New York: Back Bay, 2003.

Miller, S. G. A History of Modern Morocco. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.Pennell, C. R. Morocco Since 1830. New York: NYU Press, 2021.

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CLO 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. To use Merlin, download the app and the appropriate regional "pack." Highly recommended. For this trip, download the pack for the Western Palearctic. 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

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Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on _____, 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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Tour Code

Date / Writer

11/4/26: DE

Publish Date: 11/6/2026