



Victor Emanuel Nature Tours presents: A Special Departure
for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Golden-wing Society

GRAND ALASKA PT II

Anchorage, Denali & Kenai Peninsula

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NOME EXTENSION

June 19-28, 2027
June 28-July 3, 2027



Denali © Barry Zimmer/Victor Emanuel Nature Tours

Alaska is a land of unparalleled scenery, fabulous birding, and spectacular large mammals. Known as the Last Frontier, Alaska is one of those ultimate destinations that offers the visitor a taste of true wilderness.

On this remarkable trip, arranged exclusively for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Golden-wing Society, we'll enjoy a highlights-style birding and natural history experience in majestic Alaska, from the vast expanses of tundra and taiga of the Denali area to the moist spruce forests of the Kenai

Peninsula and the magnificent glaciers and sea stacks of Kenai Fjords National Park.

In the Denali region we will search for northern birds such as Spruce Grouse, Northern Hawk Owl, Northern Shrike, Bohemian Waxwing, and White-winged Crossbill among others. Our quest for these hard-to-find species will frequently be upstaged by the spectacular scenery and mammals. Around Anchorage we'll visit an array of wetland and boreal forest habitats seeking Red-necked Grebe, Arctic Tern, American Three-toed Woodpecker, and Golden-crowned Sparrow. In the Seward area we will scour the spruce forests for landbirds and venture out on an all-day boat trip into magnificent Kenai Fjords National Park. Seabird colonies along the coast, with literally thousands of puffins, murrelets, and kittiwakes, and small numbers of specialty birds such as Red-faced Cormorant, Parakeet Auklet, and Kittlitz's Murrelet, are worth the trip alone.



American Three-toed Woodpecker
© Andre Dionne/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

The birds of Alaska have nothing on the mammals. We may see more than 15 species, with Grizzly and Black bears, Moose, Dall's Sheep, Mountain Goat, Orca, Humpback Whale, Steller's Sea Lion, and Sea Otter all very likely. And then there is the constant, incredible scenery. Gorgeous snow-covered peaks loom around every corner—including Denali at 20,310 feet, vast expanses of rolling tundra extend as far as the eye can see, and beautiful, fog-drenched spruce forests cover the southern coasts. Simply put, Alaska is a must destination for every birder and nature enthusiast.



Dall's Sheep © Barry Zimmer/Victor Emanuel Nature Tours

An optional extension to Nome on the Seward Peninsula presents exhilarating opportunities for birding at a premier Arctic outpost. We will seek Siberian species such as Bar-tailed Godwit, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Aleutian Tern, Bluethroat, Arctic Warbler, White and Eastern Yellow wagtails that reach the United States only in western Alaska. Other northerly species with larger ranges such as Gyrfalcon, Rock and Willow ptarmigan, Lapland Longspur, and Redpoll are more readily found here than elsewhere.

Hosting this trip will be Chris Wood and another member of the Lab. Guiding our outings will be Michael O'Brien from Texas-based Victor Emanuel Nature Tours. On a very special note, Chris and Michael are two of the lead authors of an upcoming new field guide to the birds of North America, due to be published in the spring of 2027. This significant event will lend an additional air of excitement to our travels.

Finally, it should be emphasized that our birding and natural history endeavors will be complemented with social time, time to learn about recent news from the Lab, and time simply to enjoy an epic Alaska experience.

While Cornell is pleased to facilitate travel opportunities for its alumni and friends with tour operators that specialize in high-quality educational travel, please be aware that Cornell does not conduct, manage or operate these travel experiences, or act as an agent for travelers interested in tours. Tour operators and travelers are responsible for making their own safety decisions concerning this travel, and, as a facilitator between travelers and the tour operators with whom travelers make arrangements for completing travel, Cornell's role and liability are strictly limited.

Specific tour operator and national health and safety protocols will apply to each trip, and travelers should review all protocols and trip terms and conditions, including terms and conditions regarding cancellations, refunds, health and safety, and insurance prior to making a reservation. Cornell is not responsible for changes to trips or travel arrangements or for losses or additional expenses resulting from travel.

June 19, Day 1: Arrival in Anchorage

Participants should make arrangements to arrive today at Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport (airport code ANC) today. Private car service will provide transportation to the **Crowne Plaza Anchorage-Midtown** hotel, where a room has been reserved in your name. Please refer to the trip departure memo for specific arrival and transportation information.

We will meet in the hotel lobby at **6:30 p.m.** for a trip welcome and orientation, followed by dinner. Over the course of the evening, your trip hosts and leader will provide an overview of the coming days.

NIGHT: Crowne Plaza Anchorage-Midtown, Anchorage

June 20, Day 2: Anchorage area

We will begin with a full day of birding in the Anchorage area that will provide a nice introduction to Alaskan avifauna. This will likely include stops at nearby sites such as Westchester Lagoon and Kincaid Park, but we may also venture further afield if recent sightings warrant it.

Westchester Lagoon, located right in the middle of town, is a very birdy spot. A variety of water birds are likely here, including Greater and Lesser scaup, Red-necked Grebe, Short-billed Gull, Arctic Tern, and, perhaps some shorebirds, if the tide situation is favorable. Additionally, Bald Eagle, Alder Flycatcher, Black-billed Magpie and Violet-green Swallow are often found here as well. Not far away, Kincaid Park offers a series of easy trails that meander through a spruce bog and birch forests. Hairy, Downy and occasionally American Three-toed woodpeckers; Boreal Chickadee; Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned kinglets; Swainson's Thrush; and Lincoln's, Fox and Golden-crowned sparrows are among the many possibilities. Spruce Grouse is sometimes seen in this area, too.

Other locations we might visit include Hillside Park and the Arctic Valley ski area. However, if there are recent sightings of Northern Hawk Owl to the north (such as along the Glenn Highway), we may abandon local birding completely and head out for this hard-to-find and highly sought species. Our plans today will certainly be flexible.

NIGHT: Crowne Plaza Anchorage-Midtown, Anchorage



Red-necked Grebe

© Vistimil Dobes/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

June 21. Day 3: Anchorage to Denali

The entire morning will be spent driving to Denali National Park with some roadside birding en route. We will make frequent stops to break up the drive. Roadside lakes could harbor Barrow's or Common goldeneyes, Bufflehead, Common Loon and Bonaparte's Gull. The Sockeye Burn that occurred ten or so years ago may still be productive for woodpeckers with both American Three-toed and Black-backed woodpeckers possible. Although generally elusive, Spruce Grouse could be stumbled upon almost anywhere.

After lunch, we may even have time for a brief foray out the unpaved Denali Highway, where the sporadic and highly-sought Northern Hawk Owl is a prime target. By late afternoon, we should arrive at **The Lodge at Denali Park Village**, where we'll stay for the next three nights, located just south of the national park entrance.

NIGHT: The Lodge at Denali Park Village, Denali National Park

June 22, Day 4: Denali National Park

No Alaska experience is complete without a visit to the huge national park centered on Denali (formerly Mount McKinley), the highest peak in North America. A day-long tundra wilderness bus tour will allow us to see much of this spectacular park. The birds are impressive, with Willow Ptarmigan, Golden Eagle, Gyrfalcon, and Northern Shrike all possible, although sometimes elusive. However, even the most dedicated birder may be distracted by the grandeur of the surroundings and by the opportunity for encountering large mammals—Moose, Caribou, Grizzly Bear, Dall's Sheep, Red Fox, and even Gray Wolf. On a clear day the view of Denali from Stoney Pass is one of the most spectacular sights in the world!



Willow Ptarmigan © Liam Singh/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Travel note: In the fall of 2021 a landslide occurred within the park at mile 46 that completely blocked the road. At this time no traffic can go beyond mile 43, and work to correct the problem is not expected to be completed until mid-2027. **This means that the tour into the park is currently an abbreviated 43-mile (one way) version that lasts about five and a half hours.** High tundra between mile 43 and the normal turnaround point at mile 63 is the best area in the park for Brown Bears, as well as Caribou and Dall's Sheep.

In the late afternoon, we will likely visit Otto Lake to the north and the surrounding spruce forests. In addition to a variety of waterfowl, we might find the localized Boreal Chickadee and possibly Bohemian Waxwing.

NIGHT: The Lodge at Denali Park Village, Denali National Park

June 23, Day 5: Denali Highway

A second full day in the Denali area means we have additional time to explore the Denali Highway east from Denali further into the interior. Spruce forests along this road may harbor Merlin, Canada Jay, Boreal Chickadee, Bohemian Waxwing and Blackpoll Warbler among others. Nearby ponds are home to majestic Trumpeter Swans and stunning Barrow's Goldeneyes. Our real target here, however, is the localized Northern Hawk Owl. A pair or two of these wonderful owls often nest somewhere along the first 30 miles or so of this road. Finding the bird will likely require some combination of late evening and early morning drives to maximize our chances. Our search for the often-elusive hawk owl may yield other finds such as Northern Flicker, Arctic Warbler, "Red" Fox Sparrow, American Tree Sparrow, and Redpoll. Moose, Red Fox, and Porcupine are seen along this road with some frequency.

NIGHT: The Lodge at Denali Park Village, Denali National Park



Northern Hawk Owl © Vernon Buckle/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

June 24, Day 6: Denali to Anchorage

After leaving Denali this morning, we'll likely make another detour on the Denali Highway to search for species that may have previously eluded us. After lunch we'll continue south on the highway to Anchorage. We will likely devote more time to searching for two of the phantoms of the north, Spruce Grouse and American Three-toed Woodpecker. Both are low density species that can be devilishly hard to find. We will arrive back in Anchorage in time for dinner.

NIGHT: Crowne Plaza Anchorage-Midtown, Anchorage

June 25, Day 7: Anchorage to Seward

Today we bird our way to Seward, enjoying fabulous scenery en route. With special permission from the Seward Ranger District, we'll have access to a variety of areas in the Chugach National Forest. Our first stop will be at Potter Marsh on the south edge of Anchorage. Here, Arctic Tern, Short-billed Gull, and Red-necked Grebe are among the very common species. Less numerous but possible species include the stunning Horned Grebe and the locally uncommon Rusty Blackbird. As we leave Anchorage and wind along the east side of Turnagain Arm, we will keep a close eye out for Dall's Sheep, which often come down near the highway to visit mineral licks. Occasionally, Beluga Whales are seen in the murky water of the Arm itself. Depending on how many stops we make, it is only about an hour and a half to the beginning of the Kenai Peninsula, where our birding will begin in earnest.



Spruce Grouse © David Turgeon/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

The Kenai Peninsula has much to offer; perhaps an American Dipper bobbing along a rushing, glacier-fed stream; a Barrow's Goldeneye in the reflection of a snow-capped peak on a glass-smooth lake; a Spruce

Grouse nervously leading her downy charges safely through the forest; or an American Three-toed Woodpecker quietly flaking bark from a dead spruce. Frequent stops are inevitable, whether to appreciate the majesty of a close Bald Eagle, to scope a distant slope for Mountain Goats, or simply to snap a picture of some dazzling alpine backdrop.

NIGHT: Harbor 360 Hotel, Seward

June 26, Day 8: Boat Trip to Kenai Fjords National Park

This will be a day of great adventure as we embark on an all-day boat trip through protected waters to Kenai Fjords National Park & the Alaska Maritimes National Wildlife Refuge. The breathtaking scenery alone would justify the trip. Our boat navigates past massive headlands, fog-drenched spruce forest, icy fjords, and scores of snow-covered mountains. Tearing our eyes from the spellbinding scenery, the birds and mammals will take center stage. As we depart Resurrection Bay, we'll keep a close eye out for comical Sea Otters, whales (both Humpback and Orca are regular here), and Marbled Murrelets dotting the water's surface. En route to Northwestern Glacier, a calving tidewater glacier, our boat will slowly cruise along the coast. Harbor Seals and Black Oystercatchers adorn the low rocks. Pelagic Cormorants and Pigeon Guillemots forage in the nearshore waters. We should arrive at the glacier by late morning, hoping it will be actively calving during our visit—a sight and sound extravaganza never to be forgotten! We will carefully scan the waters at the base of the glacier for the uncommon and local Kittlitz's Murrelet, which occurs here in small numbers. We have about 50% success rate in locating this special bird.



Horned Puffin

© Leo Weiskittel/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Next, we encounter the Chiswell Islands, a naturalists' paradise. Craggy sea-stacks are draped in white by thousands of nesting Black-legged Kittiwakes. Hundreds of Horned and Tufted puffins buzz in and out of the grassy tussocks like so many bees. Very small numbers of the highly sought and declining Red-faced Cormorant nest in this area as well and are found on about half of our trips. The rocky shores below may yield the huge, brown forms of Steller's Sea Lions, and the waters about the boat are liberally sprinkled with rafts of Common and Thick-billed (scarcer) murrens and Rhinoceros Auklets. Some years, small numbers of Parakeet Auklets and Ancient Murrelets nest here. Our return trip takes us through slightly more offshore waters, with at least the possibility of such truly pelagic species as Short-tailed and Sooty shearwaters and Northern Fulmar.

NIGHT: Harbor 360 Hotel, Seward

June 27, Day 9: Seward area and return to Anchorage

The moist Sitka Spruce forest that hugs the coast near Seward shelters birds like Spruce Grouse, Rufous Hummingbird, Steller's Jay, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Varied and Hermit thrushes, Golden-crowned

Kinglet, Townsend's Warbler, Pine Grosbeak, and the sporadic White-winged Crossbill. Nearby coastlines may yield Harlequin Duck, the Northwestern subspecies of American Crow, and numerous Bald Eagles. Marshy swales and willow thickets could produce Trumpeter Swan, Violet-green Swallow, Wilson's Warbler, Lincoln's Sparrow, "Sooty" Fox Sparrow and the unusual *kenaiensis* race of Song Sparrow. We'll spend some time searching for these species before returning through the scenic coastal mountains to Anchorage. This evening we will gather for a final field checklist session and dinner.

NIGHT: Crowne Plaza Anchorage-Midtown, Anchorage

June 28, Day 10: Departure for home

Participants may depart Anchorage any time on June 28 or, depending on flight schedules, on an overnight flight departing after our farewell dinner on June 27.

NOME EXTENSION

JUNE 28–JULY 3, 2027



Bluethroat © Marius von Glahn/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

The old gold-rush capital of Alaska, Nome, is the venue for this optional extension that seeks an array of birds not available on the main trip. Here, amid wonderful examples of alpine and coastal tundra, we will search for some of the most special of Alaska's breeding birds including Rock and Willow ptarmigan, Gyrfalcon, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Rock Sandpiper, Aleutian Tern, Bluethroat, Northern Wheatear, Eastern Yellow Wagtail and others. We can also expect a nice cross-section of large mammals

with Muskox, Moose, Grizzly (Brown Bear) and Reindeer (Caribou) among the possibilities.

June 28–July 1, Days 1–4: Anchorage to Nome; Nome area

On June 28, we will depart the hotel for the airport in time for a morning flight to Nome. Upon arrival, we will hit the ground running to take full advantage of our four days in this bird-rich and historic area. Nome is the ivory capital of Alaska and was its gold capital in years gone by. Today the town is a major center for the natives of the region. Once a part of the Bering land bridge, the Seward Peninsula has been colonized by several Old-World species: Eastern Yellow Wagtails hover above the tundra, White Wagtails occasionally lurk around decaying old gold dredges, vociferous Bar-tailed Godwits feed in the shallow lagoons and river mouths, and Arctic Warblers trill from the willow thickets. Bluethroat, a Eurasian member of the thrush family nests outside of town.

In addition to its Old-World specialties, Nome is teeming with other birdlife. Safety Lagoon and the surrounding coastline harbor a wide variety of nesting and migrant waterbirds. Among the many possibilities are Pacific and Red-throated loons, Tundra Swan, Brant (the western race *nigricans*), Common Eider, Black Scoter, Harlequin Duck, Whimbrel, Red-necked Phalarope, Semipalmated and Western sandpipers, Long-tailed and Parasitic jaegers, and Arctic and Aleutian terns. Willow thickets along the Nome River may yield Gray-cheeked Thrush; Northern Shrike; Orange-crowned, Yellow, and Wilson's warblers; Northern Waterthrush; American Tree, Golden-crowned, and Fox sparrows; and Redpoll. The river itself is home to Harlequin Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, and Wandering Tattler. The extensive tundra and rocky slopes could yield Willow and Rock ptarmigan, American and Pacific golden-plovers, Rock Sandpiper, Northern Wheatear, Snow Bunting, and Lapland Longspur. Although occurring in rather low densities, several species of raptors can be found here as well, and we will keep a constant watch on the skies for Rough-legged Hawk, Gyrfalcon, Merlin, Golden Eagle, and Short-eared Owl. Additionally, we will also offer an optional (and rugged) hike in pursuit of the elusive and nearly-mythical Bristle-thighed Curlew, which nests in very small numbers on the peninsula.

On our final afternoon and evening in Nome, we'll search for any species previously missed.

NIGHTS: Aurora Inn, Nome

July 2, Day 5: Nome to Anchorage

Depending on current flight schedules, we may have an hour or so to bird close to Nome before our departure. We will depart for Anchorage around mid-morning (subject to change), arriving in the mid-afternoon. This evening, we will gather for a final field checklist session and dinner.

NIGHT: Crowne Plaza Anchorage-Midtown, Anchorage

July 3, Day 6: Departure for home

Participants may depart Anchorage any time on July 3 or, depending on flight schedules, on an overnight flight departing after our farewell dinner on July 2.

Essential Tour Information

TRIP SIZE: This trip is limited to 12 participants.

TRIP HOSTS AND TRIP LEADERS: Hosting this trip will be **Chris Wood** and another member of the Lab. Guiding our activities will be **Michael O'Brien** from Victor Emanuel Nature Tours.



Chris Wood is the Director for eBird and Engineering and Co-Director for the Center for Avian Population Studies at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. He has led the eBird team for the last twenty years, which has grown from a small traditional participatory-science project into a collaborative global enterprise. The eBird team have developed a novel approach to engaging diverse communities interested in watching birds while developing partnerships with scientists in a wide variety of fields. Chris has worked with diverse

teams around the world—conservation biologists, quantitative ecologists, statisticians, computer scientists, GIS and informatics specialists, application developers, data administrators and expert birdwatchers—that have enabled eBird to reach a global audience. eBird has become a major source of biodiversity data, increasing our knowledge of the dynamics of species distributions, and having a direct impact on the conservation of birds and their habitats.



Michael O'Brien is a freelance artist, author, and environmental consultant living in Cape May, New Jersey. He has a passionate interest in bird vocalizations and field identification, and a serious addiction to migration and nocturnal birding. His travels have taken him throughout North and Central America and beyond. At home in Cape May, Michael serves as an Associate Naturalist with Cape May Bird Observatory for whom he conducts numerous workshops, and, for many years, conducted a fall songbird

migration count. He is co-author of *The Shorebird Guide*, *Flight Calls of Migratory Birds*, and *America's 100 Most Wanted Birds*, and is primary author of *Larkwire*, an online and handheld application for learning bird sounds. His illustrations have been widely published in books and field guides, including the *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America* and the new Peterson field guides.

Michael also has an intense interest in butterflies, leads several “Birds & Butterflies” tours with his wife, Louise Zemaitis, and is coordinator of the Cape May Butterfly Count.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE:

Main Trip: \$10,795 per person based on double occupancy. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 through dinner on Day 9, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, all ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does **not** include airfare to nor from the starting/ending city; however, flights within the tour (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.

Extension: \$5,850 per person based on double occupancy. This includes all meals from breakfast on Day 1 through dinner on Day 5, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, all ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does **not** include airfare to nor from the starting/ending city; however, flights within the tour (if any) are included. The fee also excludes laundry, personal expenses, and other items of a personal nature. For information about gratuities, please see the “TIPPING” sub-section below.

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT:

Main Trip: If you request single accommodations, a single supplement of **\$2.150** will be added to your tour fee.

Extension: If you request single accommodations, a single supplement of **\$1,075** will be added to your tour fee.

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. A second deposit of **30% of the remaining tour fee** is due 180 days prior to departure (December 21, 2026 for the main tour; December 30, 2026 for the extension). 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 (February 19, 2027; February 28, 2027 for the extension) prior to the tour departure date.

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

BAD WEATHER/ADDITIONAL EXPENSE RESPONSIBILITY: Our Alaska tours operate in the late spring/early summer period. The weather is highly changeable at this time of year and our tours typically experience a range of conditions, from sunny and clear to overcast and rainy. From time to time, dense fog is a problem at the coastal outpost locations of St. Paul (Pribilof Islands), Nome, and Gambell (St. Lawrence Island), all places visited by our tours. Exceedingly foggy conditions occasionally lead to flight cancellations. Under such circumstances, tour participants will be responsible for any additional expenses that result, principally additional hotel nights. If a flight is cancelled due to bad weather, there will be no refund available for the unused rooms at the intended destination. Most hotels used on this tour have a 30-day cancellation policy for group bookings during the high season. In case of flight cancellation, the VENT office or your tour leaders will make arrangements for additional room nights at the location at which your departure is delayed. Tour participants will either need to pay for the additional nights directly, at the time reservations are made, or, depending on the location, upon receipt of invoice from our office after the tour. VENT cannot be responsible for delays or changes in the itinerary due to weather-related problems.

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

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

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

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

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

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS

CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT:

- **More than 120 days prior to the tour start date:**
A refund of all monies paid will be issued, less 50% of the deposit (including initial and second deposit)
- **120 days or fewer prior to the tour start date:**
No refund will be provided.
- **Optional add-ons:**
Some tours offer optional add-ons that are designated as non-refundable. Any such add-ons are clearly identified as non-refundable at the time of booking. By selecting and purchasing an optional add-on, the participant acknowledges and accepts its non-refundable status. Fees paid for non-refundable add-ons are not refundable under any circumstances, regardless of when the tour is cancelled.

This cancellation policy applies to all participants and all tours (Pre-Tours and Extensions are considered self-contained tours separate from the main tour). Because unexpected events can occur, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance.

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

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

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

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

TRAVEL INSURANCE

SUGGESTED OPTIONS: To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with **Redpoint Travel Protection** as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend its comprehensive **Ripcord** plan, which includes a medical evacuation benefit. With this in mind, it is important to note that medical evacuation is not offered by Redpoint as a stand-alone policy or benefit. For travelers not interested in comprehensive travel insurance, VENT recommends **Medjet** and its **MedjetAssist®** plan. Medjet is not an insurance company, and Medjet Assist is not an insurance product; rather, Medjet is a membership-based air-medical transport company specializing in

moving hospitalized travelers from an admitting hospital to a medical facility of choice. Medjet does not provide medical evacuation service from the point of injury or illness; yet, the MedjetAssist plan offers robust enough travel protection to satisfy the medical evacuation insurance requirement in place for many VENT tours.

About Redpoint Travel’s Ripcord Plan

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

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

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

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

About Medjet's MedjetAssist Plan

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

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

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

GETTING THERE & REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

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

can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

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

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

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

Since we use the same hotel each time we return to Anchorage throughout the trip, one can store luggage there on each leg if desired. By packing an empty medium-sized duffel in your checked luggage, you can use that to carry smaller amounts of luggage on the legs to Nome, Denali, and Seward if desired.

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTHING: The weather in Alaska in late June is usually good but is always unpredictable. It can be very warm and sunny in the interior and cold and wet along the coast, even at the height of summer. The "layered" technique is your best defense against the variable weather. Casual clothing is suitable for all of our activities.

- **Pants:** A couple pairs of pants are recommended. Many people prefer lightweight pants made of cotton or other material, but denim, though not as comfortable, is certainly acceptable.

- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI carry field clothing that many travelers find appealing. Pants and shirts made of lightweight, yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular and more reasonably priced than in the past.
- **Shirts:** Long-sleeved shirts, in addition to other comfortable styles suitable for cool weather.
- **Hats:** A hat for protection from the sun is essential. A wide-brimmed hat is best, but participants should bring a baseball cap at the very least. A knit cap will be useful if cooler conditions prevail.
- **Thermal underwear:** A thermal undershirt provides added warmth.
- **Outerwear and cold weather gear:** A warm jacket or coat is essential for cool and/or wet conditions. A good windproof and waterproof outer shell is recommended, especially for the boat trip in Kenai Fjords. A fleece or pull-over sweater is also recommended.
- **Gloves:** Ideally warm and waterproof.

FOOTWEAR: Much of our birding will be done on the roadside with any comfortable shoe (athletic shoes or trail shoes) appropriate. The Nome extension features a hike to see Bristle-thighed Curlew. In many years, insulated waterproof boots or N.E.O.S. Overshoes will be needed. Sometimes the mud is more than ankle-deep. Shoes with good ankle support are always needed for the curlew hike.

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

- **Belt pack or day pack:** Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment during all excursions.
- **Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection**
- **High-SPF sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions**
- **Personal toiletries**
- **Cameras, lenses, memory cards, and extra batteries**
- **Collapsible walking stick**

- **Folding stool:** Recommended especially for those who have trouble standing for more than ten or fifteen minutes at a time.
- **Tissue packs**
- **Water bottle** Please bring a wide-mouth water bottle; bottled water and other drinks will always be available, but refillable bottles cut down on plastic waste.
- **Insect repellent:** Refer HEALTH section below.
- **Alarm clock:** If not using your phone.

Binoculars: We strongly recommend you bring a pair of good binoculars of 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 magnification. Please do not bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. You will find that 8x32 binoculars are compact and light enough.

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

DESTINATION INFORMATION & TOUR CONDITIONS

CLIMATE & WEATHER: The length of this trip and the diversity of locations we visit virtually guarantees a range of weather conditions. The summer in Alaska is certainly the most pleasant time of the year, and mild sunny days are a hallmark of such days. Yet, the weather in Alaska is famously changeable, and periods of overcast and rain can prevail even in the summer. By late June, the temperatures around Anchorage range from the mid-50s to mid-70s, while the interior around Denali sees temperatures ranging from the upper 40s to upper 60s. On the coast temperatures typically fall in the upper 40s to 50s range. Regardless of the temperature in Seward, the boat trip will likely be cold. Temperatures around Nome will be in the 40s to low 60s.

CONDITIONS: This trip offers a highlights-style Alaska experience, centered on the premier destinations of Denali and Kenai Fjords National Parks. Anchorage serves as the hub of the trip. It is the start and end city of the tour but also provides an excellent midpoint between the Denali area in the interior and the Kenai Peninsula. We will travel in two 15-passenger vans throughout the trip. The boat trip in Kenai Fjords National Park will be aboard a small ship. Physical demands will be light with walking mostly restricted to roadsides and park trails. Very good quality accommodations at all locations (Anchorage, Denali, Kenai Fjords).

BIRDING SKILLS: It is a common misperception that participants in group tours are all 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.

TYPICAL ROUTINE:

Schedule: Most breakfasts will be around 6:00 a.m. On some days, it could be a little earlier or a little later. Lunch will always be at midday. Dinner times will range from 6:00–7:00 p.m. We try to end our days at the hotel with a minimum of 45–60 minutes before dinner.

Kenai Fjords boat trip: The Kenai Fjords experience features a cruise to the Northwestern Fjord. This is a premier activity of the trip as it provides exposure to stupendous scenery and wildlife concentrations. This excursion is eight hours and lasts for the duration of the day. We will likely bring food for lunch. Conditions may range from mild and sunny to cool and overcast. Rain is definitely possible.

Nome Extension: In Nome, the schedule often calls for somewhat longer days with less down time and even the likelihood of post-dinner birding options. We will travel by large van; road surfaces range from paved to gravel. Lunches in Nome will likely all be courtesy of Subway, as we are unable to return back to town for lunch due to the length and condition of the roads.

INTERNET ACCESS: Expect Wi-Fi to be available in all hotels and lodges.

TIME: This trip will operate in Alaska Daylight Time, which means it is four hours behind Eastern Daylight Time.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Self-serve laundry is available in Nome, Anchorage, Seward and at our hotel in Denali.

HEALTH & SAFETY

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

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

COVID-19: We continually emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. Although VENT no longer maintains any of its COVID-era prevention protocols, we strongly recommend best practices for protecting yourself and your fellow travelers against COVID-19 illness. These measures include receiving the primary series vaccinations for those eligible, staying “Up to Date” with COVID-19 booster shots, wearing high filtration N-95 or KN-95

masks when in airports and on airplanes, and avoiding risky social settings in the lead-up to your tour. These recommendations are firmly rooted in CDC guidance for avoiding COVID-19.

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

BITING INSECTS: Mosquitos can be a nuisance at times in the taiga/tundra environment and in the forests from Anchorage to Seward. We recommend bringing insect repellent, although your trip leaders will have repellent available for group use.

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

[Insect repellents for the skin](#) are commonly available in three forms:

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

[Insect repellent for clothing](#) is marketed in one approved formulation:

- **Permanone® (Permethrin):** is an odorless spray-on repellent that may be used for pre-treatment of clothing, gear, and tents. It should not be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pre-treatment process requires a number of hours to complete and must be done outdoors, so it is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment must be repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.
- **Insect Shield® apparel:** Clothing pre-treated with Permanone is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

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

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

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

SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION

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

FIELD GUIDES:

Birds

Dunn, Jon L. and Jonathan Alderfer. *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America*.

Washington, D. C.: National Geographic Society eventh edition., 2017. The recommended field guide.

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. 2nd edition New York: Alfred a. Knopf, 2014. This classic field guide has been greatly expanded to cover many of the Eurasian vagrants that we could encounter.

Mammals

Kays, Roland W., and D. E. Wilson. *Mammals of North America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

HISTORY AND CULTURE:

Freuchen, Peter. *Book of the Eskimos*. Fawcett Books, 1981. An easy-to-read classic account of Eskimo life, written in 1931. Out of Print, but appears on www.amazon.com. Other Freuchen titles are available as well: *Arctic Adventure* (AMS Press, 1995) and *Ivalu, the Eskimo Wife* (AMS Press, 1935).

Lopez, Barry. *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape*. Vintage Books, 2001.

McPhee, John. *Coming into the Country*. Noonday Press, 1991 (reissue). Published in 1976, this chronicles a remarkable journey by kayak into the last frontier.

CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY APPS & ONLINE RESOURCES:

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

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

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 February 18, 2027 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

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

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

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

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