



ECUADOR

Eastern Slope of the Andes

January 24 – February 3, 2027



Gould's Jewelfront— One of dozens of extraordinary hummingbirds found on Ecuador's eastern Andean slope © Brian Gibbons

From the lush Amazonian rainforests to the high Andean páramos, Ecuador is indeed a special place, boasting good access to birding habitat, unsurpassed scenic splendor, friendly people, and a stable government. Incredibly, over 1,736 species of birds have been recorded in the country, in an area smaller than the state of Colorado! Among them are many of the most spectacular and distinctive Neotropical species. “Ecuador: Eastern Slope of the Andes” is designed to sample this magnificent avifauna in three choice areas, representing very different ecosystems, and offering a full range of birding possibilities. This trip explores the heart of the magnificent Ecuadorian Andes on its eastern slope. Within easy reach is an incredible transect of habitats, from stunted subalpine scrub and treeless páramo through cool temperate-zone forest that descends into lush subtropical and foothill cloud forest. Without a doubt, the Andes offer the world's most spectacular mountain birding.

The scenic Andes Mountains are just as complex as the Ecuadorian lowlands, and the forests of these slopes harbor the richest montane avifauna found anywhere. There are few places where birders have

access to such an impressive cross-section of these slopes, and Northern Ecuador is perhaps foremost among them for easy access. Zonation is complex here, and many birds are restricted to narrow elevational bands, not occurring above or below, so we'll bird these spectacular mountains from the páramo to the foothills. Several roads traverse various elevations, offering a fantastic assortment of little-known birds, while trails at San Isidro and Wildsumaco give us access to the lush forest interior. Outstanding in the Andes are the tanagers and hummingbirds, two of the most colorful and entertaining families of birds in the Neotropics, and we will see literally dozens of species of both groups. Among the long list of other possibilities are fabulous birds such as Torrent Duck, Wattled and Sickie-winged guans, Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe, Andean Ibis, Andean Condor, Black-and-chestnut Eagle, Golden-headed and Crested quetzals, Coppery-chested Jacamar, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Andean Cock-of-the-rock, and a nice selection of mountain-tanagers. In addition, we will always be on the lookout for the Andes' two most sought-after mega-mammals—the iconic Spectacled Bear and the equally impressive Mountain Tapir—that show up occasionally at a few of the locations we will visit!

This tour is designed to show you a wide array of birds, but a few words of caution are prudent. In our many years of birding the tropics, we have found that it is extremely important to get out early while the birds are singing and more active. Most days we will be up early, and some days we may be afield all day (especially in the cooler mountains). Accommodations are more than adequate, but some are of necessity relatively simple. This trip has been planned to show you some of the best of Ecuador, but may be too strenuous for those not in good health or not wishing to spend a good portion of their time in the field.



Crimson-mantled Woodpecker © Andrew Whittaker

Those wishing to experience even more of Ecuador's extraordinary birdlife and natural history are encouraged to combine this tour with **Ecuador: Best of Amazonia Short Tour**, which immediately precedes it. The two itineraries are designed to connect seamlessly, making it easy to enjoy both as one unforgettable Ecuador adventure. On this companion tour, participants will explore the spectacular avifauna of Ecuador's Amazonian lowlands while staying at the outstanding Napo Wildlife Center, with opportunities to discover the rich rainforest ecosystems of the Río Napo and the incomparable biodiversity of Yasuní National Park—one of the most biologically diverse places on Earth.



January 24, Day 1: Arrival in Quito

Participants should plan to arrive in Quito on or before January 24 (Mariscal Sucre International Airport; airport code UIO). Most flights from the United States arrive in the evening. Due to the late flight arrival time, dinner tonight will be on your own. Those wanting to avoid the risk of misconnecting (due to bad weather and flight delays) or who desire more rest time to acclimate prior to the tour are encouraged to consider arriving prior to January 24. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with these arrangements.

NIGHT: San José de Puembo, Puembo (near Quito airport)

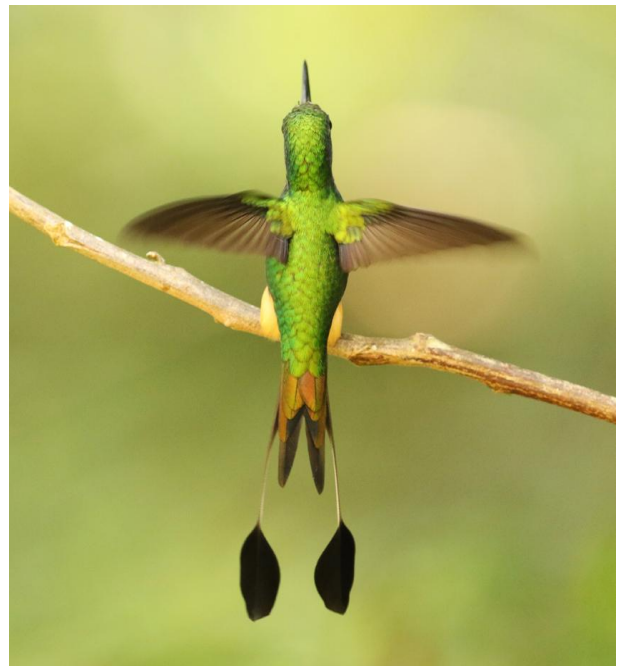
January 25 Day 2: Flight to Coca and birding en route to Wildsumaco Lodge

Participants will be transferred to the airport for a mid-morning flight to Coca, where you will meet the leaders and participants continuing from Ecuador: The Best of Amazonia. After lunch in Coca (or farther west at Loreto, depending on time) the group will travel up into the foothills of the east-slope to Wildsumaco Lodge. This lovely lodge has opened another realm of possibilities for birding the upper tropical zone. We should arrive here with time to settle in and enjoy our first sampling of the hummingbirds at the feeders and perhaps even catch the local toucans giving their late afternoon chorus, or a flight of Red-billed Parrots or Military Macaws en route to their evening roosts. And, by starting in the foothills “at the bottom” of our transect at 4,500 ft., we will be working our way up to the higher elevations through the course of the week.

NIGHT: Wildsumaco Lodge, Wildsumaco Wildlife Sanctuary

January 26 & 27 Days 3-4: Wildsumaco Area

With the opening of Wildsumaco Lodge, we finally have a comfortable place to stay in the eastern foothills, off the highway and amidst great habitat at a site chosen and designed by birders. The foothill birds are a unique mix from both the Amazonian tropics and the cooler subtropical regions, and this zone has the highest species diversity in the mountains. It is the heart of “the tanager zone,” where these colorful and entertaining birds reach their greatest diversity. Typically, they roam through the forest and edge in fast-moving mixed-flocks, their names only hinting at their beauty. How about Paradise, Golden-eared, Turquoise, Silver-beaked, Orange-eared and Golden,



Peruvian Racket-tail © Brian Gibbons

for just a few examples. Numerous other species tag along with these flocks, including Red-headed Barbet, Lafresnaye's Piculet, foliage-gleaners and woodcreepers, and numerous small flycatchers. Here too are trails allowing access to the forest interior and some of its more secretive inhabitants. Hummingbird feeders attract a surprisingly large number of species, including such rarely seen foothill specialties as Napo Sabrewing, Ecuadorian Piedtail, Rufous-vented Whitetip, Black-throated Brilliant and Gould's Jewelfront. We also have a chance of spotting spectacular birds such as the Coppery-chested Jacamar, Black-streaked Puffbird, Golden-collared Toucanet, Black-mandibled Toucan and Scarlet-breasted Fruiteater here, among many other eastern foothill specialties.

NIGHT: Wildsumaco Lodge, Wildsumaco Wildlife Sanctuary

January 28, Day 5: Wildsumaco Lodge to Cabañas San Isidro



Paradise Tanager © Andrew Whittaker

We depart from the Wildsumaco area shortly after breakfast this morning to head upslope to the upper subtropical and temperate zones, stopping as we go for any mixed-species foraging flocks encountered along the way. Much of what we do will depend on time and weather conditions as this transect offers impressive diversity. We will begin by birding the lower part of the Wildsumaco entrance road and perhaps the Huacamayo Ridge or the Vinillos entrance road to Antisana National Park. Our goal today will be to find species we have not encountered up to this point as we climb in elevation, and, although deemed a travel day, we are bound to encounter some exciting specialties and perhaps a surprise or two. A sample of what we could encounter includes Andean and Sickle-winged guans, Fasciated Tiger-Heron, Golden-headed or Crested quetzals, Green-backed Trogon, Chestnut-tipped Toucanet, Smoky-brown & Golden-olive woodpeckers, Black or Yellow-headed caracaras, Speckle-faced/White-capped Parrot, Scaly-naped Amazon, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Black-and-white Tody-Flycatcher, Large-headed Flatbill, Lemon-browed Flycatcher, Dusky Piha, Inca (Green) Jay, Mountain Wren, Chestnut-bellied Thrush, Lacrimose Mountain-Tanager, and Vermilion, Yellow-throated, Grass-

green, Blue-capped, Beryl-spangled and Flame-faced tanagers. We plan to arrive at Cabañas San Isidro with plenty of time to settle in and even do a little optional birding—which always produces more than one can imagine. After a delicious dinner (San Isidro has built a reputation for its cuisine), we may want to take a little time to seek out the lodge’s ‘mystery owl’ (if it doesn’t show up on its own at the dining room deck!) before turning in for the night.

NIGHT: Cabañas San Isidro, Cosanga

January 29-30, Days 6-7: Cabañas San Isidro and Surroundings

At 6,600 ft. in elevation, we find ourselves in the heart of the humid subtropical zone, in all its natural splendor, and we’ll have two full days to explore a wide range of habitats throughout the area. Here’s how Frank Chapman described this Andean ecosystem:

“Every available foot of ground is claimed by parasitic or epiphytic vegetation. This marvelous Subtropical Zone occupies the humid mountain slopes from the upper limit of the Tropical Zone to an altitude of from 8,000 to 9,500 feet and extends from Bolivia to Mexico. It is remarkable not alone for the richness of its life but for the high percentage of species found only within its boundaries. Protective coloration is at a discount in the Subtropical Zone. The density of vegetation protects; among arboreal birds at least - color unchecked - runs riot. Every day brought beautiful creatures we had never seen before.”

Here at San Isidro and its surroundings, we find ourselves in one of the finest sites in the world to bird this rich zone, and the possibilities seem endless. At the first hint of dawn, we will gather at the lodge’s



dining room deck to enjoy the 'show' as sunrise lights-up the stage... thrushes and Andean Solitaires sing; soon, as it becomes brighter, the vegetation suddenly comes alive with birds attracted to the lodge moth-light for insects. Typically, Inca (Green) Jays, Russet-backed Oropendolas and Subtropical Caciques arrive first, but soon tanagers, woodcreepers, flowerpiercers, flycatchers, and other small birds arrive, yielding remarkably close looks as they forage close at hand. As the morning progresses, clouds begin to blanket the mountain slopes, bathing the forest in mist. As the clouds appear, the mixed-species foraging flocks around the lodge seem to become most active. Amidst the seemingly endless array of tanagers are such gems as Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Green-and-black Fruiteater, Handsome and Cinnamon flycatchers, Barred Becard, Black-billed Peppershrike, Black-crested & Russet-crowned warblers, Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager and Bluish Flowerpiercer. To experience a big mixed-species foraging flock in the subtropics is one of the supreme joys—or utmost frustrations—of Neotropical birding. At times these flocks are hard to locate, or the light can be poor and the birds move off rapidly. At other times, however, they linger and forage deliberately, providing a spectacular visual feast as one species after another comes into view. Among the many additional special possibilities in this region are Black-and-chestnut Eagle, Wattled & Sickle-winged guans, Red-billed Parrot, Golden-headed & Crested quetzals, Masked Trogon, Andean Motmot, Powerful Woodpecker, Streak-headed Antbird, Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatcher (tiny!), and Andean Cock-of-the-rock. The diversity of hummingbirds here is high, and the different species can be spotted zipping around from the understory to the canopy. With such a profusion of flowers to choose from, they are not concentrated and can be frustrating to see at times, but with the help of very active nectar feeders, we should be able to secure excellent, even point-blank looks, at many of the possible species including Tawny-bellied Hermit, Lesser Violetear, Speckled Hummingbird, Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Bronzy Inca, Collared Inca, and Long-tailed Sylph. We will also take one afternoon to return to the nearby Vinillos entrance area, which always produces exciting surprises and more opportunities to encounter Barred Parakeet, Sickle-winged Guan, Crested Quetzal, White-throated (Southern Emerald-) Toucanet, Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Rusty-winged Barbtail, Sulphur-bellied Tyrannulet, Saffron-crowned Tanager and perhaps Red-breasted Meadowlark (Blackbird).

NIGHT: Cabañas San Isidro, Cosanga



Long-tailed Sylph © Paul J. Greenfield

January 31, Day 8: Cosanga to Papallacta

After a final morning of birding in the Cabañas San Isidro area, we will enjoy an early lunch and then take leave of the Cosanga area. After a short drive, we will make a brief stop at La Brisa, a local 'hummingbird garden' and after enjoying more hummers, we'll spend much of the early afternoon birding along the nearby 'Borja Loop' before we climb higher into the mountains to the temperate zone. We will spend the remainder of the afternoon in this ecosystem at Guango Lodge where we will find a new subset of higher elevation hummingbirds around the lodge's feeders, perhaps as many as 10 or more species present (quite a few new ones, too), such as Tourmaline Sunangel, Glowing Puffleg, Collared Inca, Mountain Velvetbreast, Buff-tailed Coronet, White-bellied Woodstar, and the incredible

Sword-billed Hummingbird. We will also bird the forest edge and perhaps a forest trail to seek out mixed-species foraging flocks in hopes of encountering Powerful Woodpecker, Strong-billed Woodcreeper, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Pearled Treerunner, Dusky Piha, White-banded Tyrannulet, Turquoise Jay, Slaty Brushfinch, Mountain Cacique, Spectacled



Male Torrent Duck © David Ascanio

Redstart (Whitestart), Black-capped Hemispingus, Hooded Mountain-Tanager, Grass-green Tanager, Blue-and-black Tanager, Blue-backed and Capped conebills, Masked Flowerpiercer, and Gray-hooded Bush Tanager. And, with all the stars in alignment, we could even encounter a Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan. Additionally, there's always a chance to come across a Mountain Tapir here. Torrent Ducks and White-capped Dippers are found along the rushing, boulder-strewn rivers. In the late afternoon, we will travel the short distance (15-20 minutes) to our lovely hotel, Las Termas de Papallacta, with its wooded gardens, and perhaps the most appreciated treat... their inviting private thermal baths.

NIGHT: Termas de Papallacta, Papallacta

February 1, Day 9: Las Termas de Papallacta and surroundings



Great Sapphirewing © Paul Greenfield

Just above Las Termas and the quiet village of Papallacta lie the great peaks and ridges of the eastern Andes. The elfin tree-line forest just above the lodge is home to special hummingbirds that include Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Viridian Metaltail, Shining Sunbeam, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, and a chance to find the spectacular Great Sapphirewing. Brilliant Scarlet-bellied and Buff-breasted mountain-tanagers tend to lead the sneaky mixed-species flocks of Pearled Treerunners, White-throated Tyrannulets, Agile Tit-Tyrants, Rufous

Wrens, Pale-naped and Yellow-breasted brushfinches, Spectacled Redstarts (Whitestarts), Black-capped and Superciliaried hemispingus, Blue-backed Conebill, Black-backed Bush Tanagers, and other small passerines that forage through the shrubbery and stunted trees here. With patience and good fortune, we may even encounter the local and rare high-elevation Masked and Black-chested mountain-tanagers! Both Spectacled Bear and Mountain Tapir have been seen along the road and in these densely forested hills, so we'll be on the lookout for sure! We will also head over to the Papallacta Pass, located above timberline in the páramo zone, where strange plants bloom in the

tundra-like bogs, and there are isolated stands of elfin *Polylepis* woodland on the protected slopes. Part of today will be spent birding this intriguing environment. With luck and decent weather, we might spot some additional specialties like the Tawny Antpitta, Red-crested Cotinga, and Giant Conebill, among other species that occur at this high elevation. At our highest point (14,000 feet), we'll conduct a special search for the ptarmigan-like Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe. Afterward, we will return to Las Termas de Papallacta for another night, with time to relax in the hot springs or to unwind before dinner.

NIGHT: Termas Papallacta, Papallacta



Masked Mountain-Tanager © Remi Greff

February 2, Day 10: Las Termas de Papallacta to Antisana National Park and Quito

Today will begin with an optional bout of early birding above the lodge, followed by breakfast and departure from Termas de Papallacta. We will head off to another area not far to the south and again ascend the eastern ridge of the Andes to Antisana National Park. Here we will explore rich páramo grassland, the La Mica Lake, and visit Tambo Condor, with their often-active hummingbird feeders,

hoping to encounter Black-tailed Trainbearer, Tyrian Metaltail, and Giant Hummingbird. High elevation species we will also be on the lookout for today include Yellow-billed Pintail, Andean Teal, Andean Duck, Silvery Grebe, Black-winged Ground-Dove, Slate-colored Coot, Andean Lapwing, Andean Gull, the scarce and local Andean Ibis, the majestic Andean Condor, Variable Hawk, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Carunculated Caracara, Aplomado Falcon, Tawny Antpitta, Andean Tit-Spinetail, Many-striped Canastero, and Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant among the many possibilities. If luck is with us, we might even catch a glance at Spectacled Bears that show up from time-to-time in the area.

We plan to arrive at our hotel with plenty of time to freshen up and meet for our final checklist and farewell dinner.

NOTE: A day-room will be reserved for participants departing on a late-night flight this evening, or a very early morning flight, for which Airport transfers will also be provided.

NIGHT: San Jose de Puembo, Puembo (near Quito Airport)

February 3, Day 11: Flights arrive home



Antisana Volcano © Paul Greenfield

ESSENTIAL TOUR INFORMATION

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

TOUR LEADER(s): This tour is led by **Paul Greenfield** and **Remi Grefa**.



Paul Greenfield: Originally from near New York City, Paul Greenfield developed a love for birds early in life that later merged seamlessly with his passion for art. After earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Temple University's Tyler School of Art, he moved to Ecuador in 1972, where he has lived ever since.

Paul's artistic and ornithological pursuits culminated in *The Birds of Ecuador* (Cornell University Press, 2001), a landmark field guide he coauthored and illustrated alongside Robert Ridgely. The Spanish edition followed in 2006, and *The Birds of Ecuador App* launched in 2018. He is also coauthor of *Birds of Western Ecuador, a Photographic Guide* (Princeton University Press, 2016).

Over the decades, Paul has contributed to the discovery and illustration of several new bird species and remains deeply committed to conservation. His efforts include leading Ecuador's National Strategy of Bird Tourism (2006, updated 2010) and collaborating with local communities, governments, and conservation organizations to protect the country's rich biodiversity.

Having guided birding tours for nearly five decades, Paul continues to share Ecuador's extraordinary avian world with visitors from around the globe. He and his wife, Martha, make their home in Quito.



Remigio "Remi" Grefa is a birding and naturalist guide whose roots run deep in Ecuador's Amazon Basin. Born and raised in the Kichwa community of Añangu along the Napo River, Remi grew up immersed in the rainforest, developing a close connection to its biodiversity from an early age. His interest in birds began when he observed visiting birdwatchers at a nearby lodge and set a goal to learn the names of local species in English—something he would go on to achieve through

dedication and hands-on experience.

As his community developed the Napo Wildlife Center, a pioneering ecotourism project, Remi joined the operation after high school. He worked his way through a range of roles—from maintenance and hospitality to boatman—gaining invaluable exposure to visiting birders and naturalists. These

experiences provided the foundation for his guiding career, allowing him to build both field knowledge and language skills.

In 2009, Remi expanded his experience aboard the Manatee Amazon Explorer, working along the Napo and Aguarico rivers. By 2017, he became an official birding and naturalist guide at Napo Wildlife Center, where he continues to lead today. He lives in Dayuma with his wife, Lola, and their 2 daughters, Kayana and Wita.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: \$5,725 per person based on double occupancy or \$6,395 for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from breakfast on Day 2 to the farewell dinner on Day 10, 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. 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 (September 26, 2026) prior to the tour departure date.

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

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

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

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

About Redpoint Travel's Ripcord Plan

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

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

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

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

About Medjet’s MedjetAssist Plan

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

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

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

GETTING THERE & REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

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

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

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

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

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

PASSPORTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Ecuador is required.

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

IMPORTANT: The visa details above are current for U.S. citizens as of July 27, 2026. Because entry requirements can change without notice, we kindly remind all participants to double-check the latest information before traveling. Travelers using non-U.S. passports are responsible for confirming any entry requirements that apply to their home country.

CLOTHING: The Eastern Slope of the Andes tour covers a constantly varying transect that ascends in altitude up the east Andean slope from the Amazonian foothills (warm to cool), through the subtropical- and temperate-zones (cool to cold) and higher to the tundra-like páramo zone (colder) just below snowline. Dress is casual or informal throughout and we suggest dark or dull-colored field pants and shirts for forest birding (especially) on both legs of the trip.

For this portion of the trip, think layering as we ascend the Andes. Warm or even a lightweight long-sleeved button shirt over a short-sleeve or long-sleeve undershirt will be the norm for most areas visited, along with a sweater or jacket for layering to provide extra warmth. If you are easily chilled, you may wish to use thermal underwear at higher elevations (i.e., Papallacta and Antisana) on our last field days. Good footwear is always essential, and for this, again, we strongly suggest waterproof hiking boots (see FOOTWEAR Section below).

To reiterate: In the Andes, especially on the final three days of the tour, at higher elevations, the temperatures can be in the low- to mid-40s on occasion and you should be prepared to layer for warmth, with thermal underwear and/or a warm long-sleeved shirt, plus a warm jacket or sweater. You can shed layers as the day warms up (or add them as it cools down). Consider bringing gloves and a warm hat if you know that you chill easily, along with thermal underwear or a flannel nightgown for warmth while sleeping. There is a strong likelihood that we will be out in at least some mist or light rain on the east-slope, so a sturdy umbrella or a rain jacket is essential. NOTE: You will not want to miss out on the thermal baths at Las Termas de Papallacta (either day or night), so do pack a bathing suit!

FOOTWEAR: For footwear, we recommend a good trail-walking shoe or a lightweight hiking boot when in the field, and a second, lighter pair to change into during downtime around the various

lodges. Athletic shoes are acceptable but will not keep your feet dry and can become soiled from muddy conditions. Sandals or other open-toed shoes are appropriate around hotels and in towns. Mud boots will not be necessary, but at the very least footgear for the field should be rated “water-resistant,” as this is a damp climate and even the dew on the roadside grass will get your feet wet!

EQUIPMENT: Note: As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

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:

- Daypack – Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment during all land excursions
- Binoculars in good repair – you may wish to pack a second pair (see BINOCULARS & SPOTTING SCOPE section below)
- Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection
- Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions
- An ample supply of all personal medication – it is a good idea to bring copies of all prescriptions
- Insect repellent – see INSECT REPELLENT section below
- Notebooks and pens
- Travel alarm clock
- Personal toiletries
- Collapsible walking stick – A highly recommended item for those who have trouble walking
- Tissue packs
- Lens cloth
- Flashlight or headlamp
- Water bottle – Napo Wildlife Center usually supplies an aluminum water bottle for guests
- Cameras, lenses, memory cards, and extra batteries

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

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

DESTINATION INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS

CLIMATE & WEATHER: In the Andes and its eastern slope, temperatures are generally pleasant during the day; cool in the early morning, to warm at midday (low 60s to 80s). However, at higher elevations (especially in the upper temperate and Paramo zones), the temperatures can be as low as the 40s on occasion (on the final three days of the tour, especially) and you should be prepared to layer for warmth, with thermal underwear and/or a warm long-sleeved shirt, plus a warm jacket or sweater. You can shed layers as the day warms up (or add them as it cools down). Consider bringing gloves and a warm hat if you know that you chill easily, along with thermal underwear or a flannel nightgown for warmth while sleeping, especially on our two nights at Las Termas de Papallacta. There is a strong likelihood that we will be out in at least some mist or light rain on the east-slope, so a good umbrella or rain jacket is essential. Cloud cover, even fog and perhaps some drizzle or light rain, can be the norm in the Andes, and preferred for our birding purposes; birds in this region do not like sunny days!

CONDITIONS:

Accommodations:

Wildsumaco Lodge was designed by birders, specifically for birders. Rooms are ample with plenty of electrical outlets for charging equipment, a safe deposit box, and modern bathrooms with an excellent supply of hot water. The separate dining hall includes a small bar and sitting area with a large fireplace, a small library, and an ample outdoor deck with very active nectar feeders and an impressive view over a forested valley and nearby forest (great for midday and late afternoon R&R). Internet access is available around the dining area and in the rooms and is usually adequate.

Cabañas San Isidro offers a variety of cabins in two areas near its separate dining hall, which includes an indoor sitting area and a terrace, which becomes a trip highlight at dawn (and even, if we're lucky, in the evening). Wifi is available at the dining area and in the cabins and is usually fairly reliable. Rooms vary in size and design, but all have a modern bathroom with flush toilets and hot water. The lodge also has a heated outdoor swimming pool that is available on demand.

Las Termas de Papallacta is a very popular hot-spring and spa located at an altitude of just under 11,000 feet above sea level. The gardens and natural thermal pools sit just outside our ample cabins (complete with modern bathrooms) and are available for a soothing soak day and/or night. The very ample restaurant, bar salon, and a series of sitting areas is situated close-by. Wifi is available throughout the complex as is normal phone service if guests have 'roaming' or a local cellphone plan. The spa is available to guests, at a discounted rate, depending on what type of massage or treatment is solicited.

The cloud forest and mountain forests (and other varied habitats) that cover the Andean slopes make up a fascinating meld of ecosystems that change in composition almost imperceptibly, except perhaps when comparing the bird communities, as one ascends or descends in altitude. Each location we visit will uncover new subsets of familiar and unfamiliar avian families along with subtle differences (to the untrained eye) in the local vegetation as we progress. At several sites we will enjoy incredible nectar feeders with new (and dizzying) varieties of hummingbird species. Much of our Andean birding will be done along forested roadsides, as access into such dense vegetation is few and far between throughout much of this mountainous terrain, though we will explore a few forest trails, where available, to experience the magic! As in the lowlands, bird activity is at its height in the early morning, although it is not uncommon, under the often cloudy (even foggy) conditions that tend to prevail in the Andes, for mixed-species foraging flocks to continue to move about throughout the day. Both Wildsumaco and Cabañas San Isidro offer moth-light set-ups that regularly attract a wide array of bird species, affording exceptional views... these are usually active early in the morning between 6:00–7:30 a.m.

CURRENCY & SPENDING: The official currency of Ecuador is the US Dollar. Your Eastern Slope of the Andes tour includes all necessary expenses. You may want to bring enough cash to cover personal

expenses not included in the program, such as bar bills, laundry, souvenirs and gifts, extra gratuities, meals on your own, and other personal items. It is strongly advised that your money be in U.S. Dollars and in smaller denominations of cash, as many places we visit may be unable to provide change for large bills. Major credit cards (MasterCard, Visa, American Express, and Diner's Club) are widely accepted in and around Quito and at Las Termas de Papallacta. As of this writing (May 2023) credit cards are not accepted at Wildsumaco Lodge or Cabañas San Isidro. Note that traveler's checks are no longer accepted in Ecuador. ATM service is available in the Quito-Puembo area and (in a pinch) at local banks in Coca and in a few towns throughout. If your home currency differs from the US Dollar you can check the latest currency conversion rate by visiting "XE-The World's Favorite Currency Site" at: <http://www.xe.com/>

ELECTRICITY: 110 volts is the standard (the same as in the U.S.), as are all electrical outlets throughout Ecuador. If you have equipment that uses 220-240V you will need an adapter to plug in your appliances as well as an all-purpose transformer if your appliances are not suitable for lower voltage or if they use a different style plug. Most computers provide plugs that accept both 110-120V and 220-240V simultaneously, though you may need a plug adapter that fits the US outlet system.

INTERNET ACCESS: Free Internet and Wi-fi access is available as follows: Quito (San José de Puembo); Wildsumaco Lodge (generally available, at times sporadically); and Cabanas San Isidro and Termas de Papallacta (generally reliable).

LANGUAGE: Spanish is the primary language spoken in Ecuador. English is spoken at the lodges we will be staying at throughout Andes.

TIME: Ecuador is on Ecuador Time (ECT) and is 1 hour behind Eastern Daylight Time (EDT).

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry facilities are more limited at the various Eastern Slope lodges and may not be able to offer one-day 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.

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

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

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

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

- **DEET:** (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide): A chemical compound that is marketed under various brand names (OFF!®, Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered in a variety of formulations including sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The formulations will state a percentage of the active ingredient DEET on the packaging. DEET may be applied to

exposed skin directly and/or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.

- Picaridin: A synthetic formulation that is derived from piperine, a substance found in plants that produce black pepper.
- Herbal insect repellents: Various mixtures of organic ingredients such as oils from eucalyptus, citronella, cedar, and other herbs. The herbal repellents are more difficult to categorize because of the difference in ingredients from one brand to another. There is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

Insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

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

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

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

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

SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION

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

FIELD GUIDES:

Birds

Ridgely, Robert S. and Greenfield, Paul J. The Birds of Ecuador. Cornell University Press, 2001.

This two-volume set is the “Bible” for anyone interested in Ecuador’s birds. The Field Guide, with 96 color plates, include illustrations of basically all the species found in the country. The informative text, designed to help species identification, includes distribution maps for all 1,600 species of Ecuador’s birds. The Status, Distribution and Taxonomy treats each of Ecuador’s species with detailed information not included in the Field Guide.

Mammals

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

Birding Resources & General Nature:

Hilty, Steven. Birds of Tropical America. Shelburne, VT: Chapters Publishing Ltd, 1994. Subtitle: “A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity.” Highly recommended as the most readable and informative book on many different aspects of bird ecology (and birding!) in the Neotropics.

Ridgely, Robert S. and Guy Tudor. The Birds of South America: Volume I, the Oscine Passerines. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1989. Excellent reference volumes, with text entries for all species and fantastic illustrations of many. This volume and the next together include all of the passerines.

Ridgely, Robert S. and Guy Tudor. The Birds of South America: Volume II, the Suboscine Passerines. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1989.

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.

Ridgely, Robert S. and Greenfield, Paul J. Birds of Ecuador—Field Guide. **Birds in the Hand LLC.** This App is the updated version of The Birds of Ecuador, including nearly 1,700 species now recorded in this tiny South American country. It can be downloaded through the App Store or Google Play. For more information, connect to the following link:

<http://www.birdseyebirding.com/app-pages/birds-of-ecuador-field-guide/>

Or connect directly to: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/birds-of-ecuador-field-guide/id1194665890> for the App Store.

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.birdseyebirding.birdseye.ecuador&hl=en_US for Google Play.

TERMS, CONDITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

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

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

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on July 27, 2026, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

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

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

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

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

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