



# GERMANY

Birds & Art in Berlin & Brandenburg

*September 19 - 28, 2026*

Eastern German is full of architectural and artistic treasures—and the area surrounding Berlin and Potsdam is blessed, too, with an abundance of readily accessible green space and wild habitats—a combination that makes this a first-rate destination for the birding traveler.

The historic city of Potsdam in fact ranks first among German municipalities in green space per inhabitant, and fully a third of Berlin’s land area is occupied by forests, parks, lakes, and fields. Autumn finds the resident birds joined by a wide variety of migrants, from noisy troops of Common Cranes to nervous flocks of colorful tits and other passerines. All this wildness goes on just a stone’s throw from the great museums and architectural landmarks of these venerable cities.



Our tour takes full advantage of both the region’s natural riches and its cultural heritage, with visits to sites commemorating both the bright and the dark sides of German history and excursions in search of the area’s wealth of bird species. Potsdam and Berlin will by themselves absorb much of our attention, but we will also venture into the nearby countryside of Brandenburg, where we will look for Red Kites, geese, and even the rare (and often elusive) Great Bustard.



*Photo Hotel am Jägertor*

Based at a single Potsdam hotel, we'll have plenty of opportunities to take full advantage of all that this world-class destination has to offer. Morning departures at 8:00 a.m. or later, leisurely meals, and the region's friendly and easy-going atmosphere make this an easy and enjoyable tour for anyone.

## September 19, Day 1: Departure from home

Most flights from the United States will depart in the evening, arriving at Berlin Brandenburg Airport (code BER) the following morning. Participants should plan to arrive in Berlin on or before September 20. Once you have completed customs and immigration formalities, you will be met for the 35-minute private transfer to our Potsdam hotel. On request, the VENT office will be happy to assist with hotel reservations for early arrivals.

**NIGHT:** In transit (overnight flight)

## September 20, Day 2: Arrival, and dinner in Potsdam

We will meet at 6:00 pm in the lobby of our hotel for introductions and a short discussion of what we have to look forward to on this tour, then walk a short distance to one of the city's many excellent restaurants. Along the way, we will pause to admire the Jägertor, an elaborate city gate constructed in 1733 and now the starting point for Potsdam's delightful Promenade, a green belt retracing the path of the old city walls.

Our four-star hotel is named for the Jägertor (“Hunter’s Gate”), and from here, an easy walk will take us to Potsdam’s Dutch Quarter, Frederick the Great’s Sanssouci Palace, and many other famous sites. Some of them we will explore as a group in the days to come, and it is never a problem to skip one of our scheduled activities to get to know more of the city on your own.

**NIGHT:** Hotel am Jägertor, Potsdam



*Sanssouci – Photo Rick Wright*

## September 21, Day 3: Sanssouci and Potsdam

A ten-minute stroll from our hotel takes us into the lavish rococo gardens of Sanssouci, built by the Prussian king Frederick the Great in the mid-1740s as a summer residence. The relatively modest, single-story palace at the top of the gardens quickly became the king’s favorite retreat, and he is buried on the grounds. Today’s visit will concentrate on the gardens, which include mature woodland, formal flowerbeds, and a host of follies and statues. We will be looking for such common residents as Mandarin and Tufted Ducks, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Blue and Great Tits, Short-toed Treecreeper, European

Nuthatch, and Hooded Crow. Like many others of the parks in Brandenburg, this can be a very attractive migrant trap, and in this season, we can hope for a surprise or two.



*Great Spotted Woodbecker – Photo Rick Wriaht*

We will spend most of the morning wandering the paths here, concluding with a look at the exterior of the palace. The interior is closed on Mondays, but those who are interested will have an opportunity to take the tour later this week.

We'll move on today to lunch in Potsdam, then take a short break before striking out again for a walking tour of the central city, ending at another fine restaurant.

**NIGHT:** Hotel am Jägertor, Potsdam

## September 22, Day 4: Strengsee and Lehnin Monastery

Twenty-five miles north of Potsdam, a complex of lakes and fishponds provides refuge and food for large numbers of cranes, ducks, and geese; the fields and marshes are watched over by raptors, often including the impressive White-tailed Eagle. On our short stroll to and from the observation blind, we will look (and listen) hard for such secretive wetland specialties as the Great Bittern, Penduline Tit, and Bearded Tit. The most accessible of the lakes, the Strengsee, is famous as an autumn rarity trap, but even if we don't encounter any exotic strays, this site may well produce the longest bird list of the trip.

We will have lunch nearby, then pay an afternoon visit to the Monastery of Lehnin. Still active today, as a hospital administered by Lutheran deaconesses, the original Cistercian foundation here dates from 1180. The surviving late medieval buildings here are among the most important and most atmospheric examples of red-brick Gothic in Germany. On our return to Potsdam, we hope to have time for a short break before dinner.

**NIGHT:** Hotel am Jägertor, Potsdam



*A Tundra Bean Goose at the Stregensee – Photo Rick Wright*

## September 23, Day 5: Berlin

With an eye to the rhythms of rush-hour traffic, and with yesterday's relatively long day in mind, we will make a mid-morning start for our first visit to Berlin, a true world city and the lively and sophisticated capital of the world's largest democracy. It is a 45-minute drive from our hotel to the Brandenburg Gate, and we will begin our exploration of the city at this enduring symbol of German unity.

Just behind the gate is the affecting Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe; other groups persecuted by the Nazi regime are also commemorated by monuments scattered through the vast park known as the Tiergarten. Among the most moving are the so-called Stolpersteine, tiny brass plaques set into the pavement in front of houses whose occupants were seized and murdered by the German government in the 1930s and 1940s; stumbling ("stolpern") across these inconspicuous and horrific markers is a remarkably powerful reminder of the profound harm done to so many millions by an ideology of hate.

On the other side of the River Spree stands the Reichstag Building, the seat of the German Parliament today. If time and governmental activities allow, we may visit the astonishing glass dome, the replacement for the one burned in the notorious fire of February 1933. We will have a late lunch nearby, then have a couple of hours on our own to pursue more traces of German history, to shop, or just to stroll the broad streets of this fascinating city before we return to Potsdam.

**NIGHT:** Hotel am Jägertor, Potsdam



*The former Cistercian monastery of Lehnin – Photo Rick*



*Mandarin Duck -- Photo Rick Wright*

## September 24, Day 6: The Gülper See

Today our minibus will take us north into the rural lowlands of the Havelland, where most of Germany's remaining Great Bustards reside. From a pre-war population of some 4,000 individuals, the country's bustard population had declined to fewer than fifty birds by 1997. Intensive conservation efforts,



*European Nuthatch – Photo Rick Wright*

including human fostering and subsequent re-release of the vulnerable fledglings, have resulted in more than quintupling that number, and the birds are once again reproducing on their own. Finding the bustards on the vast open fields where they winter can be ridiculously easy—or frustratingly impossible. We will check a few sites that have been reliable in the past, and with luck we will encounter anywhere from a few to a few dozen of these giant birds. Red Kites are often conspicuous on roadsides in these areas, too, and sunflower fields sometimes attract migrating finches.

We will wind up at the Gülper See, a large lake that has long been one of the best-known birding sites in Brandenburg. The sparse conifer woods here are a good spot for woodpeckers, and water birds may include numbers of Graylag, Tundra Bean, and Greater White-fronted geese, along with a nice

smattering of ducks and shorebirds. One of the specialties here is the White-tailed Eagle, half a dozen or more of which can sometimes be seen harassing the waterfowl or simply loafing in the shallows.

We will return to Potsdam for a short loafing session of our own before dinner.

**NIGHT:** Victor's Residenz Hotel Berlin Mitte, Berlin

## September 25, Day 7: Birding Sanssouci, and Berlin's Museumsinsel

We will start the day with an optional early birding walk in the gardens of Sanssouci. This is one of the best sites in the city to find Eurasian Jays, and Eurasian Red Squirrels, Hooded Crows, Greenfinches, and European Nuthatches are usually common and easily seen. If there is a finch "flight" this autumn, even Hawfinches can be found feeding in the trees here.

After a quick stop back at our hotel, we will make our way to Berlin and the world-famous Museumsinsel, one of the most astonishing concentrations of priceless art held anywhere in Europe. With their origins in the private holdings of the Prussian kings and, later, the German emperors, the almost overwhelmingly rich collections exhibited here are housed in imposing buildings constructed between 1824 and 1930. These grand structures suffered badly during the Second World War, but a thorough restoration beginning in 1999 has turned most of them once again into a state-of-the-art cultural landmark. *Please note that the entire Pergamon Museum is closed until at least 2027 for structural repairs. Extensive interior remodeling early this decade discovered significant problems with the building's foundations, which stand on wooden pilings driven into the sand of the island.*

There is far too much here to see in a single day, or in a lifetime of days. To get a quick overview, one can start in the New Museum, built 1843–1855, which houses the famous Golden Hat and the even more famous bust of Nefertiti, the most recognizable piece of Egyptian art on the planet. Moving from there to the Altes Museum takes you to the impressive holdings in Greek and Roman sculpture and decorative arts, while the Alte Nationalgalerie hangs paintings from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. The Bode Museum is especially rich in sculpture of all periods.

Everyone has a different rhythm and tolerance for museum visits. To accommodate that, lunch today will be on your own when we arrive in Berlin. There are many restaurants in the area, and the reconstructed Berlin Palace across from the island has an informal cafeteria with good food, which is where we typically wind up.

After gawking and gazing our fill in the museums, we will reassemble for an early dinner in Berlin before returning to our minibus and our Potsdam hotel.

**NIGHT:** Hotel am Jägertor, Potsdam

## September 26, Day 8: Potsdam and the Wannsee

A morning off will be an opportunity to take an interior tour of Sanssouci Palace, do some more birding in the palace gardens, or stroll the Promenade around the old city. We will have lunch together in Potsdam, then be picked up for the 15-minute drive to the Wannsee, one of the many sparkling lakes on the edges of Berlin. The lake and its islands, including the famous Pfaueninsel (peacock isle) with its fanciful white "castle," are now classified as a World Heritage Site—and simultaneously as a Special Bird Protection Area. Our leisurely walk should bring with it chances at a colorful suite of woodpeckers, tits, and finches.

For all its beauty, the Wannsee has also been the site of some dark chapters in German history. In autumn of 1811, Heinrich von Kleist, the author of *Earthquake in Chile* and the *Marquise of O*, carried out a suicide pact by shooting himself and a friend here. Even more sinister, it was here at the Wannsee that Nazi leaders gathered in 1942 to formulate their "final solution" for Europe.

We will ponder these contrasts—just one example of the complexities of German history—as we return to Potsdam for dinner.

**NIGHT:** Hotel am Jägertor, Potsdam

## September 27, Day 9: The Dutch Quarter and the cranes of Linum

In the 1730s, hoping to bring Prussia up to the highest standards in industry and art, Frederick William I, the Soldier King, recruited the best Dutch artisans and craftsmen to move to Potsdam. To make the offer more attractive, the king ordered the construction of more than 130 red-brick houses in the Dutch style, instantly creating the largest Dutch settlement anywhere outside of the Netherlands. Forty-five minutes north of Potsdam, the fields, ponds, and marshes around the village of Linum are the most significant inland staging area in Europe for southwest-bound Common Cranes. We will drive to the area in the early afternoon, looking for corvids, waterfowl, and cranes on the sides of the rural roads. Once in Linum, we will proceed to the fishponds below the village, one of Germany's most famous birding spots and the site of numerous rarities over the years—including the startling two pygmy cormorants discovered on our 2025 tour.

As the afternoon wears on, the movements of cranes overhead will be more conspicuous and more urgent, and we will follow the birds to some of their favorite fields to watch the assembly of what is often many thousands of cranes. We will linger at the viewing areas until sunset, then enjoy a hearty meal together in Linum's traditional inn before making the return trip to Potsdam.

**NIGHT:** Hotel am Jägertor, Potsdam



*A young Common Crane follows a parent on its first southward migration - Photo Rick Wright*

## September 28, Day 10: Departures for Home

Private transfers will take us to Berlin airport this morning, a thirty-five-minute trip.

### **Essential Tour Information**

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour is limited to 8 tour participants. However, VENT reserves the right to increase the tour limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space is available

**TOUR LEADER:** This tour is led by **Rick Wright**.



**Rick Wright** is a widely published author and sought-after lecturer and field trip leader. A native of southeast Nebraska, Rick studied French, German, Philosophy, and Life Sciences at the University of Nebraska before making a detour to Harvard Law School. He took the Ph.D. in German Languages and Literatures at Princeton University in 1990, then spent a dozen years as an academic, holding successive appointments as Assistant Professor of German at the University of Illinois, Reader in Art and Archaeology at Princeton University, and Associate Professor of Medieval Studies at Fordham University. His numerous scholarly publications include two books on the Latin animal literature of the later Middle Ages. Among Rick's recent books are the second editions of his *ABA Field Guide to Birds of New Jersey* and the *ABA Field Guide to Birds of Arizona*. His *Peterson Reference Guide to American Sparrows* is a standard work on that family. He is also the co-author with Sanford Sorkin of *Watching Birds in Montclair* and *Watching Birds in the New Jersey Meadowlands*. Rick lives with his wife, Alison Beringer, and their jet-black lab, Quetzal, in northern New Jersey.

## **TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION**

**TOUR FEE: \$7,525** per person based on double occupancy. This includes all meals from breakfast on Day 2 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, alcoholic beverages, 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.

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT:** If you request single accommodations, a single supplement of **\$900** 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 tour fee** is due 180 days prior to departure (March 23, 2026). 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 (May 22, 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 on to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

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

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

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

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

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

## **CANCELLATION & REFUNDS**

### **CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT:**

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

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

### **CANCELLATION BY VENT:**

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

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

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

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

## **TRAVEL INSURANCE**

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

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

### **About Redpoint Travel's Ripcord Plan**

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

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

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

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:**

**PASSPORT:** A passport valid for at least three months after your return from the tour is required, with at least two blank pages for entry stamps. As the rules differ from country to country, we recommend that your passport be valid for at least six months after your planned return home.

Beginning at some point in 2026, visitors from the US will need to be in possession of an ETIAS document before entering Germany. The document costs approximately \$8.00 and can be obtained online at [etias.com/etias-application](https://etias.com/etias-application). US citizens will not be admitted to Germany without this document in hand. Please monitor the ETIAS website for the latest information about this requirement.

Rules and regulations pertaining to citizens of other countries may differ; please check with a German consulate or embassy.

### **WHAT TO BRING**

**CLOTHING:** As this trip combines birding with walking in cities and at historical sites, you should consider bringing a mix of clothing that prepares you for all activities. Our dress will always be casual, but you will be more comfortable most evenings wearing neater attire. The following items are recommended:

- **Pants:** A couple of pairs of pants are essential. Many people prefer mid-weight pants made of cotton or other material, but denim, though not as comfortable, is certainly acceptable for wearing in the field. In restaurants, churches, and palaces, you will be more comfortable wearing neat, but still informal, attire.
- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI carry field clothing that many birders find appealing. Pants and shirts made of lightweight, yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular.
- **Shirts:** Comfortable long-sleeved shirts of any style are good for field wear.
- **Hat:** A hat for protection from the sun is essential.
- **Sweaters and Coats:** A sweater and coat or jacket will come in handy most mornings. In the event we encounter rain or mist, you'll want to have a water-repellent jacket as well. The weather can vary considerably over a single day, so dressing in layers is a good strategy.

- **Gloves:** Even on the warmest day, morning and evening can be chilly; light gloves will help keep you warm.

**FOOTWEAR:** Water-resistant hiking shoes are best for our birding expeditions; boots are fine, too, of course, but not necessary at any of the sites we visit. In the city, lighter-weight shoes will be more comfortable.

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

- Small daypack for extra clothing, books, supplies, and optics.
- Notebook and pencils.
- Alarm clock.
- Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection; high-SPF sunscreen.
- Lip balm and lotions.
- Cameras, lenses, and extra batteries and memory cards.
- Telescoping walking stick – highly recommended for those with difficulty walking.
- Personal toiletries.
- Pocket packages of Kleenex.
- Umbrellas can be borrowed from the front desk at our hotel.

### **BINOCULARS & SPOTTING SCOPES:**

**Binoculars** – Bring your binoculars! We strongly recommend good 7x35, 8x42, 10x40, or 10x42 binoculars. 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. Trying to find a bird in your binoculars using minis is like trying to read a book through a keyhole. You will be very frustrated, and even if you do manage to get the bird in your binoculars before it flies, you will have a poor view. You will find that modern 7x35 or 8x42 binoculars are compact and light enough.

**Spotting Scopes** – Your tour leader will have a scope available for group use throughout the trip, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please do so. The leader will let you know each evening whether scopes will be useful the following day. You will find it especially enjoyable to have your own scope when we are watching ducks, geese, and cranes.

### **Destination Information & Local Conditions**

**CLIMATE & WEATHER:** Early autumn is usually a very nice time to travel in eastern Germany. The heat of summer is past, and winter is still far away; this so-called Nachsommer, the “aftersummer,” can be full of perfect days of bright sun, warm air, and migrating birds. At nighttime low temperatures are generally in the 40s and afternoon highs in the low 60s. Rain, usually in the form of intermittent showers or mist, is always possible, but brilliant autumn days are just as likely. Though wet weather can persist, most recent tours have seen only one or two damp days.

**Additional time in Germany:** Berlin has excellent rail and flight connections to the rest of Germany and to the rest of Europe. Our tour program is intended to include what we think of as many of the area's top historical and natural sites and many of its wonderful birds. But there is much more to see in Germany and nearby portions of Europe; participants with an interest in enjoying activities beyond the stated program should come early or stay on after the tour ends. Given sufficient advance notice, the VENT office will be happy to help you make additional arrangements.

**CONDITIONS:** Our days will be full of natural and cultural experiences, but our pace will always be easy and relaxed. Though birding will predominate on some days and cultural tourism on others, most of this tour is characterized – thanks to this area's abundance of green space – by a balance between the two. We plan on leaving our hotel each morning at or after 8:00 and are often able to schedule a break between our return to the hotel and dinner.

The physical demands posed by this trip are easy to moderate but bear in mind that some of our historical sightseeing involves a moderate amount of walking and standing. Towns and villages often have uneven pavement, and in general, European cities have more curbs, stairs, and other minor obstacles than you may be used to. You will never be subjected to physical demands exceeding your capabilities.

While we are birding, our walking will be restricted to paths and roadsides, and we will not walk much more than a mile at a time. If you cannot comfortably walk a mile at a time on broad level paths or stand for several minutes at a time as we search for birds, you will not find this tour enjoyable.

Most of our activities are optional, and thanks to our central location in Potsdam, it is always possible to simply take a day off to enjoy the city on your own if you'd like.

**CURRENCY & SPENDING:** Your tour payment includes most necessary expenses while you are in Germany. You will need cash to cover such personal expenses as taxis, gifts, laundry, gratuities, snacks and any meals not taken with the group. At the end of the tour, please be ready to reimburse the leader for any alcoholic beverages you have had at meals.

The official currency in Germany is the euro; US dollars are not accepted anywhere in the country. The current exchange rate can be found at [xe.com](http://xe.com). You can order euros through your bank before leaving home or withdraw them from ATMs at the airport or in Potsdam. Please ask your bank or credit card issuer about the use of ATM and credit cards abroad.

**EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES:** Tour prices are based on the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to impose a surcharge.

**ELECTRICITY:** Electrical current in Germany is 220-240V (110-120V in the US). Electrical outlets are one of the two European standard socket types: the "Type C" Europlug and the "Type E" and "Type F" Schuko. All of these outlets are ungrounded, with openings for two round pins. Most new electronic devices can run on 220V, but if you have items that do not, you will need a step-down transformer in addition to the plug adapter.

#### **INTERNET ACCESS:**

**LANGUAGE:** German is spoken throughout the area, but Berlin and Potsdam are both very cosmopolitan cities, and nearly everyone there speaks good English.

**TIME:** Germany is on Central European Time, which is 6 hours ahead of Eastern Time and 9 hours ahead of Pacific Time. Daylight saving time is expected to be in effect during our tour.

**LAUNDRY SERVICE:** Laundry service is available at an extra charge in our hotel, but it is always best to bring enough clothes to get you through the entire tour.

## **HEALTH & SAFETY**

### **HEALTH:**

Those who are not fit for light to moderate physical activity, including those with physical disabilities that affect mobility and balance, or other conditions associated with poor health, are advised not to join the trip. At this time, no major shots or inoculations are required for entry into Germany.

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.

## **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](http://www.amazon.com) which has a wide selection; [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com) and [www.nhbs.com](http://www.nhbs.com) which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

#### **FIELD GUIDES:**

##### ***Birds***

Mullarney, K., L. Svensson, and D. Zetterstrom. *Birds of Europe*. 3rd edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023. This is the standard field guide. If you have an earlier edition of this splendid guide, please update to the third. If you bring any other bird guide, it should be in addition to, and not instead of, this book.

##### ***Mammals***

MacDonald, D., and P. Barrett. *Mammals of Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

#### **BIRDING RESOURCES AND GENERAL NATURE:**

Author (last name, first name), Copyright date. *Title*. Publisher. Short summary.

#### **HISTORY AND CULTURE:**

Henckel von Dommersmarck, F. *The Lives of Others: A Screenplay*. Pushkin Press, 2014.

Larsen, E. *In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin*. New York: Crown, 2012.

MacLean, R. *Berlin: Portrait of a City through the Centuries*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2014.

#### **TERMS, CONDITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES**

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

quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

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

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

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

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on November 25, 2025 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

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

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

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

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