



# SPRING HAWAII

*March 3 - 13, 2027*



*Hawaii Akepa © Erik Bruhnke*

The most remote archipelago in the world, the Hawaiian Islands offer a unique and dramatic view of nature. Hawaii rivals the Galapagos Islands as a living microcosm of evolution, as each main island harbors unique and varied bird and plant species. For a spectacular firsthand view of the life of volcanoes – past and present – Hawaii has almost no equal.

Our hotels on Oahu and Kauai sit alongside the ocean, as does one of our two hotels on the Big Island. The tour concentrates on locations and native habitats off the beaten track, exploring the tropical forests and coastal regions of the islands, while still enjoying Hawaii’s fine amenities and cuisine. VENT’S Hawaii tours truly leave the standard Hawaii tourist scene far behind.

In traversing three islands – Oahu, Kauai, and Hawaii – we will encounter an amazing assortment of endemic plant and bird species. Each of these islands harbors its own endemic Hawaiian “honeycreepers.” We will search out a large proportion of these native land birds (many are endangered), including liwi, Palila, Omao, Hawaii Akepa, three Elepaio and Amakihi species, and the rare Akiapolaau, to name a few. Hawaii’s endemic hawk (I’o) and goose (Nene) are also extremely

good bets. We have arranged special entry for the group into some of the best remaining tracts of native tropical forest in the islands, where we can enjoy these extraordinary birds at leisure.

Wonderful views of seabirds throughout the tour are a continual reminder of Hawaii's location in the middle of the tropical Pacific. Sprite-like White Terns reside near our hotel on Oahu. Gleaming White-tailed Tropicbirds fly effortlessly across Kauai's splendid Waimea Canyon and circle the rim of the Big Island's Halemaumau Crater. At Kilauea Point on Kauai, Red-footed Boobies and Great Frigatebirds glide overhead. A distinctive form of the Black Noddy nests along the black lava cliffs on the Big Island.

A visit to Kauai in March coincides with a peak of seabird diversity. Spectacular seabirds nest at Kilauea Point, including Laysan Albatrosses. Adult albatrosses glide by at eye level, and huge downy nestlings sit in the shade of ironwood trees. Two species of tropicbirds – perhaps the most elegant seabirds in the world – are a regular sight here. Glistening Red-tailed Tropicbirds display in aerial courtship, and White-tailed Tropicbirds wing by toward nests on cliff ledges. Exquisite Red-footed Boobies are chased by enormous Great Frigatebirds, and often a few Brown Boobies can be seen near Kilauea. Kilauea is also an excellent place at this season to view humpback whales and spinner dolphins and sometimes the endangered Hawaiian Monk Seal.



Migrant shorebirds include an abundance of Pacific Golden-Plovers, as well as Wandering Tattlers. The much sought-after Bristle-thighed Curlew is a good bet on Oahu. We'll find such endemic, endangered species as Hawaiian Duck (Koloa) and Hawaiian Coot (Alae Keokeo), as well as the endemic forms of Common Gallinule and Black-necked Stilt at several wetland sanctuaries. An assortment of introduced

bird species adds variety to the bird life on these remote tropical islands, and we will search for a good sample of these although as a lower priority than native species.

The equal of any birding wonders in the islands is the memorable experience of exploring the recent volcanic landscapes of Hawaii Volcanoes National Park on the Big Island (Hawaii). Although one can't predict its likelihood on a given visit, some tours have had the great fortune of seeing an active lava flow in the park, an unforgettable vision in fiery orange.

Hawaii's remote, tropical allure remains and is redefined through this tour of the islands' natural riches. The warm temperatures, comfortable lodging, and excellent cuisine only complement its singular wildlife and volcanic marvels.

## March 3, Day 1: Arrival in Honolulu, Oahu

Upon arrival in Honolulu (airport code HNL), please take a taxi to The Lotus Hotel where a room will be reserved in your name. We will gather in the lobby at 5:30 p.m. before a get-acquainted dinner.

**NIGHT:** The Lotus Hotel, Honolulu

## March 4, Day 2: Birding Oahu

Our first day of birding on Oahu will begin with a leisurely stroll around Kapiolani Park, directly across the street from our hotel. This is the best place in all the main islands to admire the lovely White Tern. Wintering Pacific Golden-Plovers compete for feeding territories on the park's grassy expanses. A varied assortment of non-native landbirds of the island lowlands are likely here as well, such as Red-crested Cardinal, Red-vented Bulbul, Yellow-fronted Canary, Java Sparrow, Common Waxbill, Common Myna, and others. From there, we will ascend to the forested slopes of the Koolau Mountains where we will spend the rest of our morning seeking out the two endemic Hawaiian landbirds of Oahu – Oahu Amakihi and Oahu Elepaio.

Oahu Elepaio is a Hawaiian relative of the monarch flycatchers of other Pacific islands and this elepaio species is scarce and a listed endangered species. Introduced species in these forests that we may

encounter include noisy flocks of Red-billed Leiothrix and the flashy White-rumped Shama, an Old-World Flycatcher beautiful in voice and appearance.

**NIGHT:** The Lotus Hotel, Honolulu

## March 5, Day 3: Oahu's North Shore

This day will find us taking a trip up the lush, windward side of Oahu, en route to the famous North Shore. And while the area is best known for legendary surf spots like Pipeline and Waimea Bay, we are going to be seeking out an avian visitor that is legendary in the birding world: the Bristle-thighed Curlew. Before the American Birding Association decided to include Hawaii in its listing area, birders hoping to add this enigmatic shorebird to their ABA life list had to travel all the way to Nome, AK to even have a chance of seeing it. And that was just the beginning of their journey! Our effort will be much more relaxed, and while nothing is ever guaranteed, our chances of success are quite high. In addition to the curlew, we are likely to get our first views of such waterbirds as Hawaiian Coot and the Hawaiian subspecies of Black-necked Stilt and Common Gallinule. In addition to the birds, our stops along the scenic coastline will give us a chance to find Green Sea Turtle or Hawaiian Monk Seal, one of the rarest marine mammals in the world.

**NIGHT:** Lotus Honolulu at Diamond Head, Honolulu

## March 6, Day 4: Oahu to Kauai; Kauai North Shore Refuges

An early morning flight takes us to Lihue on the island of Kauai. Kauai's active volcanic days are long gone. What remains is an island of emerald, green lushness, with sheer, scenic canyons and coastal cliffs. Today we will visit two of the islands' finest refuges, Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge and Hanalei National Wildlife Refuge, on the north side of Kauai.

At Kilauea Point can be found some of the most spectacular of all seabirds, including nesting Laysan Albatross, adults gliding by at eye level, and huge nestlings sitting in the shade of ironwood trees. Two species of tropicbirds – perhaps the most elegant seabirds in the world – are a regular sight here, with

glistening Red-tailed Tropicbirds seen regularly in aerial courtship displays and White-tailed Tropicbirds winging by to their cliff ledge nests. Red-footed Boobies are chased by enormous Great Frigatebirds, and often a few Brown Boobies are on hand. This is also an excellent place to view Humpback Whales and Spinner Dolphins. Hawaiian Geese (Nene) were re-introduced to Kauai more than 20 years ago, and the endangered species is doing well on this mongoose-free island. Expect to see these handsome geese at both Kilauea and Hanalei refuges.

We will also bird at Hanalei National Wildlife Refuge, looking for the endemic Hawaiian Duck (Koloa) and Hawaiian Coot ('Alae Keokeo), as well as the Hawaiian subspecies of Black-necked Stilt and Common Gallinule. The countryside here may also hold Japanese Bush-Warbler, White-rumped Shama, Hwamei, Chestnut Munia, Red-crested Cardinal, Western Meadowlark, Northern Mockingbird, and others.

**NIGHT:** Sheraton Kauai at Coconut Beach, Kapa'a



*Great Frigatebird © Erik Bruhnke*

## March 7, Day 5: Kauai – Koke'e Forest and Alakai Swamp

This morning we traverse incredible scenery en route to the wet mountain forest of Koke'e State Park in the northwest corner of Kauai. The route passes alongside Waimea Canyon, known as the Grand Canyon of the Pacific, a multihued gorge that cleaves thousands of feet and can be viewed from several eye-popping overlooks. The route upslope along the canyon is often a good area to see such birds as Erckel's and Black francolins.

Reaching the 4,000 feet level, we will hike along the forest edge in search of songbirds endemic to the island of Kauai. A moderately strenuous hike of up to 1 mile gives us our best opportunity to find these birds, which have declined markedly in recent years. In addition to the brick-red Apapane which occurs on several of the main islands, we have a good chance to see such Kauai specialty honeycreepers as Kauai Amakihi, Anianiau, and the distinctively plumaged Kauai Elepaio, a Hawaiian relative of the monarch flycatchers of other Pacific islands. Red Junglefowl are also well-established here, descendants of birds originally brought by the Polynesians to these islands over one thousand years ago. Some introduced birds are possible in the forest today too, including White-rumped Shama, Hwamei, and Japanese Bush-Warbler.

Nearby we will visit a lookout on the Kalalau Valley for a stupendous view of the Na Pali coastline and the blue Pacific 4,000 feet below. After lunch we may opt to continue birding the upper elevations in search of the native forest birds or we may instead return to sea level where we can bird the dry landscape near Kekaha for Black Francolin and estrildid finches and check the coastal wetland sanctuaries that sometimes harbor vagrant waterbird species.

**NIGHT:** Sheraton Kauai at Coconut Beach, Kapa'a

## March 8, Day 6: Kauai to Hawaii; the Kona Coast

This morning we fly from Lihue to Kona on the west coast of Hawaii, or "The Big Island." Hawaii is the easternmost and largest island in the chain and is well-known for recent periods of volcanic activity. Leaving the airport area, we expect to drive south toward Kealahou, where we may have our first opportunity to sight a Hawaiian Hawk (I'o), a species endemic to the Big Island. A number of introduced songbird species will likely be encountered in the Kona area, including Yellow-billed Cardinal, Saffron Finch, and possibly several estrildid finches.

We will also visit other sites on the west side of the Big Island, particularly near Pu'u Anahulu, to look for such species as Black, Erckel's and Gray francolins, and perhaps estrildid finches like Red Avadavat. We may find Nene here as well.

Our hotel tonight is located in Waimea/Kamuela at 2,500 feet above sea level on the hem of long-dormant Kohala volcano, where weather is comfortably cooler than along the hot, arid coastline.

**NIGHT:** Kamuela Inn, Kamuela (Waimea)



*'Io (Hawaiian Hawk) © Erik Bruhnke*

## March 9, Day 7: Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge

A visit to Hakalau Forest NWR rates among the top highlights of the entire tour. Making an early start from Waimea, we head for the eastern slope of Hawaii's highest volcanic peak, Mauna Kea. We have arranged special permission for the group to visit Hakalau, a critical refuge of koa and ohia forest established for the protection of Hawaii's declining forest bird species. From about 6,000 feet we'll hike down into the best forested habitat on Hawaii, where native birds are more plentiful than anywhere else in the Hawaiian Islands. Brilliant scarlet liwis, one of Hawaii's truly spectacular landbirds, can be downright common here, as are Apapanes and Hawaii Amakihis. Also, at Hakalau, we have an excellent chance to see such endangered Big Island endemics as Hawaii Akepa and Hawaii Creeper ('Alawi).

The astounding Akiapolaau, or Aki for short, is possible here too. The Aki is a unique marvel of adaptation, with a straight short lower mandible that it uses like a chisel and a long, flexible, decurved upper mandible that it works like a probe. The Aki is a bird well worth a careful and persistent search.

A different species of elepaio, Hawaii Elepaio, is found here, as is the solitaire-like Omao (Hawaiian Thrush), and we may see Hawaiian Hawks gliding over the forest canopy. On the drive into the refuge, we typically encounter an array of gallinaceous birds (turkeys, francolins, pheasants, quail, and possibly Chukar) and pass through other worldly volcanic landscapes. Expect a full and exciting day.



*I'iwi* © Erik Bruhnke

**NIGHT:** Kamuela Inn, Kamuela (Waimea)

## March 10, Day 8: Surrounding area and whale watch.

On this morning, we will depart from our beautiful countryside lodging from the past two nights and make our way to Kona while appreciating birding and sightseeing moments on the way; including keeping our eyes out for species we may have not seen yet. We may opt to explore Waikoloa Village or possibly various hills and cliffs for pleasant birding opportunities. We may keep our eyes out for the often-soaring Io (the Hawaiian Hawk), the grassland-hunting Pueo (the Hawaiian Short-eared Owl), and an array of introduced birds like Eurasian Skylark and Erckel's Spurfowl to name a few. Once in Kona, we will board a whale watching trip about 2.5-3 hours in duration. The western shore of the Big Island is renowned for pelagic wildlife, and we will be in the great care of dedicated naturalists on a comfortable boat, for an exciting trip on the water. Humpback Whales are likely, and with some careful scanning there may be a chance to see dolphins including both Spinner Dolphins and Bottlenose Dolphins. This whale watching experience is brand new for the VENT Spring Hawaii tour as of 2027!

After the boat trip we will head to Hilo, an old Hawaiian city, where we will spend the next three nights in a laid-back tropical setting with some great restaurants, also near Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. Two local wetlands in Hilo will get our attention to check for waterfowl and shorebirds on adjacent rocky shoreline.

**NIGHT:** Castle Hilo Hawaiian, Hilo

## March 11, Day 9: Hawaii Volcanoes National Park

This morning, we drive up to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. The Park reaches from the 4,000-foot rim of Kilauea Caldera to the black volcanic sea cliffs at the sea level end of the Chain of Craters Road, where Black Noddies are often present near traditional nest ledges. A leisurely day of exploring the multi-faceted park is in store, looking for some special birds and investigating the remarkable volcanic landscape that surrounds us. Specific sites to visit today include Thurston Lava Tube, Devastation Trail, and the 1980's lava fields of Mauna Ulu, where one can get a firsthand look and feel for pahoehoe and a'a varieties of lava and search for Pele's hair. A walk in Bird Park often turns up such fancy exotics as Kalij Pheasant, Red-billed Leiothrix, and Hwamei. Other stops today should include the park Visitor Center and Volcano Art Gallery. If there is an accessible nearby active lava flow – best viewed at night when the red glow is more vivid – we will make an effort to pay a sunset visit.

**NIGHT:** Castle Hilo Hawaiian, Hilo

## March 12, Day 10: Options

If we had bad weather or other difficulties in Hakalau refuge on the preceding day, we have the option of birding another site of koa and ohia forest on the shoulder of Mauna Loa, where there is a fair chance of locating some of the endemic forest birds such as Hawaiian Hawk, I'iwi, Omao, Hawaii Elepaio, Hawaii Amakihi and Apapane. Back in Hilo, a visit to some local ponds and the rocky black lava shoreline may turn up some new species of waterfowl or shorebirds for our Hawaii compilation. Other options include a trip to a local botanical garden or a return into Volcanoes National Park if an active lava flow is viewable. This is also a good day for some time to relax on the lanai at the hotel in Hilo. In recent years following the local Hilo birding hotspots, we have explored the southeastern shoreline of the Big Island; Enjoying views of Honu (the Green Sea Turtle) on beautiful Black Sand Beaches and possibly visiting other birding areas throughout the day of traveling. This latter option has been very popular; A memorable time both scenery-wise and wildlife-wise.

**NIGHT:** Castle Hilo Hawaiian, Hilo

## March 13, Day 11: Departure Day

Participants can make arrangements to depart Hilo at any time today. Hilo Airport (airport code ITO) has direct flights to the mainland as well as departures to Honolulu which typically arrive in Honolulu in about 45 minutes, allowing time for connections to various mainland-bound flights. *(Please note that tour participants are responsible for booking their own flights out of Hilo to connect with mainland flights.)* Those with later homeward flights from Honolulu may want to plan ahead for activities in Honolulu or Hilo during the day. Most flights to the mainland connect to Honolulu.

**Special Note:** On some tours and in certain areas, the larger 15-passenger vans are not available. Every effort will be made to secure the larger vehicles for this tour. However, when smaller vans are reserved, participants may not always have a window seat, and you will be asked to rotate daily.

### Essential Tour Information

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour is limited to 12 tour participants.

**TOUR LEADER(s):** This tour is led by **Erik Bruhnke** and **Kevin Burke**.



**Erik Bruhnke** has loved birds since he was a child looking at chickadees. In 2008 he graduated from Northland College in Wisconsin with a Natural Resources degree. Erik taught field ornithology at Northland College for three semesters. Between 2009 and 2014, he spent his summers conducting field research focused on breeding bird transects in Upper Michigan, point counts for a breeding bird atlas in Minnesota and Wisconsin's Northwoods, vegetation and breeding bird surveys throughout wind farms in

North Dakota's prairie potholes, and cavity-nesting surveys in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon. A devoted raptor nerd, he is drawn to hawkwatches. He worked as an interpreter for six seasons at Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory in Duluth, Minnesota; counted migrating raptors at the Corpus Christi HawkWatch in Texas in 2015; and was 2016, 2017, and 2018 hawk counter at the Cape May Hawkwatch in New Jersey. Erik's wildlife photography has won national awards, and he's written for

the American Birding Association's Birder's Guide, BirdWatching magazine, and Bird Watcher's Digest. When not leading birding tours, Erik often leads field trips and speaks at birding festivals. He also enjoys hiking, kayaking, cross-country skiing, and just being out in the snow. In his free time, he loves to cook and bake.



**Kevin Burke** is originally from Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. He grew up running around in the woods and trails of Shenandoah National park. His family spent many summers camping and hiking in the park. One of Kevin's favorite activities was jumping in the river and turning over every rock to see what was underneath. This eventually earned him the nickname "hellgrammite kid." This early exposure to the natural world has vaulted into a lifelong obsession with the outdoors. Kevin was introduced to birding while spending summers in Rhode

Island at his grandmother's house. She would point out all the birds and help him identify them. These early encounters helped foster a love for birds. An early ornithology class at Hocking College in Ohio rekindled his love for birds. He has been birding every day since. He went on to get a Bachelor of Science in Ecotourism and Conservation Ecology from the University of Idaho. Kevin has been involved with leading bird trips in some capacity for almost 20 years. He has led birding trips all throughout the United States, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic. His birding journeys have also taken him to some spectacular locations such as Portugal, Colombia, the Bahamas, and Canada. This is truly a lifelong obsession. He currently resides with his family in Hendersonville, North Carolina. Kevin's wife and two kids also enjoy birding. They have fun kayaking, hiking, and camping in the mountains that surround their home. One of their favorite activities is jumping on the paddle board and kayaks and leisurely floating the French Broad River near their house.

### **TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION**

**TOUR FEE:** \$10,450 per person based on double occupancy or \$12,625 for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 11, 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.

**REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT:** You may register for this tour through the VENT [website](#) or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The deposit for this tour is \$500 per person. We accept MasterCard and Visa.

**PAYMENTS:** All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days (November 3, 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 handle the hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

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

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

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

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

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

## **CANCELLATION & REFUNDS**

### **CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT:**

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

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

### **CANCELLATION BY VENT:**

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

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

blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

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

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

## **TRAVEL INSURANCE**

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

\*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.

## **WHAT TO BRING**

**CLOTHING:** Casual, informal clothing will be fine throughout, including in restaurants. A layered approach is suggested to be comfortable under all potential conditions

- **Slacks or jeans:** will suffice at any altitude
- **Shorts:** will be comfortable at lower elevations
- **A mix of short and long-sleeved shirts**
- **Light-weight waterproof jacket**
- **Light fleece jacket**
- **Light sweater**
- **A hat:** for protection from sun/precipitation will come in handy
- **Rain/wind pants:** in your daypack in case of sudden rain
- **Compact, collapsible umbrella**

## **FOOTWEAR:**

- **Proper hiking footwear:** boots that provide good traction and solid ankle support are essential. They should be moisture-proof as hikes into rainforest sometimes encounter precipitation. Essential for walking into several key natural areas.
- **Tennis/walking shoes or sandals:** for other activities

**EQUIPMENT:** Having the right equipment makes the travel experience more enjoyable. Below is a list of items that will ensure you are well prepared:

- **Light day-pack**
- **Plastic water bottle**
- **A camera and ample digital storage media:** There will be many photo opportunities.
- **Sunscreen**

- **Sunglasses**

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

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

## **DESTINATION INFORMATION & TOUR CONDITIONS**

**CLIMATE & WEATHER:** Most daily temperatures will fall in a very comfortable range, but you must be prepared for a variety of potential weather conditions and temperatures. Our time in this tropical region will cover quite a span of elevations, from sea level to at least 8,000 feet, and one should expect at least some precipitation over the eight days. Temperatures typically range from a sunny 85°F to a misty 60°F, depending on elevation and weather. In Kamuela on the Big Island, where we spend two nights, the temperature can drop into the 50s at night.

**CONDITIONS:** We will be doing a fair amount of light hiking and walking, sometimes over uneven or unforgiving terrain.

**CURRENCY & SPENDING:** U.S. Dollars, of course

**ELECTRICITY:** No adapter necessary if travelling from the U.S.

**INTERNET ACCESS:**

**LANGUAGE:** English and Hawaiian are spoken everywhere

**TIME:** Hawaii-Aleutian Standard Time (4 hours earlier than Central Time)

**LAUNDRY SERVICE:** Kamuela Inn (Big Island), a small property, has one coin-operated washer and dryer. All other hotels on this tour have full-service laundry facilities.

## **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](http://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](http://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](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:**

***The two best choices for field guides for birds of Hawaii are:***

Raine, Helen and Andre F. American Birding Association Field Guide to Birds of Hawai'i. New York, New York: Scott & Nix Inc, 2020.

Hawaii Audubon Society. Hawaii's Birds. Honolulu: HAS, most current edition (newest was published in 2021).

### **Other Bird Resources:**

Harrison, Craig S. Seabirds of Hawaii: Natural History and Conservation. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990. A very readable scientific overview.

Olson, Storrs L. and Helen F. James. Prodrumus of the Fossil Avifauna of the Hawaiian Islands. Smithsonian Contributions to Zoology, No. 365. Washington, D.C., 1982. Hawaii's fossil bird record is astounding; this is the original scientific summary of the data.

Pratt, H. Douglas. Enjoying Birds in Hawai'i. Mutual Publishing, 1993. Site guide.

Pratt, H. Douglas and Jack Jeffrey. Hawai'i's Birds and Their Habitats. Mutual Publishing, 2013.

This is a handy informal bird guide is excellent for showcasing photos and a wealth of information, of both birds and the habitat/landscapes we explore. While not exclusively a bird field guide, it is a fantastic resource for appreciating sense-of-place on our travels, recommended.

Pratt, H. Douglas, Phillip L. Bruner and Delwyn G. Berrett. A Field Guide to the Birds of Hawai'i and the Tropical Pacific. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987. The only traditional format field guide to Hawaii birds, with color plates by Pratt. Some information is dated at this point.

Scott, J.M., S. Conant, and C. Van Riper, III, editors. Evolution, Ecology, Conservation, and Management of Hawaiian Birds: A Vanishing Avifauna. Studies in Avian Biology No. 22, Cooper Ornithological Society, 2001. Current scientific articles.

### **Mammals, Reptiles & Amphibians:**

McKeown, Sean. A Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians in the Hawaiian Islands. Diamond Head Publishing, 1996.

Van Riper, Sandra G. and Charles Van Riper III. A Field Guide to the Mammals in Hawai'i. Honolulu: Oriental Publishing Co, 1982. The best guide for field use. Scarce, but try [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com).

### **Plants:**

Kepler, Angela Kay. Hawaiian Heritage Plants. Honolulu: Oriental Publishing, 1983. An excellent guide to plants of significance to the history of Hawaii. Out of print, but try [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com).

Lamoureux, Charles H. Trailside Plants of Hawaii's National Parks. Booklines Hawai'i, Ltd., 1996 (revised edition). Useful in any forest area.

Pratt, H. Douglas. A Pocket Guide to Hawaii's Trees and Shrubs. Mutual Publishing, 1998. A very handy pocket-sized guide.

Sohmer, S.H. and Robert Gustafson. Plants and Flowers of Hawai'i. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987. Well-written and well-illustrated. Not exactly a field guide, but recommended to anyone interested in native plant communities.

### **Geology, Geography and Archaeology:**

Blay, Chuck and Robert Siemers. Kauai's Geologic History: A Simplified Guide. TEOK, 1998.

Cox, J. Halley and Edward Stasack. Hawaiian Petroglyphs. Booklines Hawai'i, 1970.

Decker, Robert and Barbara Decker. Volcano Watching. Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park: Hawai'i Natural History Association, 2000.

Hazlett, Richard W. and Donald W. Hyndman. Roadside Geology of Hawai'i. Missoula: Mountain Press, 1996.

MacDonald, Gordon A. and Douglass H. Hubbard. Volcanoes of the National Parks in Hawai'i. 6th ed. Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park: Hawai'i Natural History Association, n.d. (10th ed.).

### **General Natural History:**

Culliney, John L. Islands in a Far Sea: Nature and Man in Hawai'i. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, Revised Ed., 2006. An excellent, worthwhile reading for anyone interested in Hawaiian natural history and conservation.

Mitchell, Andrew and James A. Michener. The Fragile South Pacific: An Ecological Odyssey. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991. Covers the entire South Pacific region and helps to place the Hawaiian Islands in proper ecological perspective.

Rauzon, Mark J. Isles of Refuge: Wildlife and History of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001. Excellent, readable natural history with a lot of relevance to the main islands of the Hawaiian chain, too.

Wagner, Warren L. and V.A. Funk. Hawaiian Biogeography: Evolution on a Hot Spot. Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995. Cladistic analyses of flora and fauna.

Ziegler, Alan C. Hawaiian Natural History, Ecology, and Evolution. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002. The best single natural history guide to the Hawaiian Islands, with entries on nearly every topic of interest.

### **CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY APPS & ONLINE RESOURCES:**

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

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

## **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 16, 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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