



BELIZE

*A Relaxed & Easy Tour
March 18 - 25, 2027*



Agami Heron © Michael O'Brien

This tour offers an exciting introduction to natural history exploration in the Neotropics. The two elements of this tour are very different and together sample much of this charming country's diverse habitats. In both areas, our accommodations are very comfortable and our schedule is flexible enough to accommodate those who wish to take time away from the group. Our "Relaxed & Easy" style is appropriate for participants who want a slower paced experience, with lighter physical activity and more ample siesta time than other tours. For those who want more birding time, an optional early morning outing will be offered before breakfast each day.

The first element of our tour will explore the lagoons, pine forest, and savannah that dominate much of northeastern Belize. At Crooked Tree, a boat ride through the lagoon may produce such exciting birds as Boat-billed and Agami herons, Jabiru, Black-collared Hawk, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, and American Pygmy Kingfisher. Nearby pine forest and cashew orchards host a long list of birds, including

the stunning Yucatan Jay, along with Yellow-lored Amazon, Canivet's Emerald, Yucatan Woodpecker, and Yucatan Flycatcher. We'll also tour the magnificent Maya ruins of Altun Ha, best known for the large jade head discovered there.

A short drive and pleasant boat ride will take us to Lamanai Outpost Lodge, situated on a bluff above the tranquil New River Lagoon, and adjacent to another spectacular Maya ruin. Here we will experience some of the finest forest birding in Belize. The diversity of birds here is fabulous, with almost 400



species recorded within a three-mile radius of the lodge. We should have regular encounters with such interesting and dazzling species as Gartered and Slaty-tailed trogons, White-whiskered Puffbird, Keel-billed Toucan, Ivory-billed Woodcreeper, and Barred Antshrike. We'll also seek specialties such as Tody Motmot and Black-throated Shrike-Tanager. During siesta time, an eye on the gardens and flowering trees right outside our cabañas could produce Long-billed Hermit, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, Spot-breasted Wren, Black-cowled Oriole, Blue Bunting, Yellow-throated Euphonia, and migrant warblers. One of the real pleasures of staying at Lamanai is having access to the river. A cocktail cruise to watch the sun set over the ruins, and an evening spotlight safari to look for nightjars, potoos, and other birds along the river will be simply delightful.

March 18, Day 1: Arrivals in Belize City

Upon arrival in Belize City, you will be met by one of our leaders or our ground operator and transferred to Bird's Eye View Lodge in Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. The trip begins with a get-acquainted meeting at 5:30 p.m. in the lounge near the front desk. Dinner will follow. If time permits, we suggest arriving a day early to allow for potential flight delays. VENT will be happy to assist with any additional lodging arrangements should you choose to arrive early.

NIGHT: Bird's Eye View Lodge, Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary



Vermilion Flycatcher © Michael O'Brien

March 19, Day 2: Crooked Tree

Established in 1984 with the cooperation of the Belize Audubon Society, the government, and local villagers, Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary is a 16,000-acre network of lagoons, swamps, pine-savanna, and mango and cashew orchards surrounding the village of Crooked Tree. From our lodge overlooking Crooked

Tree Lagoon, we should see a wide spectrum of birds including Limpkin, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Snail Kite, Great Black-Hawk, and Northern Jacana. Part of our full day at Crooked Tree will include a relaxing morning boat ride through forest-edged lagoons in search of Jabiru, Agami and Boat-billed herons, Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Black-collared Hawk, Sungrebe, and American Pygmy Kingfisher. Water levels in Crooked Tree Lagoon are highly variable, but we try to time our visit to coincide with the reduced water levels that tend to concentrate shorebirds, herons, kingfishers, and other species. In the afternoon, we'll explore nearby cashew orchards and pine savannah in search of several Yucatan specialties such as Yellow-lored Amazon, Yucatan Woodpecker, Yucatan Flycatcher, and Yucatan Jay. In this birdy area, we should expect to be constantly entertained by various parrots, flycatchers, warblers, tanagers, and other species.

NIGHT: Bird's Eye View Lodge, Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary



Waders at Crooked Tree Lagoon © Michael O'Brien

March 20, Day 3: Crooked Tree and Altun Ha

We'll spend this morning visiting the towering Maya temples at Altun Ha, occupied from around 10,000 B.C. to 900 A.D. In addition to touring the site, we'll scan the sky for soaring King Vulture or Black Hawk-Eagle and watch the treetops for a variety of interesting birds such as Olive-throated Parakeet, Boat-billed and Piratic flycatchers, Masked Tityra, Red-legged Honeycreeper, and Black-cowled Oriole. Our relaxing lunch at a nearby restaurant will feature authentic Belizean cuisine in a birdy environment. In the afternoon we'll return to Crooked Tree and take an afternoon walk near the lodge.



American Pygmy Kingfisher © Michael O'Brien

NIGHT: Bird's Eye View Lodge, Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary

March 21, Day 4: Crooked Tree to Lamanai

After another birdy morning at Crooked Tree, we'll depart after lunch and make our way to Lamanai (meaning "submerged crocodile"), another fabulous Mayan site situated above the New River Lagoon. Our transfer to Lamanai will include a lovely 75-minute boat ride down the New River, where sightings will likely include several species of kingfishers, numerous herons, and perhaps a few raptors. We'll arrive at Lamanai with plenty of time to settle into our new surroundings before dinner.

NIGHT: Lamanai Outpost Lodge, Lamanai

March 22-24, Days 5-7: Lamanai

We'll spend the next three days exploring the trails, clearings, and ruins at Lamanai. Here we'll experience some of the finest tropical forest birding in Belize. A stroll through forest trails may produce Blue Ground-Dove; Long-billed and Stripe-throated hermits; Black-headed, Slaty-tailed and

Gartered trogons; White-whiskered Puffbird; Keel-billed Toucan; Chestnut-colored Woodpecker; Tawny-winged and Ivory-billed woodcreepers; Barred Antshrike; Northern Bentbill; a long list of wintering and migrant warblers; Black-throated Shrike-Tanager; Red-throated Ant-Tanager; and Yellow-throated and Olive-backed euphonias. Beyond birds, there are always other interesting creatures here such as howler monkeys, agoutis, coatis, lizards, and a host of dazzling butterflies. A cocktail cruise on the river will be a relaxing way to watch the sun set and perhaps see a few new birds. For those who wish, one evening after dinner we'll do a river cruise, to search for interesting nocturnal species. This gives us the opportunity to see some night birds such as Northern Potoo, Yucatan Nightjar, Common Pauraque, and Mottled Owl, and is also the best chance we'll have to see other secretive creatures, like Morelet's Crocodile, or even a Jaguar.

Our days will usually break into a series of short outings with a midday or afternoon siesta. For those who wish to have more time away from the group, there will be ample opportunity to take a longer siesta, walk a trail on your own, or go canoeing or fishing with a local guide.

NIGHTS: Lamanai Outpost Lodge, Lamanai

March 25, Day 8: Lamanai to Belize City; Departures Home

After a final early morning at Lamanai, we'll transfer back to Belize City, where the tour concludes with departures home. Please do not schedule a departure flight for earlier than 1:00 p.m.

Upon arrival at the Belize airport, you will have sufficient time to check in for your return flights to the U.S.



Yucatan Nightjar © Michael O'Brien



Cruising the New River © Michael O'Brien

ESSENTIAL TOUR INFORMATION

TOUR SIZE: This tour is limited to 10 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(s): Michael O'Brien and Louise Zemaitis



Michael O'Brien is a freelance artist, author, and environmental consultant living in Cape May, New Jersey. He has a passionate interest in bird vocalizations and field identification, and a serious addiction to migration and nocturnal birding. His travels have taken him throughout North and Central America and beyond. At home in Cape May, Michael serves as an Associate Naturalist with Cape May Bird Observatory for whom he conducts numerous workshops, and, for many years, conducted a fall songbird migration count. He is co-author of *The Shorebird Guide*, *Flight Calls of Migratory Birds*, and *America's 100 Most Wanted Birds*, and is primary author of *Larkwire*, an online and handheld application for learning bird sounds. His illustrations have been widely published in books and field guides, including the *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America* and the new *Peterson field guides*. Michael also has an intense interest in butterflies, leads several "Birds & Butterflies" tours with his wife, Louise Zemaitis, and is coordinator of the Cape May Butterfly Count.



Louise Zemaitis is an artist and naturalist living in Cape May, New Jersey where she is a popular field trip leader teaching birding workshops as an Associate Naturalist with New Jersey Audubon’s Cape May Bird Observatory. She also enjoys leading birding groups and lecturing at birding festivals and is known for her enthusiasm for all natural history subjects. Louise and her husband, Michael O’Brien, have been guiding young birders at birding events and conferences for many years. In addition to leading,

Louise worked as field coordinator of the Monarch Monitoring Project in Cape May and served as compiler of the Cape May Christmas Bird Count for many years. An honors graduate of Temple University’s Tyler School of Art (owner of Swallowtail Studio), she enjoys working as a freelance artist, and her illustrations have been widely published. Her proudest accomplishment has been the raising of her two sons: Bradley, a conservation educator and artist, and Alec, a library scientist and musician.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: **\$6,795** per person based on double occupancy or **\$6,995** for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 8, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, all ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does **not** include airfare to nor from the starting/ending city; however, flights within the tour (if any) are included. The fee also excludes laundry, personal expenses, and other items of a personal nature. For information about gratuities, please see the “TIPPING” sub-section below. If the minimum group size is not met, each participant will be charged a small-group supplement—shared equally and communicated in advance—to allow the tour to proceed.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: You may register for this tour through the VENT [website](#) or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The initial deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. At 180 days VENT will collect a second deposit that brings the total deposit amount to 40% of the tour price. We accept MasterCard and Visa for both deposits.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include

initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days (November 18, 2026) prior to the tour departure date.

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

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: Tour prices are based on the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If rates change drastically, it may be necessary to impose a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges have been passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

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

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

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

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

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

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS

CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT:

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

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

CANCELLATION BY VENT:

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

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

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

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

TRAVEL INSURANCE

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

About Redpoint Travel's Ripcord Plan

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

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

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

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

About Medjet’s MedjetAssist Plan

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

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

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

GETTING THERE & REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

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

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

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

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

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:

PASSPORTS: A passport valid beyond your planned return date is required for entry to Belize, with at least one blank page for entry stamp. We recommend that your passport be valid for at least six months beyond your planned return date. If your passport is stamped by the immigration officials upon entry, you must be sure to get an exit stamp before returning to the United States. No visas are required for citizens of the United States for tourist visits of up to 30 days, but they must have proof of their intent to depart Belize (such as onward or return air tickets) and proof of sufficient funds to maintain themselves in Belize. Non-United States citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTHING: Light field clothing and casual attire are suitable for this tour. Bring several pairs of long pants and comfortable shirts. Long-sleeved shirts are useful for protection from the sun and occasional biting insects. Pre-treating field pants and socks with repellent can provide extra protection from chiggers. A good hat or cap, plus rain gear and/or an umbrella are essential. Be sure to have a pair of comfortable walking shoes or hiking boots, plus a second pair of footwear such as tennis shoes or calf-high rubber boots (if it rains the trails can be muddy, especially from June through January). A light sweater and/or jacket are also nice for the occasional cool, damp mornings, evenings and overcast days. Laundry services are available at both Bird's Eye View Lodge and Lamanai Outpost Lodge. If you plan to wash your clothes in your room, please be aware of the fact that drip-drying (even of quick drying nylon items) may take a couple of days with the frequently high humidity.

EQUIPMENT: Having the right equipment makes the travel experience more enjoyable. Below is a list of items that will ensure you are well prepared: You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good condition, along with a belt pack or daypack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, camera, etc.). As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so (mainly useful for viewing Crooked Tree Lagoon from our lodge). You should also bring sunglasses and sunscreen, a small flashlight or headlamp, battery-operated alarm clock, water bottle, camera, digital storage

media and spare batteries, small daypack, and your favorite snacks. Some may wish to bring a small folding stool (sometimes useful on forest trails or at the ruins). We highly recommend that you bring a collapsible umbrella, and also carry it with you on longer walks. Personal items like digital storage media, sunscreen, batteries, etc., can be very expensive anywhere in Belize. Bring sufficient supplies with you.

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

DESTINATION INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS

CLIMATE & WEATHER: The dry season in Belize runs from December through May, but showers can happen any time. The temperatures in March generally vary between afternoon highs in the mid-upper 80s, and nighttime lows in the low 70s.

CONDITIONS: Relaxed & Easy (R&E) tours are similar to “regular” VENT tours, but set to a slower pace, with somewhat fewer hours in the field and lighter physical activity. They are ideal for participants who prefer a somewhat later start in the morning, a little lengthier afternoon break, and a shorter afternoon outing. Walking is limited to short walks of usually not more than one mile round-trip, avoiding rough terrain. **However, these tours are NOT appropriate for anyone who needs assistance walking at a normal birding pace, or anyone not able to negotiate minor trail obstacles such as roots, rocks, or puddles.** Designed as a Relaxed & Easy tour, this trip will require a low level of physical activity from participants, with most birding being in open area situations and on level ground. However, it should be emphasized that **THIS TOUR IS NOT APPROPRIATE FOR PARTICIPANTS WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY DOING STEPS**; all participants must be able to negotiate **multiple tall (about 12-inch) steps at Lamanai** and also get in and out of boats on several occasions. A typical day will begin with breakfast at approximately 7:00 or 7:30 a.m., followed by birding until about noon. We will attempt to have lunch every day between 12:00 and 1:00, followed by an afternoon break. Be advised that an afternoon break may not be possible every day. We will resume birding for a couple of hours in the late afternoon. On most days we will provide forty-five minutes to an hour of down time before dinner. For those interested in extra birding time, there will also be a pre-breakfast outing of about an hour offered on most days.

Relaxed & Easy (R&E) refers only to the slower pace of a tour, not to a participant's birding skills or ability. Accordingly, birders of all levels of ability are welcome, as they are on typical VENT tours; R&E tours should not be mistaken as tours for beginning birders.

OTHER CONDITIONS: There will be several leisurely bird walks, either in open areas or on wide, usually flat paths. Although none of the walking will be particularly strenuous, **in some areas there will be steps, roots, rocks, or other uneven terrain, and participants must be able to negotiate these without assistance, and at a normal birding pace.** At both Crooked Tree and Lamanai we will also do some birding by boats, accessed by docks in most cases. Elevation changes will vary from sea level to less than 1,000 feet elevation. To take advantage of the best time for avian activity, we will begin optional pre-breakfast birding during the dawn hours each morning, and siesta during the heat of the day. Traveling on bumpy roads is expected whenever we are off the Western Highway.

CURRENCY & SPENDING: \$1 US dollar equals \$2 Belizean dollars. The exchange rate is subject to change, but has been constant for some years. Both currencies have identical denominations. So if you plan to spend any money in Belize, make sure you understand whether the price is being quoted in Belizean or USD. It is not necessary to exchange currency for this tour, since US dollars are accepted everywhere.

ELECTRICITY: Electricity is available at both Lamanai Outpost Lodge and Bird's Eye View Lodge 24 hours a day. Wall outlets are provided in each room/cabaña and electrical appliances may therefore be used at any time day or night. No adapter is needed.

INTERNET ACCESS: Available at each property on this tour.

LANGUAGE: English

TIME: Central Standard Time

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Bird's Eye View Lodge offers convenient daily wash-and-fold and dry cleaning services for a nominal fee. Lamanai Outpost Lodge in Belize offers a convenient same-day wash, dry, and fold laundry service. Same-day service is available, but it is always best to check with the front desk regarding daily volume.

ACCOMMODATIONS: Birds Eye View Lodge has a large ceiling fan & air conditioner in all rooms. Please note at Lamanai Outpost Lodge the tour fee includes cabanas with high-output ceiling fans. A/C units are available for an additional charge of \$40.00 USD per room, per night, (plus 9% hotel tax) subject to availability. A/C must be requested and booked (ideally before 4:00 PM) so the lodge can switch on its generators. Due to the shade and design of the rooms, we have never felt a need for air conditioning.

HEALTH & SAFETY

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

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

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

SUN EXPOSURE: The sun’s ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes), even in winter and early spring. Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. A severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors and

be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

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

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

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

Insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

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

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

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

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

BITING INSECTS

A Note About Chiggers: This tour visits areas where chiggers are known to occur. Chiggers are tiny parasitic mites found in most warm weather areas of the southern United States and the world's tropics. They are especially numerous in grassy areas, where, in the immature stage, they attach themselves to other animals or humans who make contact with the grass as they pass by. Chiggers do not suck blood and the majority of species do not carry disease. They do feed on bodily fluids through a process in which a digestive enzyme is produced by the chigger which essentially liquefies the skin around the area where the chigger is attached. The chigger is not usually attached to the skin for more than a few hours before it either falls off or is knocked off. Our bodies respond by producing a hardened area as a defense against the chigger's digestive enzyme. Though the chigger may be long gone, it is the presence of the hardened area, and the body's natural process of reabsorbing it that typically causes intense itching, often lasting for a week or more. Chiggers like to attach themselves to areas of thin skin, like around the ankles, beltline, undergarment lines, knees, and elbows.

Chiggers can be avoided by following these procedures:

- Avoid walking or standing in areas dominated by taller grass. These areas are where one is most likely to encounter chiggers.
- Tuck your pants into your socks to avoid direct skin-to-grass contact. Chiggers can find their way through clothing, but this is a standard and effective prevention technique.
- Apply insect repellent to your skin and clothing. Please refer to the Insect Repellent section that follows for important information about selecting and applying repellent.

- Powdered sulfur applied to waist, bottoms of pants, socks and boots is also effective at repelling chiggers. However, be warned that clothes will retain the sulfur odor for several washings. If using sulfur, never touch your eyes, nose, or mouth before washing your hands first.
- Shower at the end of each day in the field. Use a washcloth to vigorously rub your legs, feet, and ankles.

By following these methods, you should be able to avoid all chigger bites, as well as tick bites. If, however, you are bitten by chiggers anyway, you can reduce or eliminate the symptoms by applying benzocaine or hydrocortisone creams, calamine lotion, After Bite, or any number of anti-itch products.

***We strongly recommend the use of Insect Shield® clothing.** Insect Shield is a process by which clothing is treated with an EPA-approved formula of the insect repellent permethrin. Such clothing is highly repellent to insects and provides durable and long-lasting protection, even after dozens of washings. Outdoor wear with Insect Shield protection includes name brands such as Tilley and can be purchased at outdoor recreation stores such as REI and from a variety of online retailers. In lieu of Insect Shield clothing, you should consider treating your clothes with permethrin, which has the same effect, and that can be purchased at outdoor recreation stores and from a variety of online retailers.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). You can check the CDC website at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html> (click on Travel Health).

SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION

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

FIELD GUIDES:

Fagan, Jessie and Oliver Komar. *Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Northern Central America*. Houghton Mifflin, 2016. A convenient pocket-sized book covering all birds found in Belize.

Hilty, Steven. *Birds of Tropical America*. Shelburne, VT: Chapters Publishing Ltd., 1994. Subtitle: "A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity."

Howell, Steve N.G. and Dale Dyer. *Birds of Belize*. Princeton University Press, 2023. This new pocket-sized book is the most up to date and authoritative guide to the birds of Belize and is the single best option for visiting birders. Highly recommended.

Howell, Steve N.G. and Sophie Webb. *A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. Large format and not convenient to carry in the field, but generally a very helpful reference for difficult identifications such as soaring raptors or perched nightjars.

H. Lee Jones. *Birds of Belize*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2003. Large format and not convenient to carry in the field, but a complete and authoritative book on birds of Belize.

H. Lee Jones and A. C. Valley. *Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Belize*. Barcelona, Spain: Lynx Edicions, 2000. The most detailed status and distribution information on Belize. Unfortunately, this publication is not widely available, but it is sometimes for sale at Crooked Tree.

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Guide to Birds, Second Edition*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014. Arguably the best North American field guide; useful for wintering migrants in Belize.

Valley, Andrew C. and Dale Dyer. *Birds of Central America: Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama*. Princeton University Press, 2018. The most comprehensive and well-illustrated book for Central America, but rather large. A good option for birders visiting multiple countries in Central America.

SUGGESTED RECORDINGS: These will be helpful in learning the vocalizations of some of the region's birds.

A Bird Walk at Chan Chich by John V. Moore. San Jose, California: Astral Sounds Recording, 1992.
Proceeds aid the local library in Gallon Jug, Belize.

Birds of Mexico MP3 Sound Collection, by Peter Boesman. Distributed by Birdsounds.nl

Bird Songs of Belize, Guatemala and Mexico by Dale Delaney. Library of Natural Sounds, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 1992.

CLO Apps

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

Merlin Bird ID. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Merlin is an app designed as a birding coach for beginning and intermediate birdwatchers. Excellent for use in the field, Merlin asks the observer a series of questions about his or her bird sighting, including date and location, and color, size, and behavior of a bird. Merlin then processes the viewer's responses to present a shortlist of possible identifications, from which the user can choose the likely bird. Species profiles include

a brief physical description, photographs, and sound samples. The Photo ID feature allows anyone with a camera to snap a photo and obtain a list of suggestions. Merlin's Sound ID feature allows identification of birds through audible recognition. To use Merlin, download the app and the appropriate regional "pack." For this trip, please download the pack Europe. Highly recommended.

TERMS, CONDITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

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

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

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on June 18, 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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