



ALASKAN FALL MAGIC

Whiskered Auklets of Adak & Ross's Gull Migration

October 2 - 12, 2026



Ross's Gull © Declan Troy

Far out in Alaska's remote Aleutian chain, Adak Island offers a birding experience unlike any other—where the possibility of exceptionally rare birds, dramatic landscapes, and relative comfort converge in one of the ABA area's most compelling birding destinations. Historically overshadowed by famous outposts like St. Paul Island and Gambell, Adak has re-emerged in recent years as a must-visit location for adventurous birders looking for a level of comfort rarely found in such remote regions. The island's varied habitats—coastal wetlands, mudflats, beaches, willow stands, rugged tundra, and rich offshore waters—attract a diverse mix of regular migrants, vagrants, and seabirds, as well as a few hardy residents. Just offshore, rugged rocky islands host nesting colonies of the elusive Whiskered Auklet, the ABA's least-encountered alcid.

While the auklets are unlikely to still be on nesting rocks in October we hope to track them down by boat as they feed in the rich waters around the island, of course there remains the possibility of Short-tailed Albatross, among the more expected pelagic species of the north Pacific. In early October, Adak Island offers an exciting mix of lingering migrants, early-arriving wintering species, and the potential for Asian vagrants brought in by fall storms. Common songbirds include Snow Bunting, Lapland Longspur, Pacific Wren, and Gray-crowned Rosy-finch, while waterbirds such as flocks of Emperor Geese and Eurasian Wigeon graze the shorelines of Clam Lagoon. Occasionally Smew and Tufted Ducks call the island their winter home, as do one of the most majestic of all waterfowl, the Whooper Swan. Recent fall tours have produced astonishing rarities, including a long list of Asiatic shorebirds, Common Pochard, Eurasian Bullfinch, Rustic Bunting, Song Thrush, the ABA's 5th Naumann's Thrush, along with remarkable overwintering records of Hen Harrier and Eurasian Sparrowhawk during the 2024–2025 season.

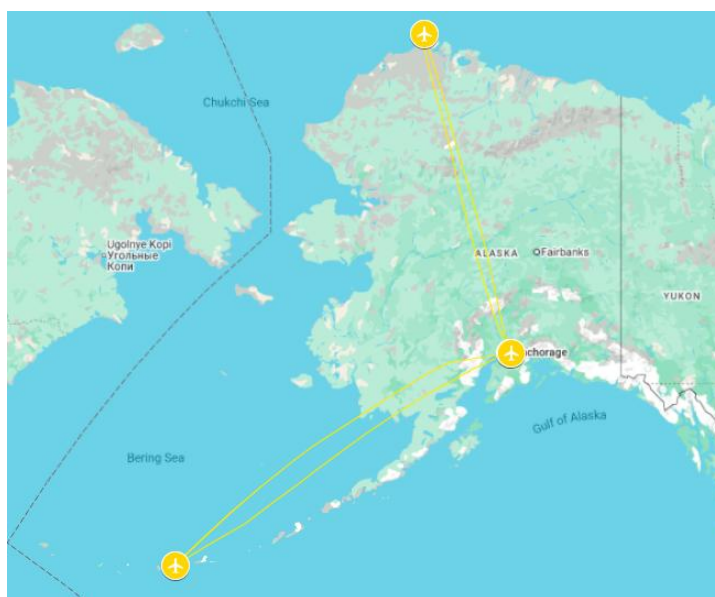
Meanwhile, on the northernmost reaches of the Alaska mainland, few bird species are more sought-after or more iconic of arctic realms than the lovely and enigmatic Ross's Gull. Yet, because these dainty gulls spend virtually the entire year at far northern latitudes, and in mostly remote and inaccessible locations, they remain mostly out-of-reach to birders, who are left hoping to intercept the occasional spring migrants to Alaska's western or northern outposts, or, the even rarer winter vagrant to the 'Lower 48'. However, for some decades now, it has become known that the bulk of the global population of Ross's Gulls migrates past Point Barrow during a narrow three-week window each fall, as they move eastward from the Bering and Chukchi seas into the Beaufort Sea. By positioning ourselves along the coastline at Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow) during this window, we stand an excellent chance of encountering at least a few Ross's Gulls, and if weather conditions are favorable for peak movements, we could be treated to a spectacle of up to 1,000 or more per day!

Although Ross's Gulls will remain our primary focus during our time in Utqiagvik, there will be other special birds to look for, even at this late season. Among the possibilities are Spectacled Eider (amid

the much more common King and Common eiders), Yellow-billed and Pacific loons, Short-tailed Shearwater, Red Phalarope, Black Guillemot, Ivory Gull, Iceland (Thayer's) Gull, Snowy Owl, and Redpoll (formerly Common and Hoary). We will also remain alert to the possibility of some pretty special mammals, including Polar Bear, Arctic Fox, Walrus and Bearded Seal.

At Adak, we stay in comfortable, well-maintained duplexes that once housed naval officers and their families. Our meals will be prepared for us by a local caterer while we travel the island in search of birds by four-wheel drive, four-door pick-ups/SUVs. Much of the birding is from, or near the roads, including some lengthy sea watches. We usually make short daily walks out onto mudflats, beaches, and through wetlands — these jaunts are optional, and we'll communicate by two-way radios for anyone that wants to wait on the sidelines in case something unexpected is found. We have at least one boat trip planned during our time on Adak, though the exact day of the boat trip will be chosen based on weather reports on the week-of. Alaska Airlines serves Adak Island with reliable, regular flights from Anchorage twice a week.

Utqiagvik can be considered a much more typical logistical experience with comfortable hotel style rooms, hot meals at restaurants, and travel by 15 passenger vans. Walking is limited to areas close to the van, and should be considered easy throughout. On at least one day we will travel by four-wheel drive SUV to Point Barrow for our best shot at encountering Polar Bear, and for some very nice sea watching opportunities.



October 2, Day 1: Arrival into Anchorage

Participants will arrive in Anchorage today and take the complementary shuttle to our hotel, where a room will be reserved in each person's name. We'll meet in the hotel lobby at 6:30 p.m. for dinner during which we'll get acquainted with each other, and discuss the tour ahead, including group behavior, and the departure plans for Adak tomorrow.

NIGHT: Coast Inn at Lake Hood, Anchorage

October 3, Day 2: Flight to Adak and a bit of birding

Flights to Adak are pretty straightforward as far as getting to remote Alaska outposts is concerned, with a long, large runway, once used by US military planes. We will arrive on a large Alaska Airlines jet outfitted with all of the top of the line aviation equipment so the likelihood of our trip taking off and landing is very likely, regardless of weather or visibility. Once on the island we will be met by the locals from Aleutian Outfitters who will set us up with our rental vehicles (generally two large SUVs) and show us to our accommodations. These are the same folks that will cater our meals while on the island. After arrival logistics are complete we'll head out to get the lay of the land, do a bit of birding, and stretch our legs.

NIGHT: Private homes on Adak

October 4-6, Days 3-5: Birding Adak by land and sea

Our exact itinerary on these days will remain flexible, allowing us to take advantage of birding and weather conditions on the ground. Some days it may make more sense to start with a seawatch, while others we'll check crab pots and vagrant traps around town for any storm-blown or misoriented migrants. This will be a great time period to search through duck flocks, and late shorebirds, so we'll likely check Clam Lagoon daily, for some easy scoping. Seawatch this time of year is variable but we can probably expect Short-tailed Shearwater, Northern Fulmar, Laysan and Black-footed albatrosses, and perhaps something less common. Adak seawatch has historically been a reliable site to spot pods

of Orcas from shore. Birding on the island will have its high points and low points, with high points usually being the birds and the low points being inclement weather, which can vary from sunny, to rainy, to sleeting, and perhaps even a light snow this time of year. Changing weather is important for finding vagrant birds, and we'll spend some time discussing the weather, and how it is known to impact bird movements. The rare birds are always exciting, though never a given, and we'll spend lots of time enjoying the unique avifauna of Adak, which includes a gargantuan Gray-crowned Rosy-finch, a sedentary Pacific Wren population that weaves its rapid, bubbling song through the island's low vegetation, and a genetically distinct population of Rock Ptarmigan, which is larger and blonder than mainland populations. One of the days we'll venture out by boat (weather permitting) to try and track down Whiskered Auklet. The boat is small but mighty and it will provide us the best opportunity for finding auklets and other seabirds, especially during the post-breeding season. Between bird sightings we'll enjoy views of steep volcanic cliffs rising from the sea. We may also find marine mammals including Harbor Seal, N. Pacific Sea Otter, Steller's Sea Lion, as well as a long list of whales. It's sure to be an exciting opportunity to search for one of North America's most elusive breeding birds.

NIGHTS: Private homes on Adak

October 7, Day 6: Return to Anchorage and a good night's rest

This morning will mostly be devoted to departure logistics, but we may have the opportunity to do a bit of birding around our neighborhood before departure, with the possibility of birding further afield being dependent on flight departure times. Once we arrive in Anchorage we'll use the complimentary shuttle to our hotel where we'll have dinner and go over logistics for tomorrow's flight to Utqiagvik, as well as answer questions about the days ahead.

NIGHTS: Coast Inn at Lake Hood, Anchorage

October 8, Day 7: Anchorage to Utqiagvik (Barrow)

An early flight (subject to change) will take us from Anchorage north to Utqiagvik (formerly known as “Barrow,” but changed to the Inupiat name following a vote in 2016). At 71°20’N latitude, and some 300 miles above the Arctic Circle, Utqiagvik (pronounced oot-kay-ahhg-vik) is the northernmost community in Alaska, and, by extension, in the United States. The town is situated on the western shore of a peninsula that marks the boundary between the Chukchi Sea to the west, and the Beaufort Sea to the east. Just inland, the surrounding tundra is a low-lying, crazy quilt expanse of ice polygon formations (most impressively viewed from the air) formed by continual freezing and thawing cycles of innumerable lakes and ephemeral melt water ponds. During our annual June visits, the landscape is distinctly watery, and alive with nesting shorebirds and waterfowl, and the sun, notoriously, never sets. But, in October, we will arrive to an icier, whiter tundra landscape, one largely devoid of birds, and with a decidedly narrower window of daylight hours (essentially 9 hours, from ca. 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.) in which to bird.

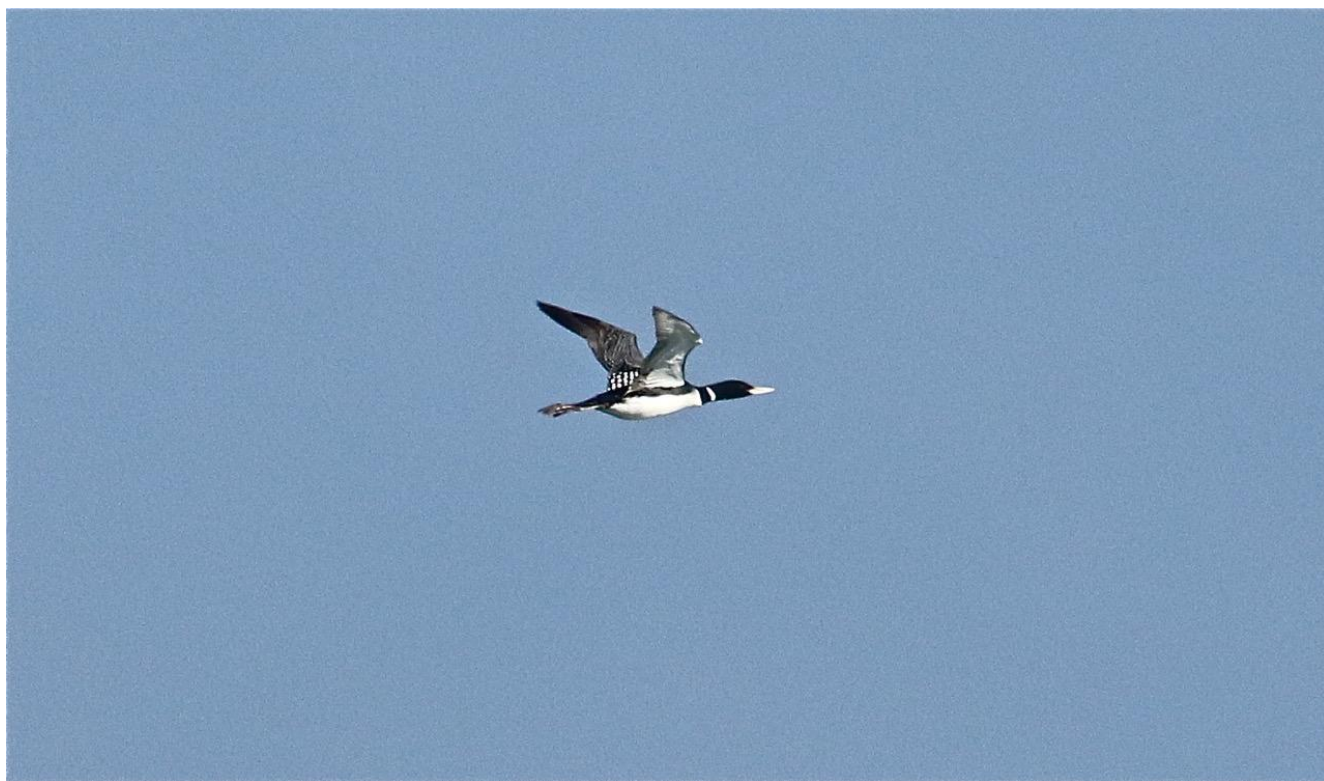
Upon arrival in Utqiagvik, we’ll collect our bags and our rental vehicle, and head to the hotel to get checked in and (depending on flight schedules) have lunch before heading out into the field. So there will be opportunity to ‘gear-up’ and change into all of our cold weather clothing before braving the elements. At this time of year, the main birding action is along the immediate coast, so our first excursion will undoubtedly be devoted to beginning our search for migrating Ross’s Gulls.

NIGHT: Top of the World Hotel, Utqiagvik (Barrow)

October 9-10, Days 8-9: Utqiagvik (Barrow)

Our days here will begin with a hot breakfast at our hotel, after which, we’ll bundle up and head out into the field. Our focus each day will be on searching for Ross’s Gulls as they move eastward from the Bering and Chukchi seas into the Beaufort Sea, a movement undertaken by the majority of the global population of these dainty, pink gulls each year between late September and mid-October. In most years, there is at least a trickle of migrating Ross’s Gulls past Point Barrow throughout this three-week window, but the big movements typically coincide with periods of strong, onshore winds, which push the migrating gulls closer to shore, and can cause thousands of these rosy gems to ‘stack-up’ along the coastline, where they often linger to feed before continuing east into the Beaufort Sea. Accordingly,

the occurrence of this spectacular phenomenon is somewhat weather dependent, and its precise timing within the September-October window variable from year-to-year, and impossible to predict, so there are no guarantees of success. However, with vigilance, and two full days plus portions of two other days to work with, our chances of seeing at least small numbers of these rare and iconic Arctic gulls should be excellent. Most of our time will be spent sea watching along the immediate coastline, particularly near the base of the Point, where migrant flocks of King and Common eiders, Long-tailed Ducks, and other waterfowl and loons often cut across the tip of the peninsula in crossing between the Chukchi Sea to the west, and the massive Elson Lagoon and the Beaufort Sea to the east and north. Be prepared for standing vigil in the cold for periods of time, but with the van/bus nearby for opportunities to escape the elements as needed.



Yellow-billed Loon © Kevin J. Zimmer

Although Ross's Gulls will remain our focus, we'll be alert to the presence of other species as well. The total species list of birds for our time in Barrow will be short, and unlikely to exceed 20–25, but the emphasis will be on quality rather than quantity. We should have decent chances at finding at least a few Spectacled Eiders among the much more numerous Kings and Commons, and our chances for

Yellow-billed Loon are excellent. Any spots where Glaucous Gulls congregate will be of special interest, since we may be able to pick up the odd Slaty-backed Gull or Iceland (Thayer's) Gull out of the masses. Our stay will fall on the early side of average fall arrival dates for Ivory Gull, but we will remain alert to their possible presence, particularly if there are remnants of recent seal or whale carcasses (a major attractant to both Ivory Gulls and Polar Bears!) anywhere along the beach. Cruising the limited open road system by vehicle will provide us with chances for seeing Snowy Owl and Arctic Fox, as well as providing a respite from frigid sea watches. Passerines are scarce this late in the year,



Snowy Owl (male), Utqiagvik (Barrow), Alaska © Kevin J. Zimmer

with possibilities mostly limited to the ubiquitous Common Ravens, and any lingering Snow Buntings and Hoary and Common redpolls (most likely visiting any feeding stations around town).

The opportunities for seeing most of the 'glamour' mammals in the area are decidedly ice-dependent, but regardless of current conditions, we will be alert to the possibility of seeing Polar Bear, Walrus, and Bearded Seal, along with the more commonly seen Ringed and Spotted seals. Polar Bears

routinely patrol the very tip of Point Barrow, where local whaling crews haul the remains of their Bowhead Whale carcasses. The bears scavenge from the carcasses, which are deliberately placed at The Point, well removed from town, in an effort to reduce any potential bear-human conflicts. Visiting The Point to look for Polar Bears and aggregations of migrant birds (including Ross's Gulls) is possible only with 4WD vehicles. We have arranged such excursions with local operators in the past, but this has not been an option in recent years. Nonetheless, we'll check on the potential for such an optional excursion (not included in the tour fee) upon our arrival in Utqiagvik.

NIGHTS: Top of the World Hotel, Utqiagvik (Barrow)

October 11, Day 10 : Morning in Utqiagvik (Barrow); Return to Anchorage

Depending on flight schedules, we should have at least a few hours of daylight after breakfast this morning for a last check of the coast for migrating gulls, waterfowl and seabirds, as well as a final shot at finding a Polar Bear, Walrus or Bearded Seal on the ice. We'll then check out of the hotel and head to the airport for our afternoon flight (subject to change) back to Anchorage, where the tour will conclude with a final checklist session and farewell dinner.



Snowy Owl (female), Barrow, Alaska © Kevin J. Zimmer

NIGHT: Coast Inn at Lake Hood, Anchorage

October 12, Day 11: Departures for Home

Participants can use the hotel's complimentary shuttle service to catch flights out of Anchorage today.

Essential Tour Information

TOUR SIZE: This tour is limited to 7 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): This tour is led by Raymond VanBuskirk with the assistance of local guides.



Raymond L. VanBuskirk is an expert birder who has been guiding tours for over a decade. Raymond has led tours throughout the Western Hemisphere from Alaska to Chile and most parts in between. He has guided in almost every country in Central America, across the Caribbean, and down both sides of the Andes in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Chile. Raymond's experience is not limited to the New World—he has traveled widely across the globe, has spent a great deal of time in the Pacific studying pelagics, and has led tours in Asia and Africa.

Raymond has had a longtime commitment to ornithology. In addition to guiding, he has conducted research with USFWS in the Arctic Ocean, North Pacific, and New Mexico. He has held leadership roles in the Central New Mexico Bird Alliance and Western Field Ornithologists. Raymond also helped guide the next generation of birders by being a regular instructor at the ABA's youth birding camps and at the Hog Island Audubon camps in Hog Island, Maine.

Raymond is also committed to including everyone in birding, and organizes and leads annual conferences for QBNA, an informal club for LGBTQIA+ birders. When not leading tours or conducting research, Raymond can be found at his home in St. Louis, Missouri with his partner, Marissa; stepdaughter Savannah; and their dog and two large snakes.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: **\$10,695** per person based on double occupancy or **\$12,325** for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 through dinner on Day 10, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, all ground transportation during the tour, and guide

services provided by the tour leader. It does **not** include airfare to nor from Anchorage; 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 (June 4, 2026) prior to the tour departure date.

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

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.

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

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

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

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

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

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS

CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT:

- **More than 120 days prior to the tour start date:** A refund of all monies paid will be issued, less 50% of the deposit (including initial and second deposit)
- **120 days or fewer prior to the tour start date:** No refund will be provided.
- **Optional add-ons:** Some tours offer optional add-ons that are designated as non-refundable. Any such add-ons are clearly identified as non-refundable at the time of booking. By selecting

and purchasing an optional add-on, the participant acknowledges and accepts its non-refundable status. Fees paid for non-refundable add-ons are not refundable under any circumstances, regardless of when the tour is cancelled.

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

CANCELLATION BY VENT:

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

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

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

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

TRAVEL INSURANCE

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

About Redpoint Travel's Ripcord Plan

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

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

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip

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

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

About Medjet’s MedjetAssist Plan

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

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

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

GETTING THERE & REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

AIR TRAVEL: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic

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

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

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

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

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTHING: General clothing information – optional

- **Name of Item:** Additional description as needed.
- **Second Item:** Description.

FOOTWEAR:

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

- **Name of Item:** Additional description as needed.
- **Second Item:** Description.

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

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

DESTINATION INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS

WEATHER: Average temperatures in October are cold, usually in the 20s to low 30s F, but occasionally dipping into the high teens. Strong winds can result in wind-chill conditions that are much colder than air temperatures alone would suggest. Temperatures in the Anchorage area will be considerably milder, but likely with higher humidity, and will still be cool.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS & TOUR PACE: Most birding will be in-and-out of the vehicles, requiring little walking. While in Anchorage, we may do a short walk of one to two miles around a local park, but Adak and Utqiagvik will involve almost no walking. We will spend most of our birding time standing outside the vehicle but always with the van/bus nearby to get out of the elements as needed. In Utqiagvik, other birding will be along the limited road system, from the vehicle. We'll return to the hotel for lunch, and for periodic bathroom stops, as needed, but expect for the remainder of our limited daylight hours (ca. 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.) to be spent in the field.

CLOTHING: The weather in Alaska in October is notoriously unpredictable in all seasons, but at Adak and Utqiagvik in October, can be expected to be quite cold. The "layered" technique is your best defense against the variable weather. We suggest you combine a thermal undershirt, shirt, sweater, and coat or jacket. Medium-weight wool or synthetic equivalent for shirts, slacks, and sweaters is

ideal. Cold-weather gear is essential and should include a warm coat or down jacket, warm hat, gloves, thermal underwear (both tops and bottoms), wool or synthetic equivalent socks, and warm shirts. A rain jacket or poncho is also essential for times when the weather turns misty. The layered technique will also serve well for dealing with milder, but still cool and highly variable conditions out of Anchorage.

FOOTWEAR: Insulated waterproof boots or N.E.O.S. Overshoes should be considered essential.

Birding around Anchorage is an entirely different matter, where comfortable hiking boots or shoes are more appropriate.

ALCOHOL: Utqiagvik, like many other ‘bush communities’ in Alaska, currently bans alcohol, meaning you cannot purchase alcohol locally, or bring it with you from the outside.

OTHER ITEMS: We recommend you bring an alarm clock, sunglasses and sunscreen. The leader will have a spotting scope and some reference books, but you may wish to bring your own. Having your own spotting scope is particularly useful when we spend time sea watching from shore. Most of the birds seen in any given sea watch are seen only in flight, making it difficult to share the “group” scope to any meaningful extent. You should also bring your own spotting scope if you are planning on doing any digiscope photography, both to avoid monopolizing the group scope, and to avoid any chance of scratching the eyepiece of the group scope due to a mismatch in diameter of your camera lens versus the scope eyepiece. A good North American field guide to the birds is the one reference that each participant should plan on carrying for their own personal use.

LAUNDRY: Coast Inn at Lake Hood in Anchorage has both self-service and send-out laundry service; Top of the World Hotel in Utqiagvik offers full-service laundry.

HEALTH & SAFETY

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

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

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

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

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

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

- **DEET:** (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide): A chemical compound that is marketed under various brand names (OFF!®, Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered in a variety of formulations including sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The formulations will state a percentage of the active ingredient DEET on the packaging. DEET may be applied to exposed skin directly and/or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.

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

Insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

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

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

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

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

SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION

A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com

which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

Field Guides—Birds:

Armstrong, Robert H. Guide to the Birds of Alaska. 4th edition. Bothwell, WA: Alaska Northwest Books, 1995.

Dunn, Jon L. and Jonathan Alderfer. National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America. Seventh edition. Washington, D. C.: National Geographic Society, 2017. The recommended field guide.

Reference—Birds:

Gabrielson, I. N. & F. E. Lincoln. The Birds of Alaska. Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole, 1959. Outdated now, but has a lot of information on the life histories of Alaskan birds. Try www.abebooks.com.

Grant, Peter J. Gulls: A Guide to Identification. Academic Press, 1997.

Kessel, Brina. Birds of the Seward Peninsula, Alaska: Their Biogeography, Seasonality and Natural History. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1996.

Kessel, Brina & Daniel D. Gibson. Status and Distribution of Alaska Birds. Studies in Avian Biology No. 1, 1978. Try www.abebooks.com.

Zimmer, K. J. Birding in the American West: A Handbook. Cornell University Press, 2000.

General Background Reading:

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

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

McGinniss, Joe. *Going to Extremes*. Plume, 1989 (reissue edition). Raw non-fiction about the people and places of America's last frontier.

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

Audubon (May 1988). The entire issue is devoted to Alaska. Especially worthwhile is "Exploring Literature of the Far North," a great bibliography of interesting books on the region.

National Geographic (October 1982). "A New Day for Alaska's Pribilofs."

Alaska Guidebooks:

Rennick, Penny (ed.) *Mammals of Alaska*. Alaska Geographic Guides. Alaska Geographic Society, 1996.

A variety of books on Alaska are available through the Alaska Geographic Society: (907) 274-0521.

Alaska Geographic Online is found at www.akgeo.com. Some of these resources include: Alaskan Native Peoples, Mammals of Alaska, and National Parks and Monuments of Alaska.

CLO Apps

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

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

anyone with a camera to snap a photo and obtain a list of suggestions. Merlin's Sound ID feature allows identification of birds through audible recognition. To use Merlin, download the app and the appropriate regional "pack." 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 2, 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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