



# SPRING GRAND ARIZONA

*May 13-23, 2027*



Southeast Arizona is, without a doubt, one of the richest and most exciting birding areas in the United States. It has a greater variety of nesting land birds than any other comparable area in the country, many of them Mexican species that only here spill over into the United States. Rising out of the desert floor are a series of spectacular mountain-ranges—the northern extension of the Sierra Madre—which harbor many of these Arizona specialties. Zone-tailed Hawk, Montezuma Quail, Whiskered Screech-Owl, Spotted Owl, Rivoli's Hummingbird, Blue-throated Mountain-gem, Coppery-tailed Trogon, Arizona Woodpecker, Sulphur-bellied and Dusky-capped flycatchers, Virginia's and Black-throated Gray warblers, and Painted Redstarts inhabit the oak/sycamore woodlands of lower canyons. Farther up, amid the firs and pines, Buff-breasted Flycatcher; Mexican Chickadee; Red-faced, Grace's, and Olive warblers; and Yellow-eyed Juncos can be found. Riparian habitat in the vicinity of Patagonia and Nogales is home to such exotics as Gray Hawk, Violet-crowned and Broad-billed hummingbirds, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Vermilion and Brown-crested flycatchers, Thick-billed Kingbird, Lucy's Warbler, and Abert's Towhee. Finally, the beautiful Sonoran Desert

hosts the tiny Elf Owl, Gila Woodpecker, Gilded Flicker, Bendire's Thrasher, and Rufous-winged Sparrow, to name but a few. In all, up to nine species of owls and eleven species of hummingbirds are possible on this trip!

In addition to its rich variety of regularly occurring species, southeast Arizona is one of the best areas to add an "accidental" to your U.S. list. One of these Mexican visitors—the Five-striped Sparrow—has become regular (albeit with tiny populations) over the past 20 years. Two more---the Black-capped Gnatcatcher and the Rufous-capped Warbler---are nearly annual in occurrence and even nest in some years. Others, such as Eared Quetzal, Plain-capped Starthroat, Berylline Hummingbird, Tufted and Nutting's flycatchers, Rufous-backed Robin, Aztec Thrush, Crescent-chested and Fan-tailed warblers, and Flame-colored Tanagers remain true vagrants. While none of these are at all likely on any given tour, the mere chance that one may show up in a particular year only adds to the excitement.



*Chiricahua Mountains, Arizona © Barry Zimmer*

## May 13, Day 1: Arrival in Tucson

Participants may plan to arrive in Tucson (airport code TUS) today and transfer to our hotel where a room will be reserved in your name. We will meet in the hotel lobby at **2:30 p.m.** for a get-acquainted session followed by some afternoon birding. Our destination will be flexible based on recent sightings, but will likely include Sweetwater Wetlands in northwest Tucson. A variety of species are possible here including Mexican Duck, Gambel's Quail, Gila Woodpecker, Verdin, Lucy's Warbler and Abert's Towhee. The very localized Tropical Kingbird nests here in some years as well, and will definitely be targeted if any are present. If any Burrowing Owls are currently being seen nearby, we will likely seek those out as well. We will return to the hotel for a brief rest, before meeting again at 6:30 p.m. to head out to dinner.

**NIGHT:** Hampton Inn, Tucson

## May 14, Day 2: Green Valley and Madera Canyon

We will likely start out in residential Green Valley, where yards filled with native vegetation harbor a good variety of desert species. Our primary target will be the localized Rufous-winged Sparrow, but other possibilities include Costa's Hummingbird, Harris's Hawk (uncommon), Gilded Flicker (scarce & seriously declining), Gila Woodpecker, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Verdin, Black-throated Sparrow, Pyrrhuloxia, and Lucy's Warbler among others. The remainder of the morning will be devoted to birding several different life zones in Madera Canyon. An early morning search of the mesquite grasslands below the canyon could produce Black-throated and Botteri's (very uncommon in spring) sparrows. Nearby, the oaks and sycamores of the Proctor Road area may harbor Golden Eagle, Cassin's Kingbird, Bewick's and Canyon wrens, Bell's Vireo, and Lucy's Warbler. If Varied Buntings have returned from their wintering grounds (typically not until mid-May or later), this is an excellent place to locate one.

Late morning will be spent in the upper portion of the canyon (including a visit to the feeders at Santa Rita Lodge). Possibilities include Arizona and Acorn woodpeckers, Broad-billed and Rivoli's hummingbirds, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Bridled Titmouse, Mexican Jay, Hutton's Vireo, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Painted Redstart, and Black-headed Grosbeak.

After lunch, we will try to take a mid-afternoon break to recharge for the evening activities. Late in the afternoon we will head back to Madera Canyon for a picnic dinner and our first owling excursion. Elf Owl, Western and Whiskered screech-owls, Common Poorwill, and Lesser Nighthawk will all be sought.

**NIGHT:** Hampton Inn, Tucson



*Whiskered Screech-Owl © Barry Zimmer*

## May 15, Day 3: Madera Canyon to Nogales

This morning we will revisit Madera Canyon. Our primary target will be the iconic Coppery-tailed Trogon, assuming any have been reported there recently. We will devote some time to searching for this Arizona specialty. Additionally, we will likely head to nearby Box Canyon. A pair of the extremely localized Five-striped Sparrow has been sighted here on and off in recent years. If any are currently

present, we will make a special effort to locate them. Other birds we may encounter in this area include Golden Eagle, White-throated Swift, Canyon and Rock wrens and Scott's Oriole.

After lunch, we may bird the De Anza trail in Tubac. Some years, a pair of highly-sought Rose-throated Becards have inhabited this area (none were present in 2024, 2025 or 2026), though they are not to be counted on. At any rate, birding the riparian habitat along the Santa Cruz River could yield Gray Hawk, Vermilion Flycatcher, Tropical Kingbird, Yellow-breasted Chat and Abert's Towhee. By mid to late afternoon, we will continue south toward Nogales.

**NIGHT:** Best Western Sonora Inn & Suites, Nogales

## May 16, Day 4: California Gulch and Patagonia

California Gulch is currently the most reliable location in Arizona for the Five-striped Sparrow. We will leave very early this morning (**about 5:30 a.m.**) to travel there in search of this rare bird. It's a lovely, winding drive (though bumpy and dusty as well) through oak woodland, and there's a chance we may see Montezuma Quail along the roadside. We'll pass the ghost town of Ruby on the way. Although the big silver strikes have mostly played out, many small claims are still being worked in this region. Other birds we may see this morning include Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet and Varied Bunting (a very late arriving species). In 2007 the road conditions to reach California Gulch were so poor as to be nearly impassable. It is conceivable that future tours may not be able to get to this location. The past several years however, the road has been in an improved condition. The late afternoon will likely find us watching hummingbirds at the Paton's Hummingbird Center in Patagonia, where Violet-crowned, Broad-billed, Anna's, and Black-chinned are all likely.

**NIGHT:** Best Western Sonora Inn & Suites, Nogales

## May 17, Day 5: Patagonia Lake State Park and Sonoita Creek Sanctuary; Patagonia to Sierra Vista

We will be up early for a full day's exploration of the Sonoita Creek area. This is one of the most famous birding spots in the country and a great variety of species may occur here. Our prime targets

will be the regal Gray Hawk and the localized Thick-billed Kingbird. Our search for these specialties will often be interrupted by the likes of other avian gems such as Costa's Hummingbird, Vermilion Flycatcher, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Phainopepla, Lucy's Warbler, and Yellow-breasted Chat. Zone-tailed Hawks are occasionally seen overhead here as well. Other likely species today include White-throated Swift, up to 14 species of flycatchers (including Ash-throated, Brown-crested, and Dusky-capped), Canyon and Rock wrens, and Summer Tanager.

After lunch we will head east toward Sierra Vista, watching for Pronghorns en route. Horned Lark, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Chihuahuan Meadowlark (just split by the AOS) are all possible in the grasslands along the way. In the afternoon, we'll visit feeders in the Huachuca Mountains, either Ash or Miller Canyon, where we can relax and let the hummingbirds come to us. Broad-tailed, Rivoli's, and Black-chinned appear most regularly; Broad-billed and Anna's are usually present; and sometimes also a Lucifer, Violet-crowned Hummingbird or White-eared (occasional).



*Five-striped Sparrow © Barry Zimmer*

**NIGHT:** Hampton Inn, Sierra Vista

## May 18, Day 6: Huachuca Mountains

The entire day will be spent exploring the famed Huachuca Mountains, including a visit to Carr Canyon. Amidst the oak-covered slopes, rocky canyons, and open groves of pines, we will make a special effort to find Arizona Woodpecker, Greater Pewee, and Buff-breasted Flycatcher—the Huachucas are presently the best place in the United States to find this species. Hepatic Tanager and Grace's, Olive, Red-faced, Virginia's (uncommon), and Black-throated Gray warblers should be in full song throughout the canyons. Other possibilities include Band-tailed Pigeon, White-throated Swift, Hutton's and Plumbeous vireos, Steller's Jay, and Spotted Towhee. Some years Northern Pygmy-Owls

are present in the canyon as well. An evening owling expedition into the lower canyons here will hopefully tally Whiskered Screech-Owl and Common Poorwill.

**NIGHT:** Hampton Inn, Sierra Vista

## May 19, Day 7: To the Chiricahua Mountains

In the cool morning hours today, we will revisit the Huachuca Mountains, most likely to upper Miller Canyon, where possibilities include Spotted Owl, Red-faced Warbler and just arriving Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, among others. Hunter Canyon is also an option, where the localized Black-chinned Sparrow will be possible or even the very rare Rufous-capped Warbler. Then, reluctantly, we will leave the Huachucas behind and head east to the Chiricahuas—mountain fortress of the Apaches; hideout for outlaws in the Old West; and today a national forest and Arizona's top birding area. Along the way, we may see Chihuahuan Raven, Horned Lark or Pronghorns. We will start owling tonight after dinner, looking especially for the tiny and elusive Flammulated Owl (a species that has become very hard to find since the fires over a decade ago).

**NIGHT:** Cave Creek Ranch, Portal

## May 20, Day 8: Cave Creek Canyon

The Chiricahua Mountains are a magnificent range of mountains rising out of the desert to almost 10,000 feet. These Arizona Mountains as described by Roger Tory Peterson in *Wild America*:

*"There they were, in the crystal morning light, rising like a massive blue island from the sea of the desert. And an island it was, in truth, part of an archipelago composed of a dozen similar ranges. They are as much a true archipelago as the Azores or Hawaii, but no surf washes their talused bases; instead the desert, dry and shimmering, besieges their foothills and sweeps across the flats to the next range, twenty, thirty, or forty miles away."*

Many birders consider the Chiricahuas the best birding area in Arizona and one of the best in the United States. Besides all the birds, this is a great place to study the concept of life zones, biological

communities of plants and animals ranging from the Lower Sonoran Desert at the base of the mountains to the Hudsonian Zone at the summit. We will visit each of the major life zones in these mountains.

Today will be spent in the woodlands of Cave Creek Canyon and the lower slopes of the mountains. In this botanically unique area, plants of the Canadian forests meet those of the desert foothills to make for a fascinating mixture of habitats. Birds are abundant, including many species found in few other places in the United States. We expect to find Coppery-tailed Trogon, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Whiskered Screech-Owl, Blue-throated Mountain-gem, Painted Redstart, Grace's Warbler, Hutton's Vireo, Hepatic Tanager, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, and many others.

In the juniper and oak slopes of the lower foothills, we will seek out Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Juniper Titmouse, and the localized and declining Black-chinned Sparrow. Mammals that we may see include White-tailed and Mule deer, Coyote Collared Peccary (Javelina), Mexican (Apache) Fox Squirrel and, with luck, a White-nosed Coati.

**NIGHT:** Cave Creek Ranch, Portal

## May 21, Day 9: Chiricahuas

Today we will visit the higher parts of the Chiricahuas, birding the ponderosa pines and oaks of the Transition Zone and the spruce and firs of the Canadian and Hudsonian zones. These high forests harbor an assortment of species typical of both the Rocky Mountain chain further north and the Sierra Madre of Mexico to the south. These include Band-tailed Pigeon; Acorn and Hairy woodpeckers; Broad-tailed Hummingbird; Western Flycatcher; Steller's Jay; Mexican Chickadee (found nowhere else in the U.S.); Pygmy Nuthatch; Western Bluebird (very localized); Hermit Thrush; Red-faced, Olive, and Virginia's warblers; Red Crossbill (sporadic); and Yellow-eyed Junco. In the evening we will take a final owling expedition. Eight species of owls are possible in different habitats of the area: Western Screech, Whiskered Screech, Elf, Flammulated, Great Horned, Barn, Northern Pygmy, and Spotted. Mexican Whip-poor-wills and Common Poorwills are also present, and chances are we will see some interesting mammals with our headlights.

**NIGHT:** Cave Creek Ranch, Portal

## May 22, Day 10: Portal to Tucson



*Red-faced Warbler © Barry Zimmer*

After an early morning trip to the flats below Portal, where Bendire's Thrasher nests and Scaled Quail, Golden Eagle, and Crissal Thrasher sometimes occur, we'll drive back to Tucson. A stop at Willcox might reveal a variety of waterfowl and shorebirds at the local playa/sewage pond. Mexican Duck, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, and

Wilson's Phalarope are all possible. We will take an afternoon break before concluding our tour with a final checklist session and dinner.

**NIGHT:** Hampton Inn, Tucson

## May 23, Day 11: Return Home

Participants may plan to depart for home at any time today.

### **ESSENTIAL TOUR INFORMATION**

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour will be limited to 10 participants.

**TOUR LEADERS:** Barry Zimmer and additional VENT leader



**Barry Zimmer** has been birding since the age of eight. His main areas of expertise lie in North and Central America, but his travels have taken him throughout much of the world, including such exotic locales as Japan, Russia, Madagascar, Africa, and New Zealand. Barry is a longtime member of the New Mexico Bird Records Committee, and served on the Texas Bird Records Committee for 12 years. He has coauthored three books: *Birds of the Trans-Pecos*, *A Birder's Guide to the Rio Grande Valley*, and *Birds and Birdfinding in*

*the El Paso Area.* Barry has a keen interest in nature photography, having captured over 1,600 species of birds on film. His other interests include sports (a diehard Red Sox fan), cooking, and movies. He received his degree in psychology at the University of Texas in El Paso. Barry resides in El Paso with his wife, Yvonne, and their daughter, Alexandra.

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

**TOUR FEE:** \$5,760 per person based on double occupancy or \$6,830 for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 11, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, all ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does **not** include airfare to nor from the starting/ending city; however, flights within the tour (if any) are included. The fee also excludes laundry, personal expenses, and other items of a personal nature. For information about gratuities, please see the “TIPPING” sub-section below.

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

**PAYMENTS:** All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days (January 13, 2027) 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.

**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.

\*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**

**CLIMATE/CLOTHING:** The temperate climate of Arizona's mountains promises warm days and pleasant nights. Daytime highs around Tucson may reach the upper 90s, possibly higher; in the mountains, temperatures will be considerably cooler, with highs generally in the mid-80s. Nighttime lows in some upper elevation areas should be in the upper 50s, but may dip down into the 40s. Lightweight clothing, hat, and sunscreen are recommended for midday, but long-sleeved shirts and sweatshirts are appropriate for mountain evenings. Also, there may be a few opportunities for swimming, so bring along a bathing suit. Comfortable walking shoes or boots are a must; and you should be prepared for showers with a raincoat or poncho. Hiking boots would be appropriate for the steep climbs in California Gulch and Miller Canyon. Informal dress is the rule throughout the tour.

**Please bring dark clothing for owling expeditions:** bright colors (particularly whites, yellows, etc.) may scare away our nocturnal targets.

**EQUIPMENT:** You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good condition, along with a belt pack or day pack (for carrying books, sunscreen, camera, etc.). As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medication 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.

We recommend a water bottle for carrying water into the field. You will also need a flashlight or headlamp. Lip balm is useful in this dry climate to protect against chapped lips. **Every person should bring an alarm clock (or have a cell phone with an alarm) as there is no wake-up service at one of the lodges where we will be staying.**

## **DESTINATION INFORMATION & TOUR CONDITIONS**

**CONDITIONS:** Virtually all of our hikes will be two miles or less. Some will be over relatively flat ground while others (upper Madera Canyon, California Gulch & Miller Canyon) will be in steep canyons. We will have early starts most mornings (sunrise is around 5:20 a.m.) to take advantage of cool morning hours. Breakfast may be as early as 5:00 a.m. some mornings, but will usually be around 6:00 a.m. Several nights (often five nights) of owling will be offered. Elevations on this tour route range from about 2,600 to 8,400 feet.

**INTERNET & PHONE ACCESS:** High speed internet or Wi-Fi is available at each hotel on this tour. Cell phone service and internet are generally available throughout the tour; however, most cell providers do not have service in the Portal area. At Cave Creek Ranch Wi-Fi is available on the office porch. At this time, only Verizon customers have service at this location. **At Portal, cell phones from Verizon may pick up a signal from a cell tower in New Mexico. Since New Mexico is on a different time than Arizona, your phone may display the incorrect time at that location.**

## **HEALTH & SAFETY**

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

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original

containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

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

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

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

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

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

because of the difference in ingredients from one brand to another. There is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

Insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

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

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

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

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

**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 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, sock 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.

### **SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION**

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

### **FIELD GUIDES:**

Dunn, Jon L. *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C., 2017. (7th ed.).

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Guide to Birds* (2nd edition). New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 2014.

**Miscellaneous:**

Brennan, Thomas C. and Holycross, Andres T. *A Field Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles in Arizona*. Arizona Game and Fish Department. 2006.

Brock, Jim P. and Kaufman, Kenn. *Butterflies of North America (Kaufman Focus Guides)*. Houghton Mifflin. 2003.

Epple, Anne Orth. *Plants of Arizona*. Falcon; Second edition. 1997.

Howell, Steve N. G. *Hummingbirds of North America: The Photographic Guide*. Princeton University Press, first edition. January, 2003.

Kaufmann, Kenn. *Finding Birds in Southeast Arizona*. Tucson Audubon Society. 2004.

Kaufmann, Kenn, Rick Bowers and Nora Bowers. *Mammals of North America*. Houghton Mifflin. April, 2004.

Kricher, John C. and Gordon Morrison. *Ecology of Western Forests*. Peterson Field Guide Series No. 45. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993.

Krutch, Joseph Wood. *The Desert Year*. University of Arizona Press, 1985 (reprint).

Peterson, Roger Tory and James Fisher. *Wild America: The Record of a 30,000 Mile Journey*. Mariner Books, 1997. See the chapter “Chiricahuas: Islands in the Sky.”

Taylor, Richard Cachor. *A Birder’s Guide to Southeastern Arizona*. ABA Birdfinding Guide. 2005.

Tweit, Susan J. *Great Southwest Nature Factbook: A Guide to the Region's Remarkable Animals, Plants and Natural Features*. Alaska Northwest Books. 1992.

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

**Recordings:**

*Birding Southeastern Arizona*, videotape by Larry and Terrie Gates, 47 Brewer Road, Purvis, MS 39475. Also available from the Tucson Audubon Society, at \$29.95; telephone: 602/629-0510 ([www.tucsonaudubon.org/](http://www.tucsonaudubon.org/)).

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

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

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

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

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary

that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e., railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

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

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

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on July 31, 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.

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