



FRANCE

Brittany in Fall

October 1 - 9, 2026



The stunning view from the Hotel de la Mer. Photo Rick Wright

They call it Finistère, the ends of the earth, and this westernmost jurisdiction in metropolitan France preserves some of the wildest and most breathtakingly beautiful landscapes in all of Europe. Rocky headlands, ocean bays, and vast sandy beaches are the backdrop to scattered villages where the Breton language and ancient Celtic folkways survive, while scrubby forests, dunes, and heath are home to breeding birds now rare elsewhere in Europe. Nature and culture come together most delightfully in October, when the year's cider is pressed and migrant birds pour in from all directions: over the years, more than 330 species have been recorded here in that month, including hordes of Arctic shorebirds and waterfowl, finches and pipits from Scandinavia and Russia, and hawks and warblers from continental Europe.



Meadow Pipits are the most abundant passerine migrant at this season. Photo Rick Wright

Seabirds, too, occur at this season in respectable numbers, and we will watch from the seawall at our hotel for Parasitic Jaegers, Northern Gannets, and Manx Shearwaters. Much of our time, though, will be spent birding traditional migrant traps in search of everything from Crested Tits and Zitting Cisticolas to Firecrests and Fieldfares. October is prime time, too, for a wide range of much scarcer migrants, among them the enchanting little, Red-breasted Flycatcher, the bizarre Rosy Starling, and the irresistible Pallas's Leaf Warbler. Even if a given day passes without our discovering a real rarity, we can count on enjoyable days in the field with large numbers of birds, a chance to truly get to know species seen elsewhere in scattered ones and twos.

After two days in Brest, we will spend the rest of our tour in a single elegant seaside hotel 40 minutes north of the Iroise Sea, with its own fine restaurant and spa. Recently remodeled to the strictest environmental specifications, our hotel is just minutes away from the finest birding spots in northern Brittany, and on good days, the lawns and gardens here offer excellent opportunities to watch migrant and resident birds without leaving the grounds.



A southbound Common Firecrest pauses on the beach. Photo Rick Wright

October 1, Thursday, Day 1: Departure from home

Most flights from the United States bound for Europe depart in the afternoon or evening and arrive the following day. Brest Bretagne Airport (BES) is served by nonstop flights from major airports in France, Portugal, Spain, and Italy. Participants concerned about the travel time to Brest are encouraged to arrive a day or two early, or to plan a layover in Paris, to rest before the start of our tour. On request, the VENT office will be happy to help early arrivals with additional hotel arrangements.

NIGHT: Aboard flight in transit to France

October 2, Friday, Day 2: Arrival in Brest & transfer to hotel

Participants should arrange to arrive at Brest Bretagne Airport no later than this afternoon. Arrangements for early check-in will have been made where necessary. We will meet at 6:30

pm for a first dinner together, a chance to get to know one another and to discuss our plans for the days ahead.

NIGHT : L'Amirauté, Brest



The Hotel de la Mer. Photo Rick Wright.

October 3, Saturday, Day 3: Lann Gazel and the *Enclos* of Trémaouézan

Breakfast in our hotel is served beginning at 5:00 am, but given the late sunrise, we have no need to rush, especially as our first birding destination is a scant twenty-minute west of our hotel. We plan to leave the hotel at 8:30 for the brief drive to the Lann Gazel Regional Nature Preserve, which today occupies five hundred acres of bogs, forest, and heath once destined to serve as a landfill for the Brest area. Surrounded by pasture and cropland, the preserve is home to several rare plant species. Among the birds we'll be hoping to find here are such colorful residents as the Eurasian Jay, Eurasian Nuthatch, and Yellowhammer; migrants may include Barn Swallows, Common Chiffchaffs, and Barn Swallows.



The spectacular enclos of Trémaouézan. Photo Rick Wright

A few minutes away, in the village of Trémaouézan, is one of the most atmospheric and most classically Breton of the sites we will visit. Scattered across northern Brittany, with a particular concentration in Finistère, the *enclos* are walled churchyards enclosing—whence the name—a cemetery, a charnel house, and an often-monumental Crucifixion scene. These were constructed during Brittany’s last period of great prosperity, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when small towns and villages competed to create the largest and most splendid displays of piety, with an often-riotous mix of Flamboyant and Renaissance architectural elements. The triumphal gate, ornate porch, and sculptural ornament of Trémaouézan make it a true gem of Breton history and culture.

We expect to return to Brest for lunch, then drive across the compact city to the Océanopolis, the largest open-air aquarium and ocean museum in Europe. We will spend about an hour and a half here—not enough to see everything, alas—paying special attention to displays of the coastal and marine life of Brittany, a foretaste of what awaits us as we move north.

Dinner will be in another excellent restaurant in Brest.

NIGHT: L’Amirauté, Brest

October 4, Sunday, Day 4: The Stang Alar Valley and to Brignonan

We will check out of our hotel after another leisurely breakfast, then head out around 8:15 for the most productive birding locality in the city of Brest, ten minutes away in the lovely Stang Alar Valley. Here on the eastern edge of the city, the lush gardens of the National Botanical Conservatory stretch along the gentle Douarguen River; a walk here takes us into wooded areas and past ponds that are home to Little Grebes, Gray Wagtails, and often some very cooperative and photogenic Common Kingfishers. The open lawns and forest also attract finches, Short-toed Treecreepers, and Song Thrushes.

Lunch will be in the charming town of Lesneven, after which we will visit one of Brittany's most impressive churches built in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The massive tower, walls, and unusual narthex of the basilica of Notre Dame in Le Folgoët are densely ornamented with statues carved out of the local granite, the same unyielding material used for the church's altars and for its world-famous choir screen, one of the great treasures from the Golden Age of Breton art.



The National Botanical Conservatory in Brest. Photo Rick Wright

From Le Folgoët, we will drive the final 20 minutes north to the shores of the Celtic Sea, where the waters of the English Channel meet the open Atlantic. Our aptly named hotel perches on the wild rocks above the beach, with European Shags, Rock Pipits, and a nice selection of shorebirds and gulls often visible right from our sea-view windows. We will check in, then offer our first bit of daily seawatching from the hotel seawall or the nearby radar tower.

Mediterranean Gulls, Northern Gannets, and hordes of migrating Sanderlings and Ruddy Turnstones are among the birds we can expect to see, and if conditions are right, even a Sabine's Gull or Cory's Shearwater may drift by.

Our dinner tonight will be from the hotel's weekend menu, featuring a lavish assortment of local cheeses, meats, and seafood served in the hotel's conservatory.

NIGHT : Hotel de la Mer, Brignonan-Plages

October 5, Monday, Day 5: Goulven and the Dunes of Keremma

Life on the wild and rocky coast of northern Brittany is measured by the tides, and the activities of both the birds and the birders depend closely on water levels. Thus, we may find ourselves needing to occasionally adjust our day-to-day scheduling to take us to sites where conditions are optimal. The best of those sites is right on the Bay of Goulven, whose waters lap at the seawall below our hotel.

At low tide, most birds are feeding on vast mudflats far from shore. As the water rises and the mud disappears, those same birds are pushed closer and closer to land, and the views from some vantage points can be amazing. Pied Oystercatchers, Sanderlings, and Ruddy Turnstones are usually the dominant species, commonly numbering into the hundreds on the right tide, but Common and Spotted Redshanks, Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwits, Red Knot, Eurasian Curlew, and Curlew Sandpiper also occur regularly. Gulls, too, move closer to the beaches to loaf; Mediterranean Gulls are reliably seen here, and the odd Little or Common Gull may join the flocks lounging on the rocks or hunting the tideline. As the water reaches its peak, ducks

and geese drift closer to shore, and we will be looking for specialties such as Brant and Eurasian Wigeon among more familiar species.



A gathering of Sanderlings, Ruddy Turnstones, and Black-bellied Plovers at our hotel. Photo Rick Wright

After lunch, we will turn to the dunes of Keremma. Covering a good thousand acres of seashore, the Keremma dunes stretch for more than three miles, making this the most extensive dune corridor in Brittany. This site is most famous for its rare flora, including 26 plant species on the regional endangered list, among them several orchids.

The autumn birdlife here is no less remarkable, with nationally significant passage and winter populations of several shorebirds. Dozens of Black-tailed Godwits and Eurasian Curlews can sometimes be found among the Dunlin, European Golden Plovers, and Northern Lapwings; tallies of Black-bellied Plover regularly reach into the hundreds. Among the less numerous species we will be looking for here are the Curlew Sandpiper, Little Stint, Ruff, Spotted Redshank, and Common Greenshank. Virtually any northern hemisphere shorebird is possible here, and even if our visit fails to turn up a rarity, the views from the dunes and beaches here are likely to be memorable even for the most experienced wader watcher.



The dike path above the Bay of Goulven. Photo Rick Wright

In the dunes themselves, accessible on a flat, broad rails-to-trails path, migrating flocks of Meadow Pipits and Linnets pause to feed in the sparse grasses. Birders are not alone in enjoying this dune avifauna. Merlins and Peregrine Falcons hunt here in the morning and evening, too. Those dashing raptors have miles to go on their own migrations—but we are just twenty minutes away from our hotel, where we plan on offering our usual seawatching stint before dinner. For those interested in a more physically strenuous activity, on this and some other afternoons, we may offer a longer walk as an alternative to our essentially stationary seawatch.

NIGHT : Hotel de la Mer, Brignonan-Plages

October 6, Tuesday, Day 6: Guissény and Le Curnic

With sunrise well after 8:00 am, we will once again have plenty of time to enjoy our breakfast before driving twenty minutes west to the Guissény area. The birding sites around the Bay of Curnic are among the best and best-known in France. The brackish lakes, sandy beaches, and

grassy lowlands are irresistible to shorebirds, ducks and geese, and songbirds, sometimes in tremendous abundance. The numerous Mallards and Tufted Ducks here can be joined by almost any species of waterfowl—including American waterfowl: the magical lake at Curnic regularly hosts such strays as the Ring-necked Duck and Lesser Scaup.

Depending, as always, on the tide, the lakeshores and beaches here can be good for shorebirds such as the Common Ringed Plover, Spotted and Common Redshank, or Red Knot. The moist sand and grassy edges also attract songbirds, ranging from European Greenfinches to Rock Pipits. This is our best chance at some more typically southern passerines, including the Zitting Cisticola and European Serin, both slightly irregular in occurrence but conspicuous when they are present.

Lunch will be in an excellent small restaurant in Guissény. If we have time and favorable winds, we will venture behind the lake and the dunes to explore a tract of damp farmland and pasture, where Western Cattle Egrets, Northern Lapwings, and sometimes Pied or Yellow Wagtails pace behind the stolid cattle. Resident raptors such as the Western Marsh-Harrier and the Common Kestrel are often joined by a migrant Peregrine Falcon or Merlin or a late European Honey-Buzzard, and virtually any songbird migrant may be found resting on the fences.

On our return to our hotel, we will have time for a break before our usual sea watching and dinner.

NIGHT : Hotel de la Mer, Brignonan-Plages

October 7, Wednesday, Day 7: Pointe Saint-Mathieu and Le Conquet

We will spend today on the very edge of France, some 40 miles west of our hotel. Bizarrely, the remote lighthouse of Saint Mathieu shares its wind-whipped promontory with the ruins of a gigantic Gothic abbey church; in fact, the first lighthouse on the site was manned by the monks and was not replaced by the present structure until 1835. Like other coastal sites in Brittany, the beaches, rocks, and scrubby pastures here attract their fair share of migrant passerines, alongside such appealing resident species as Rock Pipits, European Stonechats, and Eurasian

Oystercatchers—but it is the juxtaposition of structures and functions that makes this beautiful site unique.



Common, confiding, and noisy at this season: the European Robin. Photo Rick Wright

We will have an outstanding lunch across the street from the lighthouse, then visit Le Conquet, a picturesque fishing community that is the most westerly municipality in continental France. The town's erstwhile military significance is still reflected in the fragments of fortification around the snug harbor; just across the water stands the unusual square lighthouse of Kermorvan, rising twenty stories above the rocks and sea, its light visible from twenty-five miles away. Our time here will be largely unstructured, a chance to do some shopping or to admire the lively harbor.

We will return to Brignonan for our daily seawatching and dinner together.

NIGHT : Hotel de la Mer, Brignonan-Plages

October 8, Thursday, Day 8: The Bay and Saint-Goulven

The tide will be our guide again today on a return visit to the Bay of Goulven. This time, our focus will be on the easterly areas of the bay and the smaller, more protected cove at Kernic, which provides refuge to shorebirds and waterfowl at high tides. A segment of Brittany's 350-

mile coastal path skirts the shore here, giving us excellent access to good vantage points over the water and mudflats, where Common Shelducks, Sandwich Terns, and European Stonechats are among the specialties we will hope to encounter. Eurasian Spoonbills, locally scarce, are possible here, and Northern Wheatears, Meadow Pipits, and Eurasian Skylarks can occur in good numbers given the right winds.



The awe-inspiring ruins of the abbey church of Saint-Mathieu. Photo Rick Wright

We will have lunch in the area, then make our way to the enormous late Gothic church of Saint Goulven, featuring one of the tallest and most elaborate towers in Finistère and rare examples of Breton wood carving and painting from the early modern period. A longer break this afternoon will be a chance to rest, pack, or explore more of our charming neighborhood before we gather for a final festive dinner together.

NIGHT : Hotel de la Mer, Brignonan-Plages

October 9, Friday, Day 9: Return to Brest, and departure

After a final breakfast in our seaside hotel, we will return to Brest, the departure point for flights to Paris, London, Dublin, and other European cities. Our shuttle will pick us up at 10:00 am, and you should schedule your departing flight no earlier than noon.

Brest has excellent rail, road, and air connections to the rest of France and to many other European destinations. If you are interested in extending your stay, the VENT office, given sufficient notice, will be happy to help you with any arrangements.



An uncommon visitor to the Bay of Goulven, the European Spoonbill. Photo Rick Wright

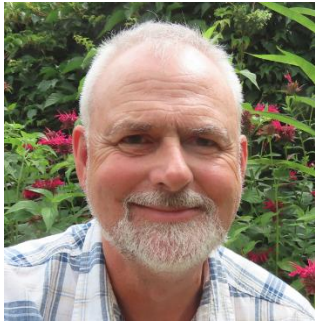


A somewhat chilling detail of the late Gothic church of Saint Goulven © Rick Wright

ESSENTIAL TOUR INFORMATION

TOUR SIZE: This tour is limited to 10 tour participants. However, VENT reserves the right to increase the tour limit by one in order to accommodate a couple when only one space is available.

TOUR LEADERS: Rick Wright and Marco Valtriani



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



Marco Valtriani holds a degree in biology with an ornithology major from the University of Pisa; his thesis was on the ecology of the Dunlin in the Mediterranean basin. A passionate hiker, birder, and field researcher, Marco has spent years exploring wild areas around the world, from France to Nepal, Syria, and Venezuela. He is a licensed private guide and tour planner, creating and leading itineraries for international conservation organizations, schools, and private travelers. Marco specializes in the natural and cultural history of the Mediterranean, above all his native Italy. He is the author of numerous scientific papers and popular articles on the birds and natural landscapes of central Italy, and has co-authored guides to Tuscany's natural habitats, trails, and wildlife. Marco lives with his family in Arezzo, where he devotes his free time to exploring new sites and discovering new aspects of familiar localities.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: The fee for the tour is **\$6,995** per person in double occupancy or **\$7,795** for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 to breakfast on

Day 9, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities for local service providers, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Brest and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature. Rates are based on group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be imposed.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: You may register for this tour on the VENT [website](#) or by calling our office (512 328-5221). The deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. A second deposit of **30% of the remaining tour fee** is due 180 days prior to departure (**April 4, 2026**). We accept MasterCard and Visa for both deposits.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days (**June 3, 2026**) before the tour departure date.

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

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

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

TIPPING: An important part of the value of a VENT tour is knowing that tips for local service providers at our destinations—restaurant staff, hotel staff, drivers, local guides, and various

other support staff—are included in your tour fee. If you would like to offer any of your local guides an additional tip, \$5 to \$10 a day is a common amount.

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

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

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

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS

CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT:

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

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

CANCELLATION BY VENT:

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

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

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

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

TRAVEL INSURANCE

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE/PROTECTION REQUIREMENT: This tour visits remote locations where immediate access to primary medical care may not be available. **For this reason, travel insurance/travel protection which covers you for emergency evacuation is required for participation on this tour.** This coverage is included in the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** program. Alternatively, comparable service can be obtained

through **Medjet** and its **MedjetAssist** plan. If you choose not to purchase insurance/travel protection through Ripcord or Medjet, you are required to obtain it through another provider. Please refer to the TRAVEL INSURANCE/TRAVEL PROTECTION section for additional information.

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

About Redpoint Travel's Ripcord Plan

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

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

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

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

About Medjet’s MedjetAssist Plan

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

For travelers under 75, MedjetAssist may be purchased as Short-Term Memberships of 8, 15, 21, and 30 days, or Regular Annual Memberships from 1 to 5 years. For travelers 75–

84, Medjet offers a Diamond Membership that is the same program but with a few additional conditions.

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

GETTING THERE & REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

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

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

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

As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on

bag. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security, we recommend that you check the website of [the Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\)](#) for information pertaining to permissible carry-on items.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

PASSPORT: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from France is required.

ETIAS or otherwise known as European Travel Information and Authorization System is a new travel registration system to be inaugurated by the Schengen group of countries in late 2026. Visitors from the US and Canada may be required to obtain their ETIAS before departing for France; citizens of other countries should check with their French consulate or embassy for instructions. The application process is entirely online, at etias.com/etias-application; approval is said to take less than an hour. The cost for applicants between the ages of 18 and 70 is now expected to be approximately \$25, and the certification, which is linked to your passport and requires no printed documentation, remains valid for three years or until the expiration of your passport. To keep up to date on the process and any changes in requirements, visit [ETIAS](#).

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTHING: French birders wear the same clothing in the field as American birders.

- **Pants:** At this season, two or three pairs of mid-weight pants of cotton may be best; denim, though less comfortable, is certainly acceptable in the field. In restaurants and our hotel dining room, you will be comfortable in neat, but still informal, attire.
- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores carry field clothing made of lightweight but durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams that many birders find appealing.
- **Shirts:** Comfortable long-sleeved shirts suitable for cool weather.
- **Hat:** A hat for protection from the sun is essential.
- **Sweaters and Coats:** A sturdy sweater and light coat or jacket will be welcome on cool mornings. Rain is always possible, making a rain jacket essential; that jacket can be "layered" over a sweater in the field. Light gloves may also keep you comfortable should the day start chilly.

FOOTWEAR: **Water-resistant hiking shoes or boots** are best for our birding expeditions; in the evenings, **lighter-weight walking shoes** may be more comfortable. Rubber boots are not necessary, though in wet years we may encounter a little mud.

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

- **Small backpack:** for extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment.
- **Notebooks and pencils**
- **Travel alarm clock**
- **Polarized sunglasses** with good UV protection
- **Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions**
- **Personal toiletries**
- **Cameras, lenses, memory cards, and extra batteries**
- **Chargers for laptops, phones, camera batteries, etc.**
- **Collapsible walking stick:** highly recommended for those who have trouble walking
- **Portable folding stool:** can come in handy during our seawatches and time at lakes and mudflats
- **Tissue packs**

Binoculars: We recommend 7x, 8x, or 10x binoculars. Do NOT bring mini binoculars of any kind. They are small and lightweight but have an extremely small field of view and very poor light-gathering power. Trying to find a bird in your binoculars using minis is like trying to read a book through a keyhole. You will be very frustrated, and even if you do manage to get the bird in your binoculars before it flies, you will have a poor view. You will find that modern binoculars of 7x35 or 8x42 specifications are compact and light enough.

Spotting scopes: Your tour leaders will have scopes available for group use, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please do so; a scope will increase your enjoyment not just in watching seabirds, shorebirds, and waterfowl, but in observing the subtle patterns of many passerines at close range.

DESTINATION INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS

CLIMATE: October is a fine time to travel in Brittany. It is usually pleasantly cool, with highs reaching into the 60s F and lows in the low 50s. It can be cooler right on the coast, where early mornings can feel chilly. Rain is possible at any time, but our schedule is relaxed and flexible enough to let us adjust our plans on short notice to accommodate rain or fog, and Finistère offers a wide range of alternative cultural and gastronomic activities should we not be able to take to the field.

CONDITIONS: Our days will be full, but our pace will always be easy and relaxed as we combine excellent birding with visits to historical and artistic monuments. Just as historical sites are often good birding, our field excursions sometimes lead us to unexpected cultural highlights.

Except on the day when we are traveling between Brest and Brignonan, it is always an option to simply take time off to enjoy the landscape on your own.

The physical demands of this tour are light to moderate. A typical day begins with breakfast in the hotel beginning at 7:30 am, with departure for the field scheduled for about 8:30. We will bird on level paths and roadsides and are unlikely to walk more than a mile at a time. All our walking will be at a slow “birder’s” pace.

Lunch will be in small towns near our birding sites and usually followed by a shorter afternoon activity. We plan to return to our hotel between 4:00 and 5:00 on most days, with time for a break or to join an optional sea watching session before dinner at 7:00 pm in our hotel. On some days, we will offer an optional somewhat longer walk as an alternative to our essentially stationary sea watch.

Remember that towns and villages in Europe often have uneven pavement, high curbs, and stairs. No one will be subjected to physical demands that exceed her or his capabilities. There are virtually no natural hazards in this part of Europe. Early mornings in woodland, a habitat we spend little time in, may see a few mosquitoes, but they are dispersed by even the slightest breeze. If you are concerned, see the section on Insect and Tick Repellents below.

CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS: Your trip fee includes most necessary expenses. You will need cash to cover personal expenses not included in the program, such as taxis or shuttles, gifts, laundry, gratuities, snacks and meals on your own, and other personal items. It is best to carry

small denominations, as some places we visit may be unable to provide change for larger bills. Credit cards are accepted almost universally in France.

The official currency of France is the euro; US dollars are not accepted anywhere in the country. You can order euros through your bank before leaving home or withdraw them from ATM's at the airport or in Brest and a few of the smaller towns. Please ask your bank or credit card issuer for information about using your ATM and credit cards abroad.

ELECTRICITY: The electrical current in France is 220–240V (110-120V in the US). All outlets are ungrounded with openings for two round prongs. You will need a two-prong Type C or Type E adapter to plug in your appliances; if your appliances do not run on higher voltage, you will also need an all-purpose transformer in addition to the plug adapter.

LANGUAGE: French is spoken throughout the area, with Breton (the Celtic language of Brittany, related to Cornish) spoken by a growing minority of the population. Road signs and much other information is provided in both languages, though in a few places in the countryside, roads and towns may be marked only in Breton. Younger people and people in Brest also often speak good English. Almost all of our hotel staff is fluent in English.

TIME: France observes Central European Summer Time in early October, 6 hours ahead of Eastern Daylight and 9 hours ahead of Pacific Daylight Time.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: One-day laundry service is available at an extra charge in our hotels, but it is always best to bring enough clothing to get you through the entire tour.

EXTRA TIME IN FRANCE: Brest offers excellent connections to the rest of France and to other countries in Europe. Participants with an interest in enjoying other activities beyond the stated program should plan to arrive early or to stay after the tour ends; given sufficient lead time, the VENT office will be happy to help you with your arrangements.

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 your Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations.

If you are taking medication, by 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 regarding recommendations for avoiding COVID-19.

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.

An 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 is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment has to 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 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). You can check the CDC website at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html> (click on Travel Health).

SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION

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

Mullarney, K., L. Svensson, and D. Zetterstrom. 2023. *Birds of Europe*. 3rd ed. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ. This is the indispensable guide to the birds of Brittany.

Mammals

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

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."

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 January 16, 2026 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant’s Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant

will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

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

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

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12/15/2025 – RW

01/16/2026 – CD/DE

6/16/26 -- PNS