GRAND ALASKA PART II

Anchorage, Denali & Kenai Peninsula

June 16 - 25, 2027



Trail River Lake, Alaska © Barry Zimmer

Alaska is a land of unparalleled non-stop scenery, fabulous birding (including many species found nowhere else in the United States) and spectacular, large mammals. Known as the “Last Frontier”, Alaska offers the visitor a chance to see true wilderness. This tour combines the vast expanses of tundra and taiga surrounding the Denali area with the moist spruce forests of the Kenai Peninsula and the magnificent glaciers and sea stacks of Kenai Fjords National Park. In the Denali region we will search for such highly sought species as Spruce Grouse, Northern Hawk Owl, Northern Shrike, Bohemian Waxwing and White-winged Crossbill among others. Our quest for these hard-to-find species will frequently be upstaged by the spectacular scenery and mammals. Finally, in the Seward area we will scour the spruce forests for landbirds and venture out on an all-day boat trip into Kenai Fjords National Park. Seabird colonies along the coast, with literally thousands of puffins, murres, and kittiwakes, and small

numbers of such specialties as Red-faced Cormorant, Parakeet Auklet, and Kittlitz's Murrelet, are worth the trip alone. The birds of Alaska have nothing on the mammals. Trip lists often reach twenty species including the likes of Brown Bear, Moose, Dall's Sheep, Mountain Goat, Killer Whale (Orca), Humpback Whale, and Dall's Porpoise among others. And then there is the constant, incredible scenery. Gorgeous snow-covered peaks loom around every corner (including Denali, North America's tallest peak at 20,310 feet), vast expanses of rolling tundra extend as far as the eye can see, and beautiful, fog-drenched spruce forests cover the southern coasts. Simply put, Alaska is a must destination for every birder and nature enthusiast.



June 16, Day 1: Arrival in Anchorage

Participants arriving into Anchorage will met and transferred to the Crowne Plaza Anchorage-Midtown Hotel, where a room will be reserved in each person's name. We'll meet in the hotel lobby at 6:30 p.m. for a get-acquainted dinner and to discuss plans for tomorrow.

We will likely stop by a city park after dinner for a very brief taste of Anchorage birding. Greater Scaup, Red-necked Grebe, Short-billed Gull and Arctic Tern are among the many possibilities.

NIGHT: Crowne Plaza Anchorage-Midtown, Anchorage

June 17, Day 2: Anchorage Area

We will begin with a full day of birding in the Anchorage area that will provide a good introduction to the Alaskan avifauna. This will likely include stops at nearby locales such as Westchester Lagoon and Kincaid Park, but we may also venture further afield if recent sightings warrant it.

Westchester Lagoon, located right in the middle of town, is a very birdy spot. A variety of water birds are likely here, including such possibilities as Greater and Lesser scaup, Red-necked Grebe, Short-billed Gull, Arctic Tern, and, perhaps some shorebirds, if the tide situation is favorable. Additionally, Bald Eagle, Alder Flycatcher, Black-billed Magpie and Violet-green Swallow may be found here as well. Not far away, Kincaid Park offers a series of nice trails that meander through a spruce bog and birch forests. Hairy, Downy and American Three-toed woodpeckers; Boreal Chickadee; Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned kinglets; Swainson's Thrush; and Lincoln's, Fox and Golden-crowned sparrows are among the many possibilities. Even the nearly mythical Spruce Grouse is sometimes seen in this area.

Other locations we might visit include Hillside Park and the Arctic Valley ski area. However, if there are recent sightings of Northern Hawk Owl to the north (such as along the Glenn Highway), we may abandon local birding completely and head out for this hard-to-find and highly sought species. Our plans today will certainly be flexible.

NIGHT: Crowne Plaza Anchorage-Midtown, Anchorage

June 18. Day 3: Anchorage to Denali

The entire morning will be spent driving to Denali National Park with some roadside birding en route. We will make frequent stops to break up the drive. Roadside lakes could harbor Barrow's or Common goldeneyes, Bufflehead, Common Loon and Bonaparte's Gull. The Sockeye Burn that occurred ten or so years ago may still be productive for woodpeckers with both American Three-toed and Black-backed woodpeckers possible. Although generally elusive, Spruce Grouse could be stumbled upon almost anywhere.

After lunch, we may even have time for a brief foray out the Denali Highway, where the sporadic and highly-sought Northern Hawk Owl is a prime target. By late afternoon, we should arrive at our hotel for the next three nights, located just south of the park itself.

NIGHT: The Lodge at Denali Park Village, Denali National Park

June 19, Day 4: Denali National Park

No Alaska experience is complete without a visit to the huge national park centered on Denali (formerly Mount McKinley), the highest peak in North America. A tundra wilderness bus tour (lasting about eight hours) will allow us to see much of this spectacular park. The birds are impressive, with Golden Eagle, Gyrfalcon, Willow Ptarmigan, and Northern Shrike all possible, although sometimes elusive. However, even the most dedicated birder may be distracted by the grandeur of the surroundings and by the opportunity for encountering large mammals—Moose, Caribou, Grizzly Bear, Dall's Sheep, Red Fox, and rarely Gray Wolf. On a clear day the view of Denali from Stoney Pass is one of the most spectacular sights in the world!

Important note: In the fall of 2021 an avalanche occurred within the park at mile 46 that completely blocked the road. At this time no traffic can go beyond mile 43, and work to correct the problem is not expected to be completed until 2028 or later. This means that the tour into the park is currently an abbreviated 43-mile (one way) version that lasts about five and a half hours. High tundra between mile 43 and the normal turnaround point at mile 63 is the best area in the park for Brown Bears, as well as

Caribou and Dall's Sheep. Therefore, our chances of seeing some of these mammals is reduced until the road is fully repaired. Additionally, some of the birds possible within the park are also best found beyond mile 43 (especially Gyrfalcon). We still believe there is value in the park tour, and we plan to continue to take the abbreviated version as part of our trip.

In the late afternoon, we will likely visit Otto Lake to the north and the surrounding spruce forests. In addition to a variety of waterfowl, we might find the localized Boreal Chickadee and possibly Bohemian Waxwing.

NIGHT: The Lodge at Denali Park Village, Denali National Park



Denali, Alaska © Barry Zimmer

June 20, Day 5: Denali Highway

We have added in a full day to our tour in order to have adequate time to explore the Denali Highway. Spruce forests along this road may harbor Merlin, Canada Jay, Boreal Chickadee, Bohemian Waxwing and Blackpoll Warbler among others. Nearby ponds are home to majestic Trumpeter Swans and

stunning Barrow's Goldeneyes. Our real target here, however, is the localized Northern Hawk Owl. A pair or two of these wonderful owls often nest somewhere along the first 30 miles or so of this road (though they were absent in 2012, 2013, 2016, 2019 and 2023). Finding the hawk owl will likely require some combination of late evening drives and early morning drives to maximize our chances. Our search for the often-elusive hawk owl may yield other finds such as Northern Flicker, Arctic Warbler, Fox Sparrow (Red), American Tree Sparrow, and Redpoll. Moose, Red Fox and Porcupine are seen along this road with some frequency.

NIGHT: The Lodge at Denali Park Village, Denali National Park

June 21, Day 6: Denali to Anchorage

After leaving Denali this morning, we'll likely make another detour on the Denali Highway to search for species that may have previously eluded us. After lunch we'll continue south on the Parks Highway to Anchorage. We will likely devote more time to searching for two of the phantoms of the north, Spruce Grouse and American Three-toed Woodpecker. Both are low density species that can be devilishly hard to find, but forest along the Parks Highway could harbor either species.

We will arrive back in Anchorage in time for dinner.

NIGHT: Crowne Plaza Anchorage-Midtown, Anchorage

June 22, Day 7: Anchorage to Seward

Today we bird our way to Seward, enjoying fabulous scenery en route. With special permission from the Seward Ranger District, we'll have access to a variety of areas in the Chugach National Forest. Our first stop will be at Potter Marsh on the south edge of Anchorage. Here Arctic Tern, Short-billed Gull, and Red-necked Grebe are among the very common species. Less numerous but possible species include the stunning Horned Grebe and the locally uncommon Rusty Blackbird. As we leave Anchorage and wind along the east side of Turnagain Arm, we will keep a close eye out for Dall's Sheep, which often come down near the highway to visit mineral licks. Occasionally, Beluga Whales are seen in the murky water

of the Arm itself. Depending on how many stops we make, it is only about an hour and a half to the beginning of the Kenai Peninsula, where our birding will begin in earnest.

The Kenai Peninsula has much to offer; perhaps an American Dipper bobbing along a rushing, glacier-fed stream; a Barrow's Goldeneye in the reflection of a snow-capped peak on a glass-smooth lake; a Spruce Grouse nervously leading her downy charges safely through the forest; or an American Three-toed Woodpecker quietly flaking bark from a dead spruce. Frequent stops are inevitable, whether to appreciate the majesty of a close Bald Eagle, to scope a distant slope for Mountain Goats, or simply to snap a picture of some dazzling alpine backdrop.

NIGHT: Harbor 360 Hotel, Seward



Dall's Sheep © Barry Zimmer

June 23, Day 8: Boat Trip to Kenai Fjords National Park

This will be a day of great adventure, as we embark on an all-day boat trip through protected waters to Kenai Fjords National Park & the Alaska Maritimes National Wildlife Refuge. The breathtaking scenery alone would justify the trip. Our boat navigates past massive headlands, fog-drenched spruce forest, icy fjords, and scores of snow-covered mountains. It will be the birds and mammals that will steal the show,

however. As we depart Resurrection Bay, we'll keep a close eye out for comical Sea Otters, whales (both Humpback and Killer are regular here), and Marbled Murrelets dotting the water's surface. En route to Northwestern Glacier, a calving tidewater glacier, our boat will slowly cruise along the coast. Harbor Seals and Black Oystercatchers adorn the low rocks. Pelagic Cormorants and Pigeon Guillemots forage in the near shore waters. We should arrive at the glacier by late morning, hoping it will be actively calving during our visit—a sight and sound extravaganza never to be forgotten! We will carefully scan the waters at the base of the glacier for the uncommon and local Kittlitz's Murrelet, which occurs here in small numbers. We have about a 50% success rate in locating this special bird.



American Three-toed Woodpecker © Barry Zimmer

Next, we encounter the Chiswell Islands, a naturalists' paradise. Craggy sea-stacks are draped in white by thousands of nesting Black-legged Kittiwakes. Hundreds of Horned and Tufted puffins buzz in and out of the grassy tussocks like so many bees. Very small numbers of the highly sought and declining Red-faced Cormorant nest in this area as well and are found on about half of our trips. The rocky shores below may yield the huge, brown forms of Steller's Sea Lions, and the waters about the boat are liberally sprinkled with rafts of Common and Thick-billed (scarce) murres and Rhinoceros Auklets. Some years, small numbers of Parakeet Auklets and Ancient Murrelets nest here. Our return trip takes us through slightly more offshore waters, with at least the possibility of such truly pelagic species as Short-tailed and Sooty shearwaters and Northern Fulmar.

NIGHT: Harbor 360 Hotel, Seward

June 24, Day 9: Seward Area and Return to Anchorage

The moist Sitka spruce forest that hugs the coast near Seward shelters birds like Spruce Grouse, Rufous Hummingbird, Steller's Jay, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Varied and Hermit thrushes, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Townsend's Warbler, Pine Grosbeak, and the sporadic White-winged Crossbill. Nearby coastlines may yield Harlequin Duck, the Northwestern subspecies of American Crow, and numerous Bald Eagles. Marshy swales and willow thickets could produce Trumpeter Swan, Violet-green Swallow, Wilson's Warbler, Lincoln's Sparrow, Fox Sparrow (the "Sooty" subspecies), and the unusual kenaiensis race of Song Sparrow. We'll spend some time searching for these species before returning through the scenic coastal mountains to Anchorage, arriving in time for a final checklist session followed by dinner.

NIGHT: Crowne Plaza Anchorage-Midtown, Anchorage



Townsend's Warbler, Seward, Alaska © Barry Zimmer

June 25, Day 10: Departure for Home

Participants will be provided with transfers to the Anchorage Airport any time on June 25 or, depending on flight schedules, on overnight flights departing after our farewell dinner on June 24.

ESSENTIAL TOUR INFORMATION

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 12 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: Barry Zimmer and **Erik Bruhnke**



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 co-authored 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 1,000 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.



Erik Bruhnke has had a love for birds since he was a child. He graduated from Northland College in Wisconsin with a Natural Resources degree in 2008 and taught field ornithology for various semesters while there. As a devoted raptor nerd, Erik is drawn to hawkwatches. He worked as an interpreter for six seasons at Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory in Duluth, Minnesota; has counted migrating raptors at the Corpus Christi HawkWatch in Texas; and is the 2016 hawk counter at the Cape May Hawkwatch in New Jersey. Erik's avian field experiences have taken him throughout Oregon, Washington, Montana, Idaho, North and South Dakota, Maine, California, New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, and western Canada. Erik's wildlife photography has won national awards, and his writings have been featured in Birder's Guide via the American Birding Association, BirdWatching, and Birdwatcher's Digest. When not traveling the country leading field trips and speaking at various birding festivals, Erik splits his time between the tropics of South Texas and the Northwoods of Minnesota. He loves to cook and bake in his free time.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: For Grand Alaska Part II, $9,895 per person based on double occupancy or **$11,595** for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 through dinner on Day 9, 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 Anchorage. The fee also excludes laundry, personal expenses, and other items of a personal nature. For information about gratuities, please see the "TIPPING" sub-section below. If the minimum group size is not met, each participant will be charged a small-group supplement—shared equally and communicated in advance—to allow the tour to proceed.

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

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days (February 16, 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.

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 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.

In case your checked luggage is delayed, it's recommended that you pack all documents, medications, a change of clothes, your binoculars, and toiletry items in a carry-on bag. Since we use the same hotel each time we return to Anchorage throughout the trip, one can store luggage there on each leg if desired. By packing an empty medium-sized duffel in your checked luggage, you can use that to carry smaller amounts of luggage on the legs to Denali and Seward if desired.

CONDITIONS

CLOTHING & WEATHER: The weather in Alaska in June is notoriously unpredictable and can still be quite cold. The "layered" technique is your best defense against the variable weather. We suggest you combine a thermal undershirt, shirt, sweater, and coat or jacket. Medium-weight wool or synthetic equivalent for shirts, pants, and sweaters is ideal. Cold-weather gear is essential and should include a warm coat or down jacket, warm hat, gloves, long underwear, wool or synthetic equivalent socks, and warm shirts. A rain jacket or poncho is also essential for times when the weather turns misty. Since it can be surprisingly warm too (sometimes in the mid-70s or higher), you should bring some lighter field clothing as well. Temperatures around Anchorage will likely be in the 50s or 60s. Regardless of the temperature in Seward, the boat trip will be quite cold.

FOOTWEAR: Much of our birding will be done roadside with any comfortable shoe (tennis shoes or hiking shoes) appropriate. Most years, insulated waterproof boots or N.E.O.S. Overshoes will be needed for the hike for the Bristle-thighed Curlew (sometimes the mud is more than ankle deep). Shoes with good ankle support are always needed for the curlew hike. Waterproof footwear is generally not necessary for the Grand Alaska Part II portion, although some may opt to wear them on our boat trip.

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, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag.

OTHER ITEMS: We recommend that you bring insect repellent, an alarm clock, sunglasses, sunscreen, and water bottle. Your leader will have a spotting scope and reference books, but you may wish to bring your own. You may also wish to bring seasickness medication for our boat trip to Kenai Fjords.

INTERNET ACCESS: Expect Wi-Fi to be available in all hotels and lodges.

LAUNDRY: Self-serve laundry is available in Anchorage, Seward and Denali.

SCHEDULE: Most breakfasts will be around 6:00 a.m. On some days, it could be a little earlier or a little later.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

Insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

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

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

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

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

SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION

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

FIELD GUIDES:

Alaska Guidebooks:

Field Guides—Birds:

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

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

Peterson, Roger Tory. A Field Guide to Western Birds. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1998.

Sibley, David Allen. The Sibley Guide to Birds. 2nd edition New York: Alfred a. Knopf, 2014. This classic field guide has been greatly expanded to cover many of the Eurasian vagrants that we could encounter.

Wild Bird Society of Japan. A Field Guide to the Birds of Japan. Japan: Kodansha International, 1991. Offers additional illustrations of the Asian strays. Difficult book to find, however!

Reference—Birds:

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

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

Harrison, Peter. Seabirds: An Identification Guide. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1991 (reprint).

Hayman, Peter, John Marchant & Tony Prater. Shorebirds: An Identification Guide to the Waders of the World. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1991 (reprint).

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

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

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

General Background Reading:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A variety of books on Alaska are available through the Alaska Geographic Society: (907) 274-0521. Alaska Geographic Online is found at www.akgeo.com. Some of these resources include Alaskan Native Peoples, Mammals of Alaska, and National Parks and Monuments of Alaska. On the tour a number of local guide books and pamphlets can be picked up at local gift shops, including: Louise Potter's Wild Flowers Along Mt. McKinley Park Road (Camp Denali Publishers, n.d.). Although out of print, Potter's book is possibly available in Denali National Park; it is also found on www.amazon.com.

CLO Apps

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

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

TERMS, CONDITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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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.

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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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