



# WINTER NEW MEXICO

*January 5 - 11, 2027*



*Sandhill Cranes, Bosque del Apache NWR © Barry Zimmer*

Each year the Rio Grande Valley of central and southern New Mexico plays host to an incredible array of wintering bird species. Tens of thousands of geese, ducks, and cranes descend on famous Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge and the Bernardo Waterfowl Complex, as well as Caballo and Elephant Butte reservoirs. Sparrows, some years in astonishing numbers and variety, cover the desert grasslands and riparian thickets. Drawn by the abundant prey, raptors abound with a combined total of 17 hawk, falcon and owl species possible. In short, this avian-rich area is a mecca for winter birding.

In six days we will cover the entire Rio Grande Valley from El Paso to Albuquerque. As a centerpiece to the tour, we will visit the Bernardo Waterfowl Management area and world-famous Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, home of the Winter Crane Festival. A total of over 150 species are possible along this route, including such sought-after gems as Clark's Grebe, Ross's Goose, Ferruginous Hawk, Sandhill Crane, Burrowing Owl, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Juniper Titmouse, Crissal and Sage thrashers,

Green-tailed Towhee, Black-chinned (irregular) and Sagebrush sparrows and all three rosy-finches. The great birding, generally mild winter weather, and spectacular scenery make this visit to the Land of Enchantment a must.

## January 5, Day 1: Arrival in El Paso



*Yellow-headed Blackbird roost outside of El Paso, TX © Barry Zimmer*

Participants should plan to arrive in El Paso today. A complimentary hotel shuttle is available from the airport to the Home 2 Suites, El Paso Airport. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 3:00 p.m. for a visit to a huge Yellow-headed Blackbird roost (some years numbering thousands of individuals) in west El Paso. We will go from birding directly to dinner.

**NIGHT:** Home 2 Suites, El Paso Airport

## January 6, Day 2: Rio Grande Valley to Las Cruces

The entire day will be devoted to areas around El Paso (possibly extending eastward to McNary Reservoir) and traveling north to Las Cruces via the Rio Grande Valley. Our schedule will be flexible based on what has been seen recently in the area. It will likely start with a visit to nearby Ascarate Lake. A wide variety of waterfowl are possible at this location (including Wood Duck, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Duck and Common & Hooded mergansers) in addition to grebes, cormorants, and herons. Our primary target here will be Burrowing Owl, a couple of pairs of which often overwinter at this site. A visit to your leader's yard could be next in line, particularly if anything unusual is present. Some years there are



overwintering hummingbirds or orioles. Regular species would include White-winged Dove, Verdin, Cactus Wren, Curve-billed Thrasher, and Lesser Goldfinch. Desert areas in the Franklin Mountains could yield the likes of Scaled Quail, Cactus and Rock wrens, Crissal Thrasher, Canyon Towhee and Rufous-crowned and Black-throated sparrows. This day has produced an incredible array of rarities over the years including such spectacular vagrants as Black-legged Kittiwake, Broad-billed & Costa's hummingbirds, Lewis's Woodpecker, Vermilion Flycatcher, Gray Silky-flycatcher, Northern Parula, Yellow-throated and Townsend's warblers, and Hooded and Scott's orioles. One never knows what unexpected species will turn up next!

**NIGHT:** Hampton Inn and Suites, Las Cruces

## January 7, Day 3: Organ Mountains and Jornada Grasslands

The majestic Organ Mountains, named for their organ pipe-shaped peaks, harbor many species typical of the southwestern oak/juniper belt. We will set a relaxed pace on a one mile hike in this scenic range

to seek out such species as Red-naped Sapsucker; Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay (a recent split from Western Scrub-Jay); Juniper Titmouse (recently split from the Plain Titmouse complex); Bewick's, Canyon, and Rock wrens; Townsend's Solitaire; Western Bluebird; Canyon Towhee; Rufous-crowned and Black-chinned sparrows (scarce); and Lesser Goldfinch. Regal Golden Eagles sometimes patrol the mountain skies overhead and Scaled Quail are occasionally seen on the entry road.

In the late afternoon we will check the desert basin grasslands of the Jornada del Muerto or "Journey of Death," so named because this extensive, waterless region spelled the doom of many early travelers. A variety of raptors and sparrows can be found here. Black-throated, Sagebrush, and Brewer's sparrows, as well as Lark Bunting, are all possible; and we could encounter Golden Eagle or Prairie Falcon, as well as the often elusive Crissal Thrasher.

**NIGHT:** Hampton Inn and Suites, Las Cruces



*Organ Mountains/Desert Peaks National Monument © Barry Zimmer*

## January 8, Day 4: Percha Dam and Caballo Lake

North of Las Cruces, the habitat along the Rio Grande is less disturbed by agricultural practices, with some tracts of original riparian growth still remaining. Percha Dam State Park is one such site. Regarded

as one of the premier birding and vagrant-hunting spots in the state, this park has produced an incredible list of rarities. Among the more regular species that we should see are Gambel's Quail, Greater Roadrunner, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Black Phoebe, Verdin, Crissal Thrasher, Western Bluebird and Phainopepla. Also there may be numerous sparrows, including Lincoln's, Swamp (uncommon), Song, White-crowned, and perhaps White-throated. In good invasion years, all three species of bluebirds are possible, including the incomparable Mountain. This area has produced many vagrants on past tours including Lewis's Woodpecker, Hammond's Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, Vermilion Flycatcher, Hutton's Vireo, Carolina Wren, and Harris's and Golden-crowned sparrows. Surrounding agricultural fields are often teeming with geese, cranes, and raptors. We will check closely for Ferruginous Hawk and Prairie Falcon if we are still missing either of these elegant species.

Nearby Caballo Reservoir plays host to large numbers of wintering waterfowl, cranes, and gulls. Among the possibilities are Western, Clark's, and Eared grebes; Double-crested and Neotropic cormorants; Ross's Goose; Common Goldeneye; Common and Hooded mergansers; Sandhill Crane; and the locally rare California Gull. Bald Eagles often winter here as well, patrolling the shorelines for fish and



*Bridled Titmouse, Animas Creek © Barry Zimmer*

injured waterfowl. As with Percha, this reservoir acts as a magnet, attracting an amazing number of rare vagrants. Though not at all likely on any given trip and never to be expected, such rarities as Yellow-billed Loon, Tundra Swan, Greater White-fronted Goose, Mew Gull, Thayer's Gull, and Black-legged Kittiwake have all occurred here in recent winters. Who knows what odd waterbird might show up next?

A late afternoon visit to the sycamore-lined banks of Animas Creek should yield the locally uncommon Acorn Woodpecker and perhaps the very uncommon Bridled Titmouse.

**NIGHT:** Comfort Inn,

Truth or Consequences

## January 9, Day 5: Elephant Butte Lake, Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, Water Canyon and Bernardo

On the way north towards Socorro, we may briefly check Elephant Butte Lake for any waterbirds we may be missing. As with Caballo, this reservoir turns up a wealth of vagrants each year. Clark's and Western grebes are generally more numerous here, and chances for an odd loon or gull are increased.

From there, we will likely head directly to world famous Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. Lying along a nine-mile stretch of the Rio Grande, Bosque del Apache combines riparian habitat, extensive water impoundments, and cultivated fields, all of which help attract tens of thousands of wintering birds. We will concentrate in particular on the north end of the refuge where, most years, large numbers of Snow Geese and Sandhill Cranes gather to feed in the agricultural fields. The tiny Ross's Goose is almost assured here, often close to the road and in rather large numbers. Waterfowl, often 20 or more species, are everywhere and usually close enough for superb study. Hawks, eagles, and falcons perch patiently atop cottonwood snags looking for the injured and weak among the throngs of ducks and geese. This is truly a birder's paradise!

After lunch, we will be in the Magdalena Mountains west of Socorro. Here in scenic Water Canyon, a variety of montane species are likely. Acorn Woodpecker, Red-naped Sapsucker, Steller's Jay, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Juniper Titmouse, Mountain Chickadee, Bushtit, White-breasted Nuthatch, Western and Mountain (irregular) bluebirds, Townsend's Solitaire and Pine Siskin are among the many possibilities. Though less regular, we have a chance for irruptive species such as Sage Thrasher and Cassin's Finch. Nearby grasslands could yield Chestnut-collared Longspur or the recently split Chihuahuan Meadowlark.

Late afternoon will find us north of Socorro at the Bernardo Waterfowl Management Area. In recent years, this has been the go to spot for the largest numbers of cranes and geese. Flock after flock of Sandhill Cranes and Snow Geese pour into this site as evening approaches. The symphony of honks, rattles and trumpets plays on until dusk. This evening will almost certainly be a memorable one.

**NIGHT:** Comfort Inn, Socorro

## January 10, Day 6: Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge/ Bernardo Waterfowl Complex and Sandia Crest

A very early start this morning (departing our hotel about 6 AM) will find us heading north back to the Bernardo Waterfowl Complex hoping to witness the incredible dawn flight of geese (sometimes numbering 20,000 or more) and cranes (5,000-15,000). The sights and sounds of such an extravaganza are truly unforgettable!



*Snow Geese, Bosque del Apache NWR © Barry Zimmer*

Most winters some rosy-finches are present on Sandia Crest above Albuquerque. If any finches are present this year, and if road conditions allow us to reach the top, we will depart Bernardo by 9:00 a.m. and head to the high elevations of the Sandia range. **(Note: Any snowfall in the day or two before our arrival would likely prevent us from getting to the top.)** In twelve of the past fifteen years, we have tallied either two or three rosy-finch species, in addition to often getting the distinctive Hepburn's race

of the Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch. Twice, we have struck out completely. Other upper elevation species may be located here as well, such as Steller's Jay, Red-breasted and White-breasted nuthatch, Mountain Chickadee, and Cassin's Finch (irregular). If no rosy-finches are being reported, we will linger longer in the Socorro area before heading northward.

Time-permitting, we may spend the late afternoon visiting the Rio Grande Nature Center in west Albuquerque. Here spectacular Wood Ducks can often be found at the pond at the visitor center, Cackling Geese are regular visitors and Mountain and Black-capped chickadees frequent the feeders.

**NIGHT:** Sheraton Albuquerque Airport Hotel, Albuquerque

## January 11, Day 7: Departure for Home

Participants may plan to depart Albuquerque (ABQ) at any time today.

### **ESSENTIAL TOUR INFORMATION**

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

**TOUR LEADERS:** Barry Zimmer and Kevin Burke



**Barry Zimmer** has been birding since the age of eight. His main areas of expertise lie in North and Central America, but his travels have taken him throughout much of the world, including such exotic locales as Japan, Russia, Madagascar, Africa, and New Zealand. Barry is a longtime member of the New Mexico Bird Records Committee, and served on the Texas Bird Records Committee for 12 years. He has coauthored three books: *Birds of the Trans-Pecos*, *A Birder's Guide to the Rio Grande Valley*, and *Birds and Birdfinding in the El Paso Area*. Barry has a keen interest in nature photography, having captured over 1,600 species of birds on film. His other interests include sports (a diehard Red Sox fan), cooking, and movies. He received his degree in psychology at the University of Texas in El Paso. Barry resides in El Paso with his wife, Yvonne, and their daughter, Alexandra.



**Kevin Burke** is originally from the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. He grew up running around in the woods and trails of Shenandoah National Park. His family spent many summers camping and hiking in the park. One of Kevin's favorite activities was jumping in the river and turning over every rock to see what was underneath. This eventually earned him the nickname "Hellgrammite Kid." This early exposure to the natural world has vaulted into a lifelong obsession with the outdoors.

Kevin was introduced to birding while spending summers in Rhode Island at his grandmother's house. She would point out all the feeder birds and help him identify them. These early encounters helped foster a love for birds. An early Ornithology class at Hocking College in Ohio rekindled his love for birds. He has been birding every day since. He went on to get a Bachelor of Science in Ecotourism and Conservation Ecology from the University of Idaho. Kevin has been involved with leading bird trips in some capacity for almost 20 years. He has led birding trips all throughout the United States, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic. His birding journeys have also taken him to some spectacular locations such as Portugal, Colombia, The Bahamas, and Canada. This is truly a lifelong obsession. He currently resides with his family in Hendersonville, North Carolina. Kevin's wife and two kids also enjoy birding. They have fun kayaking, hiking, and camping in the mountains that surround their home. One of their favorite activities is jumping on the paddle board and kayaks and leisurely floating the French Broad River near their house.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for the tour is **\$4,095** per person in double occupancy or \$4,560 for a person requiring single accommodation from El Paso (tour ends in Albuquerque). This includes all food from dinner on Day 1 to dinner on Day 6, all lodging as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leader/s. It does not include airfare from your home to El Paso and return from Albuquerque, airport departure taxes, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

**REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT:** To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person. We accept MasterCard and Visa.

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

second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date (September 7, 2026).

## 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.**

**FUEL & FUEL SURCHARGES:** In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

**TRAVEL INSURANCE/TRAVEL PROTECTION:** 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 Ripcord**

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:

**<https://ripcordtravelprotection.com/ventbird>**; or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help and 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.

### **Coronavirus (COVID-19):**

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 MedjetAssist**

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://medjet.com/VentBird) or call 1-800-527-7478. Pricing is based on type and term of membership.

### **Coronavirus (COVID-19):**

In line with the decision made by the federal government (including the CDC), 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.

Please visit the **Coronavirus FAQ** page at the following link:  
[https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid\\_19\\_faq/](https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/)

**AIR INFORMATION:** 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.

**CONDITIONS:** This tour will primarily involve easy, roadside birding with short walks. We may have one hike of a mile or so in the Organ Mountains with a few hundred feet elevation gain. Climate will be largely dry, although snowfall is always a possibility at this season. There will almost certainly be snow on the ground at Sandia crest if we are able to get there. Temperatures should range from lows in the 20's and 30's to highs ranging from the 40's to the 60's. As we head further north, cooler temperatures are likely. Temperatures in the teens at dawn at Bernardo are a distinct possibility. Dressing in layers is always important with a warm jacket, gloves and a warm hat a must. Breakfasts will usually be at 6 AM and we should be ending our days by 5 to 5:30 PM.

**BAGGAGE:** You should limit your luggage to one medium-sized bag and one carry-on item per person. Your tour leader/s will have a spotting scope; however, if you have one and would like to bring it, please feel free to do so.

**CLIMATE, CLOTHING, ETC.:** Temperatures in early January can vary considerably in southern New Mexico. Daytime highs should range from the low 40s to the upper 60s (something in the low 50s would be most likely) and nighttime lows should be in the mid-20s to mid-30s. Colder weather is possible; our 1997 tour had temperatures down to 11 degrees, our 2010 tour had two days in a row with highs in the 30's, and our 2013 trip had snow and ice in El Paso & Las Cruces! Conversely, our 2014 & 2022 tours hit 70 degrees on one day. Recent trips have had temperatures range from 25-71 degrees. Precipitation is rather uncommon at this season, but one should always be prepared for the chance of a rain shower or even some snow. A sweater and a light jacket will most likely be appropriate for mid-day birding. A heavier jacket, gloves, warm cap, and thermal underwear are recommended for early mornings. We will likely encounter very cold conditions on our morning at Bosque del Apache/ Bernardo and at Sandia Crest. Long-sleeved shirts, jeans or other birding pants, and a hat for sun protection would be standard

birding gear. Comfortable walking shoes, such as tennis shoes, will be fine for the most part. You may wish to have hiking boots for our uphill hike at Aguirre Springs (Day 3).

Unless unexpected snow accumulations occur, waterproof footwear will most likely not be needed. Dress will be informal throughout, including in restaurants. Elevations on the tour will range from 3,500-10,600 feet.

**BIRDING SCHEDULE:** In general, we will plan to have breakfast at 6:00 a.m. most mornings. The exception will be our early start at Bernardo when breakfast will be around 5:30 a.m. Most days we will finish birding at 5:00 p.m. or shortly thereafter.

**LAUNDRY:** Self-service laundry is available at the Hampton Inn in Las Cruces and the Comfort Inns in Truth or Consequences and Socorro.

**INSECT PROTECTION:** Insects should not be a problem in mid-winter.

**SUN PROTECTION:** The use of sunscreen, a hat, and lip balm are recommended for protection from the often sunny skies and dry air.

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

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

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

when in airports and on airplanes, and avoiding risky social settings in the lead-up to your tour. These recommendations are firmly rooted in CDC guidance regarding recommendations for avoiding COVID-19. Please visit the **Coronavirus Travel Update** page of our website <https://ventbird.com/covid-19> for our official statement regarding COVID-19 and the operation of our tours. Please visit the CDC website for the most up to date information about COVID-19 and associated guidance for proper health and hygiene: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

**OTHER:** A small water bottle will be useful on our hike at Aguirre Springs (Day 3). Though all of our hotels have wake-up service, an alarm clock is always a good idea. A small flashlight or headlamp may be helpful if we decide to do any nocturnal owling (we hope to find our target owls by day).

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

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1978. New Mexico Ornithological Society Publication No. 6.

Moore, Michael. *Medicinal Plants of the Desert and Canyon West*. Museum of New Mexico Press, 1989.

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Zimmer, Barry. *Birds of the Trans-Pecos*. University of Texas Press, 1998.

**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.

**RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT:** Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, “**VENT**”) act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the

participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

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

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

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure. 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. Notwithstanding the foregoing, VENT will not provide any participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to any 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, when and to the extent such failure or delay is caused by or results from acts beyond VENT's control, including, without limitation, the following force majeure events: (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 in effect on or after the date of the scheduled tour; (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.

If a participant cancels any tour or any portion of a tour, VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by any participant (see VENT Registration & Deposit policy and Cancellation & Refunds policy contained in the itinerary). Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on June 3, 2025 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. If a participant is removed from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

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

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