



# THE PHILIPPINES

Mindanao & The Philippine Eagle

*February 28 – March 8, 2027*



*Philippine Eagle © Charles Salutan/Unsplash*

Few birds inspire birders more than the giant, critically endangered Philippine Eagle, one of the world's most magnificent and elusive raptors. Until recently, seeing one in the wild demanded difficult travel and complex logistics. Today, improved access allows us to offer a much more comfortable experience while still providing an excellent opportunity to observe this remarkable bird, once widely known as the Monkey-eating Eagle.

This week-long tour will also give us the chance to observe a nice cross-section of Mindanao and/or Philippine endemics not available on our Philippines Highlights tour. Among the birds possible are Ridgetop Swiftlet, Pinsker's Hawk-Eagle, Giant and Mindanao scops-owls, Mindanao Hornbill, Southern Silvery Kingfisher, Mindanao Racquet-tail, Mindanao and McGregor's cuckooshrikes, Black-and-cinnamon Fantail, Mountain Shrike, White-browed and Rufous-headed tailorbirds, Long-tailed Bush Warbler, Mindanao Heleia, Mindanao Island-

Thrush, Stripe-breasted Rhabdornis, Apo Myna, Cryptic Flycatcher, Olive-capped, Whiskered and Flame-crowned flowerpeckers, Gray-hooded and Lina's sunbirds, Orange-tufted Spiderhunter, Red-eared Parrotfinch and Cinnamon Ibon. Beyond these are several very rare inter-Asian migrants, such as Chinese Crested Tern and Japanese Night-Heron, that have become increasingly findable in recent years as "stake-outs." If we are especially lucky, we'll also connect with some birds of near-mythical status, such as Bagobo Robin and Mindanao Brown-Dove.



*Mindanao Hornbill © Adrian Constantino*

Please note that Mindanao has reduced tourist infrastructure compared to other locations in the Philippines. One of our hotels will be quite basic (a one-night stay in Compostela). Consider though that searching for the eagle previously involved strapping your bag to a horse and slogging it uphill in the mud to a bush camp. From that perspective, this is indeed a comfortable tour!

Please note that this tour may be taken as a stand-alone departure or in connection with our Philippines Highlights tours.

## February 28–March 1, Days 1–2: Travel to Manila

Participants will depart the United States on February 28 and arrive in Manila on March 1 at Ninoy Aquino International Airport (airport code: MNL). After collecting your luggage, please proceed outside the baggage claim area, where you will be met by a representative of our local ground operator. Transportation will be provided to the SEDA Bay Hotel, where a room has been reserved in your name.

We will gather for a welcome and orientation meeting in the hotel lobby at 7:00 p.m.

Travel Notes: Flights from North America to the Philippines cross the International Date Line and, depending on your itinerary, typically result in the loss of one calendar day.

Consequently, some flight schedules may require departure from the United States on February 27 in order to arrive at the hotel in time for the welcome meeting on March 1.

Because international travel can be unpredictable, we strongly recommend arriving in Manila one or more days before March 1. Doing so provides a buffer against possible travel delays and allows time to recover from the long international journey before the tour begins. Upon request, the VENT office will be happy to assist with arranging additional hotel accommodations.

**NIGHTS:** In flight (Feb 28)

SEDA Manila Bay, Manila (March 1)

## March 2, Day 3: Fly Manila to Cagayan de Oro: Drive to Cinchona

We will take a morning flight to the city of Cagayan de Oro where we'll commence the drive to Cinchona, situated in Mount Kitanglad Natural Park. The drive will take four to five hours, and we will stop for any interesting birds we encounter along the way. We hope to have everyone settled into the hotel in time to start our true forest birding this afternoon.

**NIGHT:** Hotel de Susana, Valencia, Bukidnon

## March 3–4, Days 4-5: Cinchona Forest Reserve and the search for the Philippine Eagle

We will dedicate two full days in the Cinchona area to finding and observing the Philippine Eagle, certainly one of the world's most spectacular birds.

The Philippine Eagle is one of the world's largest and most powerful raptors and is found only on the islands of Luzon, Samar, Leyte, and Mindanao. Once widespread across these islands, it has suffered a dramatic decline over the past century, primarily because of the destruction of its lowland and montane rainforest habitat. The principal threats to the survival of the species were:

**Deforestation**—Commercial logging, agricultural expansion, mining, and human settlement have eliminated vast tracts of old-growth forest required by the species. Because each breeding pair occupies an exceptionally large territory—often 50–130 km<sup>2</sup> (20–50 mi<sup>2</sup>) or more, depending on habitat quality—even modest habitat loss can displace breeding birds.

**Hunting and persecution** – Eagles have historically been shot for sport, killed out of fear, or captured for private collections and zoos. Although now protected by law, occasional shootings still occur.

**Low reproductive rate** – The species lays only a single egg every two years under normal circumstances. Young remain dependent on their parents for many months, making population recovery inherently slow.

**Habitat fragmentation**—Remaining forests are increasingly isolated, making it more difficult for young eagles to establish territories and maintain genetic connectivity between populations.

Today, the Philippine Eagle is classified as Critically Endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Current estimates suggest that only a few hundred breeding pairs remain in the wild, with Mindanao supporting the largest surviving population.



*A Philippine Eagle dwarfs an Oriental Honey-Buzzard in Cinchona © Adrian Constantino*

Despite these challenges, there are encouraging signs. The Philippine Eagle Foundation has become a global model for raptor conservation. Through habitat protection, nest monitoring, community education, captive breeding, veterinary care, and rehabilitation of injured birds, the Foundation has helped improve the outlook for the species. Equally important, increasing numbers of local communities now view the eagle as a symbol of national pride and a flagship for rainforest conservation.

Although its future remains uncertain, the Philippine Eagle's story is no longer one of decline. It is also one of determined conservation efforts and growing optimism that this remarkable bird can persist if sufficient forest habitat is protected and restored.

Visitors here are not simply traveling to see one of the world's most magnificent birds—they are also witnessing one of Southeast Asia's most significant conservation success stories in progress.

Over the next two days we will devote our efforts to searching for the Philippine Eagle. From viewpoints overlooking the surrounding forest, we will patiently scan the canopy in hopes of observing this extraordinary raptor. It is important to maintain realistic expectations. We

may see the bird well, or simply not at all. On days with favorable weather, the eagles often soar high above their forest territory, providing excellent viewing opportunities of birds in flight. With a bit of luck, we may even find one perched in full view. Spotting scopes are invaluable for this search, and we will have two available for the group's use. If the weather is bad, i.e. overcast and rainy, the birds may remain concealed within the forest overstory.

Beyond the eagle there are plenty of special forest birds to maintain our focus. Yellow-breasted Fruit-Dove, Philippine Cuckoo-Dove, Philippine Hawk-Cuckoo, Philippine Coucal, Ridgetop and Philippine swiftlets, Whiskered Treeswift, Buff-spotted Flameback, Philippine Pygmy Woodpecker, Philippine Trogon, Mindanao Hornbill, Blue-capped Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Whistler, Short-tailed Drongo, Rufous-headed Tailorbird, Coletto, Philippine Leaf-Warbler, Sulphur-billed Nuthatch, Stripe-breasted Rhabdornis, Apo Myna, Gray-hooded and Gray-throated sunbirds, and Olive-capped, and Pygmy flowerpeckers will all be on the radar. At night we can look for Philippine Frogmouth, and Everett's, Giant and Mindanao scops-owls. While raptor watching, we can keep an eye out for Black-winged Kite, Oriental and Philippine honey-buzzards, Philippine Serpent-Eagle, Rufous-bellied Eagle and Pinsker's Hawk-Eagle.

There will be plenty to keep us occupied, for sure!

**NIGHTS:** Hotel de Susana, Valencia, Bukidnon



*Mindanao Scops-Owl: A tricky bird to find in the mountain forests*  
© Adrian Constantino

## March 5, Day 6: Travel from Cinchona to Compostela

After a final morning of birding in Cinchona, we will drive southeast to a relatively recently opened birding site in the Compostela Valley. The drive will take four hours.

After checking into our relatively basic hotel, we hope to have time for birding in the Compostela Valley in the afternoon. This site offers good forest biodiversity and is most famous for the endemic and rare Lina's Sunbird. High on our wish-list will be rarities such as Spotted Imperial-Pigeon, Mindanao Brown-Dove, Mindanao Racquet-tail, McGregor's Cuckooshrike, Mindanao Island-Thrush, Bagobo Robin, Flame-crowned Flowerpecker and Red-eared Parrotfinch. Mixed flocks should consist of Turquoise Flycatcher, Mindanao Heleia, Warbling White-eye, Black-and-cinnamon Fantail, Elegant Tit, Negros Leaf-Warbler, Rufous-headed Tailorbird and Fire-throated Flowerpecker. There are good chances for forest raptors like Philippine Serpent-Eagle, endemic woodpeckers like the Buff-spotted Flameback, and maybe a chance to jag a Blue-capped Kingfisher or Mindanao Scops-Owl. There have even been records recently of Philippine Eagle and Mindanao Lorikeet, so there is a definite wild card element to this site.

**NIGHT:** Cocos Hotel COMVAL

*(Please note that this is a very basic accommodation and single may be asked to share a room)*

## March 6, Day 7: Drive to Davao

We will make the most of the morning tracking down all of our key target birds. After the most productive part of the morning has passed and activity has subsided, we will make the drive to Davao, about two and a half hours northeast. En route we will stop to search for the incredibly rare Chinese Crested Tern (world population estimate at 140 individuals). Up to four individuals have been recorded in the bay in recent years and can often be scoped loafing on bamboo poles. Hopefully, after success with the tern we will drive through to our very comfortable hotel that offers good onsite forest birding. The premier attraction has been the wintering Japanese Night-Heron that often feeds quite unconcernedly in the

orchards adjoining the forest. Hopefully, we will have some local intelligence on the location of the bird and go straight for it. In the evening, we will try for Giant Scops-Owl.

**NIGHT:** Eden Nature Park & Resort, Davao



*For nearly a decade, a Japanese Night Heron has returned regularly to an orchard in Mindanao © Adrian Constantino*

## March 7, Day 8: Davao to Manila

We will have the morning to track down two last rare Mindanao endemics: Cryptic Flycatcher and Whiskered Flowerpecker. Ponds and streams in the hotel gardens often host the beautiful Southern Silvery Kingfisher and there is some chance for the hyper-active Orange-flanked Spiderhunter. Other more widely distributed birds possible here are White-eared Brown-Dove, Plain Bush-hen, Philippine Hanging-Parrot, the distinctive subspecies of Scarlet Minivet, Little Pied Flycatcher, Everett's White-eye, Brown Tit-Babbler, and Bicolored, Red-keeled and Orange-bellied flowerpeckers.

After lunch we will go to the airport to check in for the afternoon flight to Manila.

Upon arrival in Manila, we'll receive transfer to the SEDA Manila Bay where this evening we will attend a welcome meeting with newly arrived participants. Those not continuing to the main tour will overnight in Manila before transferring back to the airport the next day for international flights.

**NIGHT:** SEDA Manila Bay, Manila

## March 8, Day 9: Departure from Manila

Participants who stayed in Manila the previous evening will depart today, arriving in the USA on the same day.

### **Essential Tour Information**

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour is limited to 8 tour participants.

**TOUR LEADER(s):** This tour is led by **Dion Hobcroft** and a local leader.



Dion Hobcroft has been working for VENT since 2001. He has led many tours (more than 200) to Australia, New Guinea, New Zealand, Bhutan, Indonesia, India, China, Southwest Pacific, Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, Malawi, Myanmar, Japan, Russia, Alaska, Tanzania, Uganda, Madagascar, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and the Antarctic. In 2007, 2013–2019, and 2022–2025 alone, Dion showed more than 2,000 species of birds to

VENT clients every calendar year. His informative, relaxed, and educational nature, combined with sharp eyes and ears, has established Dion as a favorite of many tour participants. His fieldwork for over 40 years on birds and other terrestrial vertebrates has allowed him to amass an extraordinary knowledge of the biodiversity in the Asia-Pacific region. Born in Tasmania and based in Sydney, Dion has traveled widely throughout Australasia, listing over 1,200 species, placing him in the top echelons of the region's birders. He is very tuned-in to the songs of bird species in the Asia-Pacific region and specializes in rare and elusive species. He is delighted to show these skulking rarities to his travel companions. Dion has published several papers on field ornithology, served on national and state rare bird committees, managed Birdline NSW, run introduction to ornithology courses for Sydney University, and,

before he traveled so continuously, was a popular speaker with various natural history societies. Dion has worked for many research and government agencies ranging from the Antarctic Division, Department of Environment NSW, Agriculture Protection WA, Taronga Zoo, Australian Museum, and the Queensland Department of Primary Industry. Dion lives in Sydney with his wife, Lise, and two grown-up children, Grace (age 24) and Daniel (age 20).

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

**TOUR FEE:** \$3,325 per person based on double occupancy or \$4,025 for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 through dinner on Day 8, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, all ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare to nor from the starting/ending city; however, flights within the tour (if any) are included. The fee also excludes laundry, personal expenses, and other items of a personal nature. For information about gratuities, please see the “TIPPING” sub-section below. 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 (October 31, 2026) 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.

**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 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 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.

### **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. Due to storing our luggage in the Land Cruisers when we are traveling, a soft-sided bag is important to help us use space efficiently.

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**

**PASSPORTS:** A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned arrival date in the Philippines is required.

**VISAs:** U.S. citizens must obtain an approved visa or Electronic Travel Authority (ETA) before traveling to Australia. Australia does not offer visa-free entry for American passport holders. All travelers must apply for an electronic travel arrival form from 72 hours before they fly.

**IMPORTANT:** The visa details above are current for U.S. citizens as of September 9, 2026. Because entry requirements can change without notice, we kindly remind all participants to double-check the latest information before traveling. Travelers using non-U.S. passports are responsible for confirming any entry requirements that apply to their home country.

**CLOTHING:** As this trip operates in a casual setting, typical birding attire is recommended and sufficient.

- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI carry field clothing that many birders find appealing. Pants and shirts made of lightweight, yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular and more reasonably priced than in the past. Please be sure your shirts are long-sleeved. Neutral colors are preferred.
- **Shirts:** Several non-field-type shirts or other comfortable styles suitable for warm weather will come in handy when relaxing around the hotels and lodges.
- **Hat:** For protection from the sun is essential. A broad-brimmed hat affords the best protection, but please bring a baseball cap at the least.
- **Sweaters and Coats:** Warm weather is expected on this trip, but a warm jacket, fleece or sweater is strongly recommended for the evenings, when it can cool considerably.

- Other outerwear: A parka or water repellent jacket will be necessary in the event of rain or heavy fog.
- Swimsuit: A swimsuit may be handy in some locations where there is a swimming pool.

**FOOTWEAR:** A light hiking boot or sturdy trail shoe is strongly recommended. Footwear that features a covered toe and a solid sole are important when birding on foot in most situations. Athletic shoes and open-toe footwear are appropriate on travel days and around hotels and lodges.

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

- Backpack: **Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment during all land excursions**
- Notebooks and pens
- Travel alarm clock (if not using your phone)
- Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection
- Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions
- Personal toiletries
- Plug adapters – See ELECTRICITY below
- Cameras, lenses, film, memory cards, and extra batteries
- Collapsible walking stick – A highly recommended item for those who have trouble walking
- Tissue packs

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

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

watching over valleys, and as it is difficult for participants to exchange views on a flying raptor in a telescope, you may have more success if you have your own scope for this tour. Please make sure you are familiar in how to use it and are well-practiced.

### **DESTINATION INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS**

**CLIMATE & WEATHER:** The rainy and dry seasons have become less well-defined and predictable in recent years; however we expect mainly warm to hot weather with daytime temperatures ranging from 77–88 °F. In the highlands evenings can be chilly, with cool, misty mornings when temperatures may fall to the mid-50's. Generally, the temperatures and climate are quite pleasant and comfortable, but hotter and more humid on the coast. We will most likely experience some rain storms. Typically, rain is good as it brings the birds into breeding plumage, and many species nest at this time of year.

**CONDITIONS:** Mindanao is a less-developed island than many others in the Philippines. In certain areas, we should expect the roads to be slow, pot-holed, and bumpy. Accommodations range from basic (Compostela) to good at other locations. Physical demands are light to moderate. Most walking will be on established trails and roadsides, with occasional birding from a vehicle. For the more physically fit among us, we will walk some uphill trails for those keen to move into the forest interior for shyer birds that avoid the forest edge. There will be several long drives between key birding sites, but with regular stops to stretch, bird and use restrooms/bush stops along the way. We will likely carry packed lunches on these longer drives. For anyone who needs more rest, it will be easy to opt out of an excursion in favor of birding around the lodges. Many locations offer good birding right at the doorstep.

**Philippine Eagle search:** This tour is designed around observation of the Philippine Eagle. We are excited to offer this opportunity because it is possible to do so under better conditions than ever before. With that in mind, seeing the bird will require good weather and a bit of luck. The eagle is a very rare, low-density species that can easily escape detection, which means that getting the bird, even under the best of circumstances, could require time and patience. We will visit Mount Kitanglad National Park where we will spend two full days searching for the eagle. Our approach will involve positioning ourselves at various viewpoints overlooking the forest, from which we will scan the sky and treetops with

binoculars and telescopes with hope of spotting a bird. Our chances are dramatically better if the mornings are clear and warm; less so if the weather is foggy and/or rainy. In the very best-case scenario, we will spot a bird sitting on an exposed perch in the forest canopy. A more likely scenario is that we would see a bird in flight soaring over the forest. Participants need also accept the reality that the bird will not be seen at all if weather conditions are less conducive.

**FOOD & WATER:** Bottled water will be provided at all times. Please avoid uncooked foods. Your tour leaders will advise of the safety of all food and drinks at all locations.

**CURRENCY & SPENDING:** Your trip to the Philippines includes all necessary expenses, including all meals and transportation. It is not necessary to obtain local currency, but if you wish to have some handy, you will not need large amounts. Almost all places, including gift shops, accept major credit cards. If you do wish to obtain local currency, it is best to acquire it before leaving the U.S. or at the airport in Manila. There are ATM machines throughout the Philippines. If you decide to obtain local currency once the tour has started, U.S. Dollars may be accepted in cities and larger towns, but businesses may not be able to provide change.

The official currency of the Philippines is the Philippine Peso (PHP). You can check the latest currency conversion rate by visiting “XE-The World’s Favorite Currency Site” at:

<http://www.xe.com/>.

Notes on using cash: It is impossible to exchange (or use as payment) U.S. dollars of any denomination that were printed prior to 2013; neither banks nor merchants will accept these older style notes that lack the most recent anti-counterfeiting designs. All notes should be clean, unmarked, and unturned.

Notes on credit/ATM cards: Please bring your PIN number and don’t forget to notify your bank of your travel plan so activity is not seen as suspicious. Check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

**ELECTRICITY:** Electrical current in the Philippines is 220–230 volts; 60Hz frequency. Power outlets are of types A, B, and C.

## Plug Types

- Type A: Two flat parallel pins, commonly used in North America. Most outlets in the Philippines accept this type.
- Type B: Similar to Type A but with an additional grounding pin. Type B plugs may require an adapter for non-grounded outlets.
- Type C: Two round pins, the standard European plug. Some outlets in the Philippines are Type C or hybrid, accepting both Type A and C plugs. Many hotels and public places may have a mix of these types, sometimes even in the same room, so a universal travel adapter is recommended.

NOTES: Devices from countries with 100–127V (like the US and Canada) may require a voltage converter if they are not dual-voltage. Most modern electronics like phone chargers and laptops are multi-voltage (100–240V) and can be used safely with just a plug adapter.

<https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=955c028097acfabdf4e675bd8f29b29dae7b9c9e0182d3a2ff5090e0a3f9a65JmItdHM9MTc4ODczOTIwMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=4&fclid=3d5a657b-2ab1-65b9-0e5f-76f02bb964e9&psq=electricity+outlets+in+the+Philippines&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly93b3JsZC1wb3dlci1wbHVncy5jb20vcGhpbGlwcGluZXM&ntb=1>

Check your device's voltage rating before plugging in. Use a universal adapter to cover Type A, B, and C outlets. Be cautious with older or poorly maintained outlets, as some may be loose or non-grounded. If your device has a grounding pin and the outlet is non-grounded, an adapter is necessary to connect safely.

**INTERNET ACCESS:** Patchy. Generally good in larger towns; WIFI is available in the hotels but often in reception and restaurant areas only. Service is less reliable in more remote locations.

**LANGUAGE:** Tagalog and English are the official languages of the Philippines.

**TIME:** The Philippines are 13 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time.

**LAUNDRY SERVICE:** Laundry service is available at most of the hotels and lodges where we'll stay, which will enable you to pack lighter.

## **HEALTH & SAFETY**

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

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

**COVID 19:** All eligible travelers should be up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines.

**MALARIA:** Malaria is known from the Mindanao island group, although the chances of transmission are low given the locations we'll visit. The CDC does recommend that travelers going to this area of the Philippines take prescription medicine to prevent malaria.

Depending on the medicine you take, you will need to start taking this medicine multiple days before your trip, as well as during and after your trip. Please consult with your doctor about which malaria medication you should take.

**TYPHOID:** VENT recommends vaccination against Typhoid, a bacterial disease endemic to the Philippines. Typhoid, or Typhoid Fever, is caused by *Salmonella Typhi*. It is transmitted through consumption of contaminated food and water, typically when someone who is infected uses the bathroom and does not wash their hands. Symptoms may include high fever, weakness, stomach pain, headache, diarrhea or constipation, cough, and loss of appetite.

**CHIKUNGUNYA:** Chikungunya is a viral disease transmitted by mosquitos. As of this writing (September 2026) there is elevated risk of Chikungunya in the Philippines. The CDC recommends "consider" vaccination when traveling to this destination as it is the best method for preventing this illness. With that in mind, prevention starts with avoiding being

bitten by mosquitos. We recommend wearing long sleeve shirts and pants when in the field and applying insect repellent to your clothing and areas of exposed skin. A stick-style repellent is easier to apply to the face and hands, while a pump-style container is ideal for clothing. Please refer to the Insect Repellent section below for more information on the use of repellents.

**YELLOW FEVER:** Vaccination is not required or even necessary.

**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.

**BITING INSECTS:** Mosquitoes can be a nuisance in coastal lowland areas and forests.

Recommendation is insect repellent, long sleeves and pants for these situations.

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

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

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

Insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **FIELD GUIDES:**

#### ***Birds***

Allen, Desmond. *Birds of the Philippines*. Lynx Nature Books. Barcelona 2020. This is by far the best field guide available to the birds of the Philippines. Essential.

### **HISTORY AND CULTURE:**

Francia, Luis H. *A History of the Philippines: From Indios Bravos to Filipinos*. Abrams Press, 2013.

A number of books are available on the history of this country. This title is recommended for its in-depth exploration of the forces and factors that shaped the islands and its inhabitants—from a diverse people to a national identity.

### **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. Please download the Philippines bird pack from the eBird app.

**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 Philippines pack. Highly recommended.

### **TERMS, CONDITONS & 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 September 9, 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.

PHLE

9/28/25 Dion Hobcroft

9/10/2026 – BL/PS/DE

Publish Date: 9/15/26