



BEST OF BELIZE

Crooked Tree & Chan Chich Lodge

March 15 - 23, 2027

This tour combines two premier locales in Belize into one action-packed week of birding. The incredible waterbird spectacle of Crooked Tree and the fabulous, protected rainforests of Chan Chich Lodge combine for Central American birding at its best!

Crooked Tree, just north of Belize City, is a region renowned for its wonderful concentrations of water birds. For most of two days we will explore the expansive wet and dry savannas, patches of coastal thorn scrub, pine/oak woodland and the famous Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary where Jabiru, Boat-billed Heron, Agami Heron, Snail Kite, Black-collared Hawk, Sungrebe, Russet-naped Wood-Rail and American Pygmy Kingfisher are among the many possibilities. Pine forests just west of the lagoon can harbor such regional specialties as Yellow-headed Parrot, Yucatan Woodpecker, and Yucatan Jay among a host of other land birds.



Anyone who has had the privilege of visiting the Chan Chich Lodge in northwestern Belize has been dazzled by its high quality facilities, special ambience, and superb birding and wildlife viewing opportunities. For many years, this area was private property, but with construction of the lodge, birders and naturalists have the unprecedented ability to experience wildlife on over 30,000 acres of pristine, subtropical moist forest.

Chan Chich is a place where rare and/or secretive species may still be encountered, many of which have been eradicated elsewhere. The lodge is built into the main plaza of an ancient Maya ruin. The forest starts right outside your door with monkeys, parrots, turkeys, guans, and more all visible from the veranda of your cabaña. Many highly sought Central American species can be found here including the likes of Great Curassow, Crested Guan, Ocellated Turkey, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Tody Motmot, Gray-throated Chat, Rose-throated Tanager, and more. Additionally, this is one of the better spots in the New World to have a chance of seeing a wild cat of some species. Simply put, this is the

largest tract of undisturbed, easily accessible lowland forest remaining in all of Central America, and it abounds with wildlife.

While birds will be the focus of our time in the field, this tour also provides exposure to a variety of other wildlife including mammals, reptiles, and butterflies.

March 15, Day 1: Arrival in Belize City

Participants should make plans to arrive in Belize City anytime this afternoon. After clearing immigration and customs, you will be met outside the airport and transported to the Fort George Marina Hotel & Spa in Belize City (about a 20-minute ride). Those arriving with enough time to bird may find a good variety of species right around the hotel. Cinnamon Hummingbird, White-fronted Amazon, Social Flycatcher, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, Morelet's Seedeater and Hooded and Orchard orioles are all regulars on the hotel grounds. We will gather in the hotel lobby at 6:00 p.m. for a welcome session followed by dinner.

NIGHT: Fort George Hotel and Spa, Belize City



Jabiru © Barry Zimmer

March 16, Day 2: Crooked Tree

We will depart early this morning (around 5:00 a.m.) heading northward to the village of Crooked Tree.

Pine forests and semi-open savannas in this area support a nice diversity of species, many of which are



Yucatan Woodpecker © Barry Zimmer

not likely to be seen elsewhere on the tour.

Common species here include Pale-vented Pigeon, White-fronted Amazon, Great Kiskadee, Vermilion Flycatcher, Brown Jay, Gray-breasted Martin, Mangrove Swallow, Clay-colored Thrush, Tropical Mockingbird, Cinnamon-bellied Saltator, Melodious Blackbird, and Hooded Oriole. Several less numerous species will be our main targets of the morning, however. We will give special

effort to locate the uncommon Yucatan Woodpecker and the stunning Yucatan Jay (both regional endemics). In addition, the road into Crooked Tree crosses the main lagoon, and here and at other wet areas, we should see a variety of waterbirds including such possibilities as Neotropic Cormorant, Little Blue and Green herons, White Ibis, Wood Stork, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, Limpkin, and Northern Jacana. Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Snail Kite (in some years downright common), Osprey, and Ringed and Belted kingfishers are likely. We will also try to keep an eye out overhead for the magnificent Jabiru. When water conditions are right (usually the lower the better), this incredible species visits Crooked Tree Lagoon.

After lunch we will head back to Belize City for birding on foot near the hotel. Cinnamon Hummingbirds forage in flowering trees in the hotel gardens, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers often roost in palms nearby, neotropical migrants forage in the gardens, and a variety of shorebirds and terns are possible along the wharf.

NIGHT: Fort George Hotel and Spa, Belize City

March 17, Day 3: Crooked Tree Lagoon; Continue to Chan Chich Lodge

We will again depart Belize City early this morning (probably around 5:00 a.m.) so as to be at Crooked Tree shortly after first light for a boat trip to the south end of the lagoon and hopefully on to Spanish Creek. Here a wide variety of new birds might be encountered, including the comical Boat-billed

Heron, Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned night herons, the rare and highly sought Agami Heron, Wood Stork, the stunning Russet-naped Wood-Rail, the elusive Sungrebe, and the tiny American Pygmy Kingfisher. All these species favor the brush-lined edges of the lagoon and finding them can be highly dependent on water levels at Crooked Tree (low water levels are required to see many of these species). Short forests on the edge of the water could also produce Black-collared Hawk, Rufous-breasted Spinetail, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Yellow-billed Cacique, and Yellow-tailed Oriole.

After lunch, we will head back to Belize City for our afternoon charter flight to Gallon Jug. Upon arrival at Gallon Jug airstrip, we will be met and transferred to Chan Chich Lodge.



Chan Chich Lodge © Barry Zimmer

Our lodging facilities are nestled on an ancient elevated plaza ringed by grass-covered temples and palaces clothed in dense forest. The owner has a reputation for doing everything first-class and this lodge is no exception. The thatched-roof cabañas are skillfully handcrafted of exquisite hardwoods to blend well with the natural surroundings. Inside each cabaña are two queen-size beds, a large array of

well-screened windows, a ceiling fan, a spacious bathroom with shower facilities and hot and cold running water, plus electrical power available twenty-four hours a day. To begin birding, all you have to do is step out your door! This is beyond doubt a dream come true— creature comforts and home-cooked food in an avian-rich setting, free of hunting and logging pressures.

We will spend the last hour or so of the afternoon birding the area right around the cabañas. Hummingbird feeders around the dining area and flowering bushes play host to White-necked Jacobin, Long-billed and Stripe-throated hermits, White-bellied Emerald, and Rufous-tailed Hummingbird. Ocellated Turkeys stroll about the grounds, and often Central American Spider Monkeys are visible around the edge of the clearing. A pair of stunning Bat Falcons is often visible in the vicinity of the pool, and other raptors may be spotted overhead. A check of nearby fruiting trees

could yield a wide variety of flashy birds including Crested Guan, Collared Aracari, Keel-billed Toucan, Mealy and Red-lored amazons, Olive-throated Parakeet, Masked Tityra, Yellow-winged Tanager, and Yellow-throated and Olive-backed euphonias.

As dusk settles in, we may be treated to some of the most incredible sounds of nature, including the ethereal calls of Great Tinamou, the eerie cries of Common Pauraque, and the impressive roars of Mexican Black Howler Monkeys.

NIGHT: Chan Chich Lodge, Gallon Jug Estate

March 18-22, Days 4-8: Chan Chich and Vicinity

For the next five days, we will enjoy the avian riches awaiting us in the private reserve surrounding Chan Chich and Gallon Jug. Situated amidst over 30,000 acres of protected seasonal rain forest, Chan Chich is truly a birder's paradise. Nine miles of well-maintained trails radiate out from the lodge, each covering somewhat different habitats. In addition, a series of roads through the property will allow for drives to outlying areas such as Laguna Seca, the escarpment, and Zibal. All in all, we should tally over 200 species of birds just on the lodge property.

On our first full day here, we will spend the first hour or so of the morning birding the area right around the cabañas. The lodge clearing is usually quite birdy with possibilities including Black-cheeked, Lineated and Pale-billed woodpeckers, Red-billed Pigeon, Gartered Trogon, White-crowned Parrot, Red-legged Honeycreeper, and a host of other species. It can be hard to tear one's self away from the area right around the rooms!



Slaty-tailed Trogon © Barry Zimmer

A walk down toward the suspension bridge takes us through taller forest where a new list of possibilities arises. Black-headed, Gartered Violaceous, and Slaty-tailed trogons; Pale-billed and Chestnut-colored woodpecker; Cinnamon Becard; Spot-breasted Wren; White-breasted Wood-Wren; Long-billed Gnatwren; Lesser Greenlet; and Red-crowned Ant-Tanager are among the many

possibilities. A side trip to the Upper Plaza and King's Tomb could produce such stunners as Rufous-tailed Jacamar, White-whiskered Puffbird, and Lesson's Motmot. Even the highly sought Tody Motmot is a real possibility here.

Each day we will venture onto a different trail or drive to a different habitat. On most days we will do both, alternating walking for part of the day with driving for the remainder. Our exact schedule will vary depending on weather and what birds are present.

In the shorter, drier forest, called bajo forest or tintal, we could see such specialties as Blue Ground Dove, Yellow-lored Amazon (scarce), Northern Schiffornis, White-bellied Wren, Long-billed Gnatwren, White-browed Gnatcatcher, Blue Bunting, and Green-backed Sparrow. In addition, two very special regional endemics are also possible, the striking Gray-throated Chat and Rose-throated Tanager.

Taller forests produce a different set of birds. Large mixed-species flocks roam about the jungle, often led by a Black-throated Shrike-Tanager. Each flock contains a somewhat different make-up, but Slaty-tailed, Black-headed, and Collared (very uncommon) trogons; seven species of woodcreepers; the incredible Chestnut-colored Woodpecker; Dot-winged Antwren; Northern Plain Xenops; Eye-ringed Flatbill; Ochre-bellied and Ruddy-tailed flycatchers; Yellow-olive Flatbill, Rufous Mourner; Tawny-crowned and Lesser greenlets; Green Shrike-Vireo; Red-crowned and Red-throated ant-tanagers; and Black-faced Grosbeak are among the possibilities in this habitat.



Chestnut-colored Woodpecker © Barry Zimmer

At a special location along Chan Chich Creek, birds come in to bathe in the afternoon, and the show can be spectacular. Purple-crowned Fairies dance over the water, while a variety of manakins, flycatchers, warblers, and tanagers come in for a quick bath or drink before sunset.

In the more open country around Gallon Jug and Zibal, possibilities include White-tailed Kite, Roadside Hawk, Green-breasted Mango, the comical Barred Antshrike, stunning Fork-tailed and Scissor-tailed flycatchers, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Brown Jay, Morelet's Seedeater, Blue-black Grassquit, Montezuma Oropendola, and Yellow-tailed Oriole. Raptors abound throughout this area with a wide variety of species possible (one year we had 21 species in one day!). The escarpment is a great area to find many of these species. King Vulture; Gray-headed, Hook-billed, Plumbeous, and Double-toothed kites; White, Gray, and Short-tailed hawks; Ornate and Black hawk-eagles; and Laughing Falcon are among some of the species we could see. Any drive could produce one of the most sought after birds of the area, the impressive Great Curassow. Like the turkey and the guan, this species has been eliminated from most of its range due to hunting pressures. Here one has a very good chance of seeing all three of these species.

In addition, we will take one night walk and a night drive away from the lodge. Several night birds are possible including Mottled, Barn, and Black-and-white (very uncommon) owls; Common Pauraque; the bizarre Northern Potoo; and Yucatan Nightjar. There is usually a good chance for an interesting mammal as well. We have had Ocelot on about a third of our trips, and there is always the possibility of something truly amazing such as a Jaguar or Puma. Again, due to the protection from hunting, this is perhaps one of the best places in the world to encounter a wild cat of some sort.

Our days here at Chan Chich are certain to yield some of the most memorable birding you will encounter anywhere!

NIGHTS: Chan Chich Lodge, Gallon Jug Estate

March 23, Day 9: Chan Chich and Departures Home

We will have a final couple of hours around the lodge this morning to look for any species we may have missed or we may opt to walk down toward the suspension bridge before returning to pack. We will leave Gallon Jug on a charter flight at 10:00 a.m., arriving at the Belize International airport

around 10:30 a.m. Departing flights home should be scheduled for no earlier than 1:00 p.m., as time is needed for check-in on international departures. Departures back to the States are scheduled at various times during the afternoon depending on the airline, so some participants may have a longer wait than others at the Belize airport.

ESSENTIAL TOUR INFORMATION

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

TOUR LEADERS: Barry Zimmer & Brennan Mulrooney



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.



Brennan Mulrooney was born and raised in San Diego, California. Growing up, his heart and mind were captured by the ocean. He split his summer days between helping out behind the scenes at southern California's leading aquarium and working on sport fishing vessels off the coast. As a wildlife and fisheries biology major at UC Davis, he developed his fascination with birds and love of birding while taking a required ornithology course. After graduating from UC Davis, Brennan traveled throughout the United States

working on widespread ornithological field studies. His work took him from the mountains of northern California to the Salton Sea in southern California, and from Cape May, New Jersey to Key Largo, Florida. After a six-year stay in the Florida Keys, Brennan returned home to San Diego where he

currently lives with his wife Brynne, their son Declan, and daughter Saoirse. Participants often comment that Brennan’s sharp eyes, sharper wit, and easygoing attitude make it a pleasure to bird with him

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: \$9,275 per person based on double occupancy or **\$11,025** for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast 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 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 (September 16, 2026) 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 (November 15, 2026) prior to the tour departure date.

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

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

About Redpoint Travel's Ripcord Plan

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

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

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of

the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, second deposit, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip costs in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

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

About Medjet’s MedjetAssist Plan

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

For travelers under 75, MedjetAssist may be purchased as Short-Term Memberships of 8, 15, 21, and 30 days, or Regular Annual Memberships from 1 to 5 years. For travelers 75–84, Medjet offers a Diamond Membership that is the same program but with a few additional conditions.

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

GETTING THERE & REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

AIR TRAVEL: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international.* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If

you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. **Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be held responsible for any air ticket penalties.**

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

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

As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security, we recommend that you check the website of the [Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\)](#) for information pertaining to permissible carry-on items.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid beyond your planned return date is required for entry to Belize, with at least one blank page for entry stamp. We recommend that your passport be valid for at least six months beyond your planned return date. If your passport is stamped by the immigration officials upon entry, you must be sure to get an exit stamp before returning to the United States. Visas are not required for entry by United States citizens. Non-United States citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

Travelers **entering** and **leaving** Belize through the Philip Goldson International Airport can now submit their forms online before traveling. The process is very straightforward. Once the link is clicked, it automatically leads you to a Belize Immigration form website, where you will be required to input personal information along with details of your trip. Upon arrival at the Philip Goldson Airport, immigration and customs officials will have your information ready, making the process more efficient.

https://belizetravel.immigration.gov.bz/Belize_Digital_Forms/

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTHING: Light field clothing and casual attire are suitable for this tour. Bring several pairs of long pants and comfortable shirts. Long-sleeved shirts are useful for protection from the sun and occasional biting insects. Pre-treating field pants and socks with repellent can provide extra protection from chiggers. A good hat or cap, plus rain gear and/or an umbrella are essential. Be sure to have a pair of comfortable walking shoes or hiking boots, plus a second pair of footwear such as tennis shoes. Waterproof boots or NEOS overshoes may be useful if the rainy season has been prolonged (if it rains, the trails can be muddy), but most years the trails are rather dry by this time. A sweater and/or light jacket are also useful for occasionally cool, damp mornings, evenings and overcast days. Remember to take a bathing suit if you would like to take advantage of the pool. Laundry service is available on a charge-per-item basis at Chan Chich. Items dropped off in the morning at the front desk are usually returned late the same afternoon. If you plan to wash your clothes in your room, please know drip-drying (even of quick drying nylon items) may take a couple of days with the frequently high humidity.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good condition, along with a belt pack or day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, camera, etc.). As a precaution, it's a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leader will have a spotting scope; but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. You should also bring sunglasses and sunscreen, a good flashlight or headlamp, a small folding stool (many find this extremely useful when we are patiently waiting for shy forest birds, as well as at the bird bathing spot along the Sac Be Trail where we will be waiting for some time), battery-operated alarm clock, water bottle, camera, digital storage media and spare batteries, small

daypack, and your favorite snacks. We highly recommend that you bring a collapsible umbrella, and also carry it with you on longer walks. Personal items like digital storage media, sun lotion, batteries, etc., can be very expensive anywhere in Belize. Bring sufficient supplies with you.

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.

DESTINATION INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS

CLIMATE & WEATHER: The dry season runs from December through May, but showers can happen anytime in this region of lush, tropical moist forest. The average temperatures in March are lows in the low 60's to low 70's (but can on occasion dip into the 50's) and highs in the mid to upper 80's. The midday weather is often hot and humid (80-90 degrees), with slightly cooler evenings (each cabaña has a ceiling fan). Our 2025 tour had two exceptionally hot days that approached 100 degrees, so a wide range of temperatures is possible. Good raingear or an umbrella (or both) should be brought on any trip despite it being the dry season.

Temperatures in the Crooked Tree area will be somewhat hotter than at Chan Chich. Daytime highs here might reach into the 90s.

CONDITIONS: There will be several leisurely bird walks at Chan Chich, where the paths are wide and for the most part flat (there are a few ups and downs, especially around the temple areas). None of the walking will be particularly strenuous (longest walk will be around 3.5 miles). Altitude changes will vary from sea level to less than 900 feet elevation. To take advantage of the best time for avian activity, we will begin birding during the dawn hours each morning (breakfast will be at 6:00 a.m. each morning in Chan Chich). Chan Chich Lodge has a beautifully designed swimming pool and hot tub; the pool is enclosed by mosquito screens and is bug-free. There is also a pool at the Fort George Hotel in Belize City. There will be two early morning departures from Belize City (5:00 a.m. in order to be at Crooked Tree for an early breakfast followed by birding in the peak of the morning). The open-air,

safari type vehicles at Chan Chich are superb for birding. They do require going up three steps on the side of the vehicle to get in. There is a front passenger seat available in each vehicle if someone cannot manage the side steps.

CURRENCY: \$1 USD equals \$2 Belizean Dollars. The exchange rate is subject to change, but has been constant for some years. Both currencies have identical denominations. So if you plan to spend any money in Belize, make sure you understand whether the price is being quoted in Belizean or USD. It is not necessary to exchange currency for this tour, since USD are accepted everywhere.

ELECTRICITY: The electricity at Chan Chich Lodge is provided via two distant generators, which are in operation 24 hours a day. Electricity - 110/220 volts

INTERNET ACCESS: Chan Chich Lodge has Wi-Fi in the common areas. The Fort George Hotel has Wi-Fi available in the rooms.

LANGUAGE: English

TIME: Central Standard Time

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Chan Chich Lodge offers full laundry service.

HEALTH & SAFETY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

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

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

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

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta Georgia. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636), or you can check their website at www.cdc.gov/travel. 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).

A Note About Chiggers: This tour visits areas where chiggers are known to occur. Chiggers are tiny parasitic mites found in most warm weather areas of the southern United States and the world's tropics. They are especially numerous in grassy areas, where, in the immature stage, they attach themselves to other animals or humans who make contact with the grass as they pass by. Chiggers do not suck blood and the majority of species do not carry disease. They do feed on bodily fluids through a process in which a digestive enzyme is produced by the chigger which essentially liquefies the skin around the area where the chigger is attached. The chigger is not usually attached to the skin for more than a few hours before it either falls off or is knocked off. Our bodies respond by producing a hardened area as a defense against the chigger's digestive enzyme. Though the chigger may be long gone, it is the presence of the hardened area, and the body's natural process of reabsorbing it that

typically causes intense itching, often lasting for a week or more. Chiggers like to attach themselves to areas of thin skin, like around the ankles, beltline, undergarment lines, knees, and elbows.

Chiggers can be avoided by following these procedures:

- Avoid walking or standing in areas dominated by grass. These areas are where one is most likely to encounter chiggers.
- Tuck your pants into your socks to avoid direct skin-to-grass contact. Chiggers can find their way through clothing, but this is a standard and effective prevention technique.
- Apply insect repellent to your skin and clothing. Please refer to the Insect Repellent section that follows for important information about selecting and applying repellent.
- Powdered sulfur applied to waist, bottoms of pants, sock and boots is also effective at repelling chiggers. However, be warned that clothes will retain the sulfur odor for several washings. If using sulfur, never touch your eyes, nose, or mouth before washing your hands first.
- Shower at the end of each day in the field. Use a washcloth to vigorously rub your legs, feet, and ankles.

By following these methods, you should be able to avoid all chigger bites, as well as tick bites. If, however, you are bitten by chiggers anyway, you can reduce or eliminate the symptoms by applying benzocaine or hydrocortisone creams, calamine lotion, After Bite, or any number of anti-itch products.

***We strongly recommend the use of Insect Shield® clothing.** Insect Shield is a process by which clothing is treated with an EPA-approved formula of the insect repellent permethrin. Such clothing is highly repellent to insects and provides durable and long-lasting protection, even after dozens of washings. Outdoor wear with Insect Shield protection includes name brands such as ExOfficio and Tilley, and can be purchased at outdoor recreation stores such as REI and from a variety of online retailers. In lieu of Insect Shield clothing, you should consider treating your clothes with permethrin, which has the same effect, and can be purchased at outdoor recreation stores and from a variety of online retailers.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). You can check the CDC website at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html> (click on Travel Health).

SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION

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 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:

Mammals

Emmons, Louise H. *Neotropical Rainforest Mammals*. University of Chicago Press. Chicago. 1997

Birds

Fagan, Jesse & Komar, Oliver. *Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Northern Central America*. Houghton Mifflin Publishing, 2016.

Glassberg, Jeffrey. *A Swift Guide to the Butterflies of Mexico and Central America*. Sunstreak Books, 2007.

Hilty, Steven. *Birds of Tropical America*. Shelburne, VT: Chapters Publishing Ltd., 1994. Subtitle: "A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity."

Howell, Steve N.G. and Sophie Webb. *A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Jones, H. Lee. *Birds of Belize*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2003.

Rabinowitz, Alan. *Jaguar*. New York, NY: Arbor House, 1986.

SUGGESTED RECORDINGS: These will be helpful in learning the vocalizations of some of the region's birds.

Bird Songs of Belize, Guatemala and Mexico by Dale Delaney. Library of Natural Sounds, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 1992.

A Bird Walk at Chan Chich by John V. Moore. San Jose, California: Astral Sounds Recording, 1992.
Proceeds aid the local library in Gallon Jug, Belize.

Birds of Mexico MP3 Sound Collection, by Peter Boesman. Distributed by Birdsounds.nl

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 needs 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.

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 June 2, 2026 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant's Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

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

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

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