



# COLORADO GROUSE

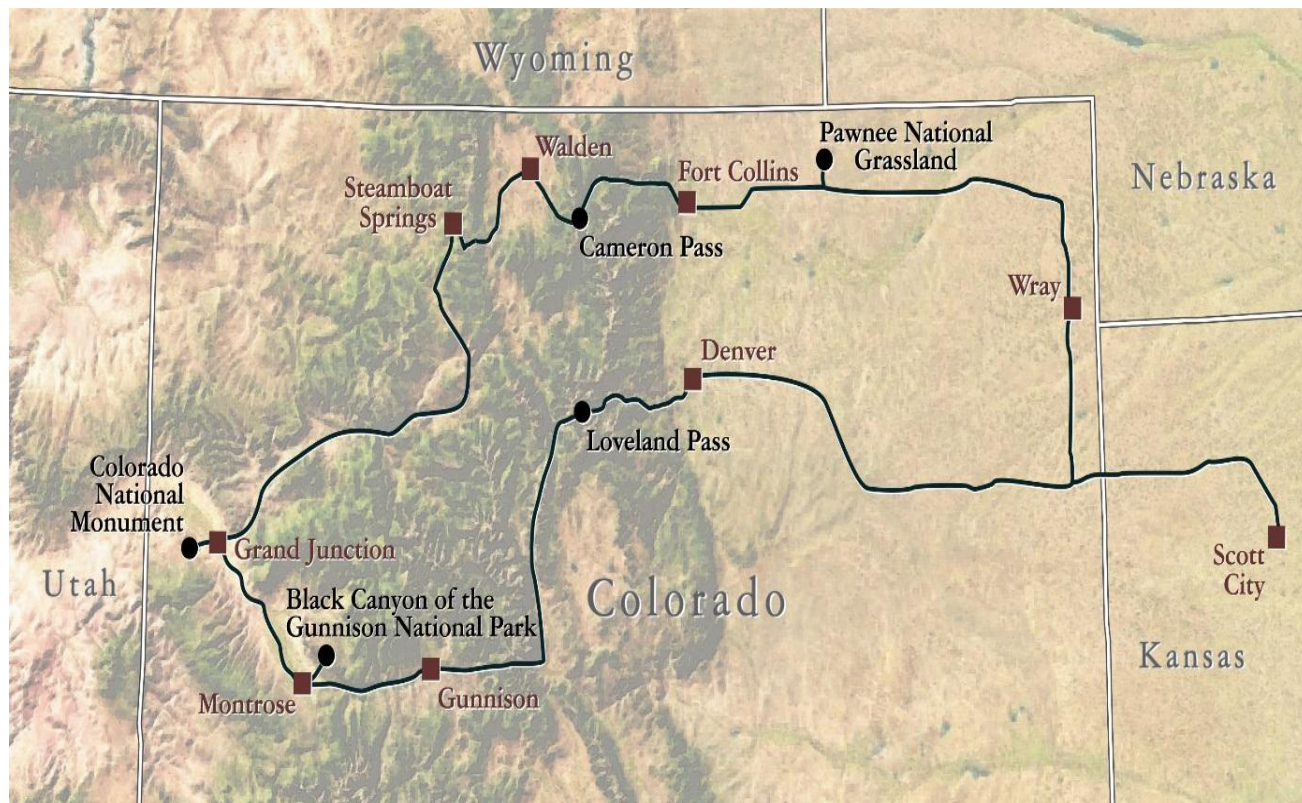
*April 1 – 11, 2027*



*Sharp-Tailed Grouse © Erik Bruhnke*

Five species of lekking grouse inhabit the prairies and northern valleys of North America—the Greater and Gunnison sage-grouse, the Sharp-tailed Grouse, and the Greater and Lesser prairie-chickens. All are noted for their spectacular mating displays, and all can be exceedingly difficult to find away from their “leks” or display grounds. This tour will focus on observing these birds and their mating rituals. From the sandhills of western Kansas to the high sagebrush parklands of the mountains of Colorado, we’ll be spectators at some of the most fascinating displays in the bird world, such as the “booming” of the prairie-chickens, the wild dance of the sharp-tails, and the strutting of the huge sage-grouse. We also seek out more secretive denizens of Colorado, the Dusky Grouse and White-tailed Ptarmigan, but these birds are always a challenge and have been missed.

There are more birds to see in Colorado at this season than grouse. Possibilities will include Golden Eagle; Ferruginous, Rough-legged and Swainson's hawks; Prairie Falcon; Sandhill Crane; Mountain Plover; Lewis's Woodpecker; Mountain Bluebird; Chestnut-collared and Thick-billed longspurs; as well as a host of waterfowl, shorebirds, and prairie and montane specialties. Mammal viewing should also be excellent, and the scenery will be breathtaking. Although the tour will require considerable daytime driving, we'll make frequent stops.



## April 1, Day 1: Arrival in Denver

Participants should make arrangements to arrive today and take the complimentary shuttle to our hotel where a room will be reserved in your name. We will gather early this evening for a short orientation followed by dinner.

**NIGHT:** Courtyard Denver Airport, Denver



## April 2, Day 2: Depart Denver; Birding Loveland Pass and Silverthorne; Drive to Gunnison

This morning, we will depart the west side of town where we will have breakfast enroute to our first birding spot. After breakfast we will make our way up the mountains for an attempt to see the White-tailed Ptarmigan at Loveland Pass at 12,000 feet. Nearby in Silverthorne we will look for Rosy-Finches and other high elevation birds before heading southwest to Gunnison. Time pending on this afternoon, we may keep our eyes out among select cottonwoods that could be home to Lewis's Woodpeckers.

**NIGHT:** Holiday Inn Express, Gunnison

## April 3, Day 3: Gunnison Area; Drive to Montrose



*White-tailed Ptarmigan © Erik Bruhnke*

A pre-dawn start will take us to the first of our five grouse leks, this one for the recently described and declining Gunnison Sage-Grouse. With its strange filoplume crest, more prominently banded tail, smaller size than the Greater Sage-Grouse, and tiny range (basically restricted to southwestern Colorado), this threatened species is sought after among many birders. Though this lek is not close, we should have scope views of the Gunnison Sage-Grouse in their

outrageous display. After the morning display by the sage-grouse, we will have an opportunity for additional birding throughout the day. Throughout recent years we have maximized our day's birding experiences and trip diversity by birding our way west towards Montrose; occasionally starting with local birding in Gunnison and visiting several waterways west that are home to a wide array of waterfowl and scattered gulls among various other sightings. An afternoon visit to the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park may ensue with the day's short drive, for a brief chance for Dusky Grouse (which we will also be looking for with greater time allotted, in the morning to follow). Note: Viewing

the Gunnison Sage-Grouse will be from a blind and we will be inside from around 5:00 a.m. until the grouse leaves (sometimes not until after 8:00 a.m.)

**NIGHT:** Hampton Inn, Montrose

## April 4, Day 4: Montrose to Grand Junction

The spectacular Black Canyon of the Gunnison will be a wonderful backdrop as we survey this little-known national park for the hulking Dusky Grouse along the roadside scenic overlooks, with the Dusky Grouse being a focus species of our morning. Fox Sparrow, Woodhouses's Scrub-Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, and Spotted Towhee make up just a few of the additional potential birds while visiting the national park. We will then bird our way up to Grand Junction while taking in the scenic splendor of the arid canyonlands. Lewis's Woodpeckers may be flycatching from ancient gnarly cottonwoods along the way.



*Brown-capped Rosy-Finch © Brian Gibbons*

**NIGHT:** Holiday Inn Express and Suites, Grand Junction

## April 5, Day 5: Grand Junction to Craig

In the morning, we will explore the red rock canyonlands of Colorado National Monument searching for Pinyon Jays, Juniper Titmouse and Black-throated Sparrows among the junipers and pinyon pines of this beautiful, stark landscape. The morning's visit to the Colorado National Monument is often a tour-highlight experience for many participants over the years, noting the special scenery we explore and bird among. While challenging to find on a single morning, we will also be in the realm of the introduced Chukar among the rustic, rocky landscape. Perhaps we'll have some luck with this species.

**NIGHT:** Best Western Plus Deer Park Hotel and Suites, Craig

## April 6, Day 6: Craig to Walden

Another early morning will have us starting out at a Sharp-tailed Grouse lek. Although smaller and less physically imposing, they have the most arresting dance. With tails held high, wings bowed out to the sides, and feet propelling them in circles, they resemble wind-up toys run amok. Imitated by the Plains Indians, this dance is an integral part of spring on the northern prairies. In the rolling grasslands nearby, Sandhill Cranes and Western Meadowlarks may enliven the scene. Along the way to Walden, we may search a few spruce forest areas for American Three-toed Woodpecker, Pine Grosbeak and Clark's Nutcrackers before continuing towards Walden. American Dippers are known to make the nearby rivers their home. After crossing Rabbit Ears Pass, we'll descend into North Park, a region of sweeping vistas where snow-covered mountains provide a backdrop for marshy meadows and mint-green sagebrush hills. Mountain Bluebirds add dazzling touches of color to the landscape; and in some years, roadside snowbanks or local feeders may hold lingering rosy finches. Raptors (particularly Golden Eagle, Rough-legged and Swainson's hawks, but also an occasional Prairie Falcon) should be evident. Mammal possibilities for the day include Moose, Pronghorn, Mule Deer, and White-tailed Prairie Dog.

**NIGHT:** North Park Inn and Suites, Walden

## April 7, Day 7: Walden to Fort Collins

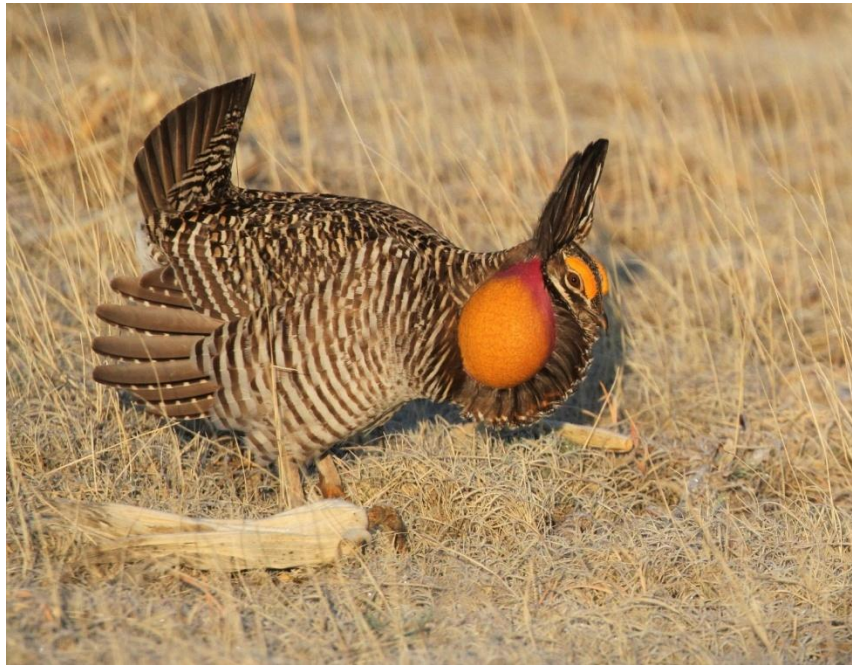
Today we will travel from Walden to Fort Collins, but only after we have watched the spectacular and impressive Greater Sage-Grouse on their lek. We will also spend time searching through the piles of birds at Walden Reservoir; fifteen species of ducks are possible. The grebes, shorebirds and local Bald Eagles will keep us busy for a couple of hours. We'll spend any available time searching for other birds in the foothills,



*Greater Sage-Grouse display © Brian Gibbons*

including various raptors, Sandhill Cranes, and Spotted towhees. Cameron Pass will afford a final chance for any boreal forest birds we've not tracked down yet. Pine Grosbeak, Cassin's Finch, Canada Jay, and American Three-toed Woodpeckers are all possibilities if we have good weather. As we descend Poudre Canyon towards Fort Collins, we will encounter stunning scenery along the Poudre River, where dippers roam and Common Mergansers nest, and Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls have been known to show up during some years

**NIGHT:** Hilton Garden Inn, Fort Collins



*Greater Prairie-Chicken in display © Brian Gibbons*

## April 8, Day 8: Fort Collins to Wray

We will enjoy one of our later starts this morning before we head east to the Pawnee National Grassland, where we will be looking for Ferruginous and Swainson's Hawks among the fields. With some searching, our chances are quite good for finding Mountain Plover at select fields, as well as Chestnut-collared and Thick-billed longspurs, all in high breeding plumage. The rolling plains of shortgrass prairie with its tiny prickly pear cactus will contrast with the rugged mountains we've just departed. The vast Pawnee National Grasslands have a charm unto themselves, explored well on our tour, including flora and fauna alike.

**NIGHT:** Cobblestone Inn and Suites, Wray

## April 9, Day 9: Wray to Oakley, Kansas

We will hear the Greater Prairie-Chickens before we can see them. On cue the males start cooing in unison; whoops, cackles, and foot stomping ensue. With the morning sun, the golden-orange air sacs of the males glow with a lavender rim. With pinnae erect, the males display for any females that may wander through the lek. After this spectacular morning show we will head southeast, birding our way into Kansas for our second prairie-chicken, the Lesser.

**NIGHT:** Sleep Inn & Suites, Oakley

## April 10, Day 10: Oakley to Denver

Our final early morning will find us on a Lesser Prairie-Chicken lek. While they look similar when not displaying, the calls are different. More gurgling pops and the smaller brick red air sacs distinguish the Lesser from the Greater. They are a small spectacular species! After this last dance we will make our way back to Denver, searching along the way for any missing prairie birds like Mountain Plover, Burrowing Owl, and longspurs. It's a day of vast possibilities as our tour concludes. We will conclude with a checklist session back in Denver, and dinner to follow.

**NIGHT:** Courtyard Denver Airport, Denver

## April 11, Day 11: Departure for Home

Participants may make arrangements to leave Denver anytime today.

### **ESSENTIAL TOUR INFORMATION**

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour is limited to 12 tour participants.

**TOUR LEADER(s):** This tour is led by **Kevin Burke** and **Mollee Brown**.





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

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



**Mollee Brown** is an experienced birding guide, naturalist, and founder of Nighthawk Agency, with over a decade of work in birding, conservation, and environmental communication. She began her career at *Bird Watcher's Digest* before launching her agency in 2017, where she collaborates with companies and nonprofits on birding tourism, conservation initiatives, and outreach projects. She has led birding tours across the United States and internationally, often partnering with women-led organizations.

Mollee is also a skilled communicator, contributing to nature publications and co-hosting *Life List: A Birding Podcast*. Her guiding style emphasizes connections between bird behavior, habitats, conservation, and human impact, making her work accessible to a wide range of audiences. Academically, she holds degrees in economics and education, and she teaches bird and nature courses at a federal prison. She is active in the birding community, serving in leadership and advisory roles for multiple ornithological and conservation organizations, and founded The Birding Co-op.

Raised on a cattle farm, Mollee remains interested in sustainable agriculture's role in conservation and has contributed to multiple forest recovery programs. She lives in West Virginia on 40 acres of reclaimed land that she and her husband are restoring for wildlife habitat and organic food production, with help from their dogs.

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

**TOUR FEE:** \$6,095 per person based on double occupancy or \$6,925 for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 through dinner on Day 11, 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.

**REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT:** You may register for this tour through the VENT [website](#) or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The deposit for this tour is \$500 per person. We accept MasterCard and Visa

**PAYMENTS:** All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days (December 2) 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 handle the hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

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

**TIPPING:** An important part of the value of a VENT tour is knowing that tips for local service providers at our destinations—restaurant staff, hotel staff, drivers, local guides, and various other support staff—are included in your tour fee. If you would like to offer any of your local guides an additional tip, \$5 to \$10 a day is a common amount.

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

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

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

## **CANCELLATION & REFUNDS**

### **CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT:**

- **More than 120 days prior to the tour start date:** A refund of all monies paid will be issued, less 50% of the deposit.
- **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. Because unexpected events can occur, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance.

## CANCELLATION BY VENT:

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

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement.

A “**Force Majeure**” event means any act beyond VENT’s control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

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

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

## TRAVEL INSURANCE

**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.

\*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.

## **WHAT TO BRING**

**CLOTHING:** We suggest lightweight field clothing, a warm jacket (possibly down), thermal underwear, hat, and gloves. You should bring a comfortable pair of walking shoes or hiking boots and a second pair of light shoes. Dress will be casual throughout. Sitting in vans/blinds on the leks in pre-dawn darkness can at times be chilly, so be prepared with layers of warm clothing. Small disposable hand warmer packs have been widely employed on the frigid mornings.

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

**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.

Pack a pair of binoculars in good condition, along with a belt pack or day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, camera, etc.). As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leaders will have a spotting scope; but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. Other items should include an alarm clock, as well as a good flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries.

## **DESTINATION INFORMATION & TOUR CONDITIONS**

**CLIMATE & WEATHER:** Temperatures will range from very warm in the lowland prairies to very cold in the mountains. Daytime highs in the plains could reach the mid-80s, while nighttime lows in the mountains may dip below 20°F. Temperatures ranging from the low 30s to mid-60s would be closer to the norm. Spring snow storms are not uncommon in Colorado in April, so be prepared. Note that several nights are spent in towns near 7,000 feet and above (Gunnison 7,700 feet, Walden 8,100 feet and Steamboat Springs 6,800 feet). We will drive over mountain passes exceeding 10,000 feet on three days and some birding at these elevations will take place. Loveland Pass for White-tailed Ptarmigan is at 12,000 feet.

**CONDITIONS:** The Colorado Grouse tour is one of VENT's most ambitious tours. To see all the wonderful sights and more specifically all the lekking grouse we need to be on the move and out when the grouse are active. This means we will have several days with extremely early starting times, around 4-5AM. There will be extended periods of sitting in the vans using them as blinds to view the grouse. Sometimes we will be using modified trailers to sit in and view the grouse. The conditions can be cold and windy. We have secured extra comfortable high-top vans to use as blinds. These specially modified vans are very comfortable, and you can move about in them while they are parked as blinds.

There will be a few mornings where we will have to go 3-4 hours without a bathroom break. While sitting in the vans as blinds it is not possible to exit while the grouse are actively lekking. We will make every attempt to have a bathroom break right before lekking begins, sometimes using the restroom outside. There will also be longer periods of driving between hotels, which we will change every night. While driving, we will make regular restroom breaks for comfort. We will try to make it to each hotel in the evening with an hour's break before dinner, but this may not be possible every day. Lodging will be good to nice every night, although given the remoteness of the areas we will go to it may not be quite up to VENT's standards every night.

The sights and birds on this tour far outweigh the minor inconveniences. With a potential of seven species of grouse and five lekking grouse this is a magical tour.

**TRANSPORTATION:** Comfort and safety for the miles driven in modern high-top extended passenger vans with AWD. Large windows provide great scenery-viewing and birding from the vehicle.



**INTERNET ACCESS:** Wi-Fi is offered at all hotels on this tour.

**TIME:** Colorado is in the Mountain Standard Time.

**BAGGAGE:** As space in the vehicles is limited, please restrict your luggage to one medium sized bag and one carry-on bag.

**MISCELLANEOUS:** Among the array of nice restaurants we visit throughout the tour, please note the restaurant options/quality are limited at times throughout smaller towns. On early mornings with lek-viewing, we will partake in breakfast after the leks conclude. An array of early morning snacks will be offered before leaving for lek-viewing, for those interested.

### **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.

### **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.

#### ***Birds***

Andrews, Robert, and Robert Righter. *Colorado Birds*. Denver: Denver Museum of Natural History, 1992. An excellent reference on bird distribution and habitats within the state.

Bailey, Alfred M., and Robert J. Niedrach. *Birds of Colorado*. Denver: Denver Museum of Natural History, 1965. Large and very expensive but may be available through your local library.

Bailey, Alfred M. and Robert J. Niedrach. *Pictorial Checklist of Colorado Birds*. Denver: Denver Museum, 1967. Available through Audubon House, Buteo Books and other dealers.

Bowers, Nora, Rick Bowers and Kenn Kaufman. *Mammals of North America*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. Look for used copies with this one – it is out of print, and is a leading field guide for North American mammal ID.

Connelly, J.W., M.W. Gratson, and K.P. Reese. Sharp-Tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*). In *The Birds of North America*, No. 354. (A. Poole and F. Gill Eds.) Philadelphia, PA: The Birds of North America, Inc., 1998. [Excellent life history account.]

Craighead, Craighead, and Davis. *A Field Guide to Rocky Mountain Wildflowers From Northern Arizona and New Mexico to British Columbia*. Peterson Field Guide Series. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963.

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