CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

Seabirds & Specialties

September 11-19, 2027



Black-footed Albatross © Brian Sullivan

This weeklong exploration of the central California coast featuring Monterey Bay, offshore waters, tidal marshes, chaparral covered hills, and oak-filled interior valleys promises an amazing array of great California birds. From Buller's Shearwaters and Black-footed Albatross offshore to Yellow-billed Magpie and California Condor inland.

Centered on two pelagic trips, one each from Half Moon Bay and Monterey, we will seek storm-petrels of several species; Pink-footed, Buller's, and Sooty shearwaters; as well as Rhinoceros and Cassin's Auklet. Black-footed Albatross will cause great excitement when one cruises past the boat, which is likely. Monterey Bay is also famous for its marine mammals, Humpback Whales, Pacific White-sided Dolphin, and Risso's Dolphin; California and perhaps even Steller Sea Lion are possible. Closer to shore we might find Pigeon Guillemots around the docks of Monterey's Fisherman's Wharf along with raucous Western Gulls and the handsome Heerman's Gull. The Southern Sea Otter is a common sight in this area as well. Much of our time offshore in Monterey Bay will be in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary established in 1992 and encompassing 6,000 square miles.

Our birding will not be limited to the water. Central California hosts the declining Tricolored Blackbird which will certainly be a target around the wetlands of Monterey Bay near Moss Landing. One day we will venture into the dry interior valleys with golden pastures and scattered oaks – the realm of the endemic Yellow-billed Magpie and the handsome Lawrence's Goldfinch. Our search for the ice age

relict, California Condor, will take us down the spectacular Pacific Coast to Big Sur among the giant Coast Redwoods. Wandering around the rocky coastline around Point Pinos we should encounter Black Oystercatchers and perhaps some of the "rockpipers" like Surfbird, Wandering Tattler, and Black Turnstone. At the peak of fall migration anything is possible along the central California coast. We will seek migrant warblers and other songbirds in coastal groves during our stay. Townsend's, Hermit, and Black-throated gray warblers are all possible, and you never know what rarity we could discover. Wetlands, beaches, and fields should host a variety of shorebirds from the stately Marbled Godwit and Long-billed Curlew to diminutive peeps, like Western Sandpiper. The central California Coast hosts many great birds, and this tour will provide a great variety in a spectacular coastal setting.

September 11, Day 1: Arrival in San Jose, California

Participants can arrive at any time today at the San Jose Mineta International Airport (SJC). The hotel has a complimentary shuttle service. We will have a get acquainted meeting at 5:30 this evening before heading to dinner nearby.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn & Suites San Jose Airport

September 12, Day 2: San Jose to Half Moon Bay

We will start our birding on the south end of San Francisco Bay, where various refuges, parks, and preserves host an immense variety of birds adjacent to the hustle and bustle of Palo Alto and surrounding cities. Mudflats, marshes, shorelines, impoundments, and open bay waters will keep us busy for the morning. American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Marbled Godwit, and Long-billed Curlew, are just some of the birds we can expect to encounter through the morning. Equally interested in the sandpipers, but for other reasons, might be a migrant Peregrine Falcon hunting the flats. White-tailed Kites may be hunting the marshes and weedy fields along the way too, keeping us, and the small critters on our toes. We may also be lucky enough to encounter the uncommon Ridgway's Rail in the marshes. Eventually we will have to tear ourselves away and cross the peninsula over to Half Moon Bay where we might have a little time to explore before dinner and a good night's rest for the pelagic trip tomorrow.

NIGHT: Oceano Hotel & Spa, Half Moon Bay

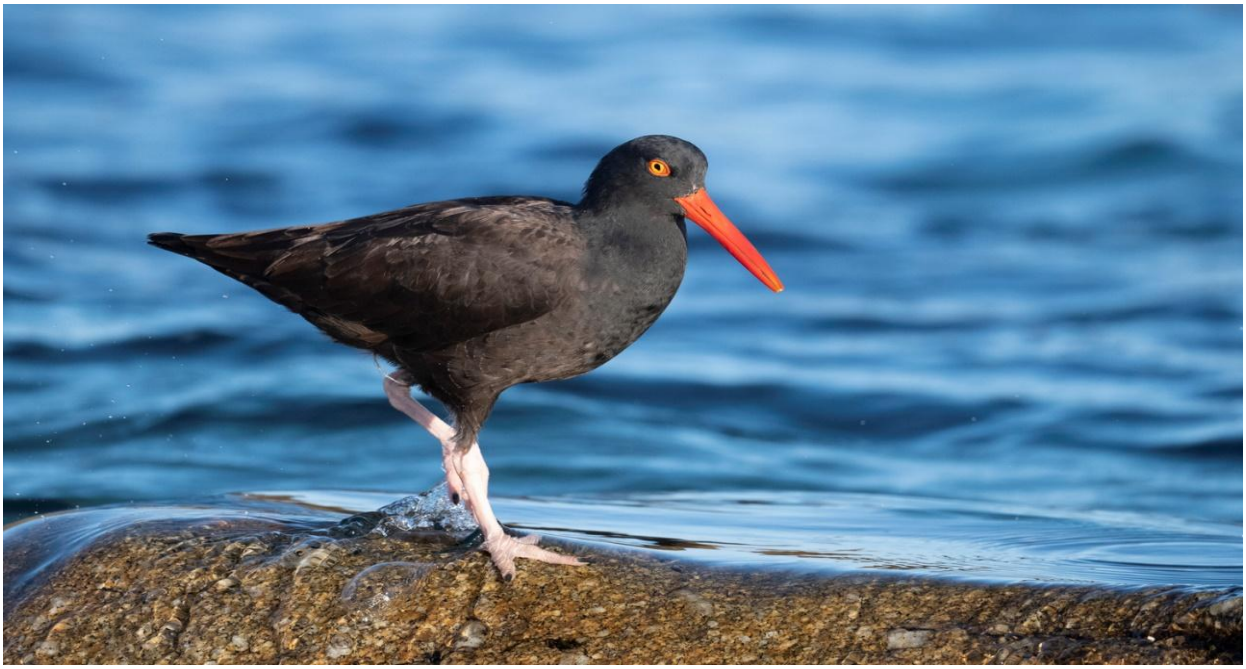


Long-billed Curlew © Brian Sullivan

September 13, Day 3: Pelagic out of Half Moon Bay

Weather permitting, we will spend 8-10 hours offshore today seeking the best pelagic birds the Pacific has to offer. Our exact destination won't be known until days before our trip as we will rely on local intel to track down flocks of storm-petrels and other species. Black-footed Albatross is certainly expected, but we might get lucky with a Laysan Albatross as well. Pink-footed and Sooty Shearwaters will be some of the common birds offshore. We will comb through them looking for the rare Flesh-footed Shearwater and the handsome Buller's Shearwater both of which winter in the north Pacific from their breeding grounds in Australia and New Zealand. In the flocks of storm-petrels we could find four species: Black (fairly common), Ashy (fairly common), Fork-tailed (rare), and Wilson's (rare). Over the years, an incredible array of rarities has also turned up on these trips, and we hope to continue the tradition. Marine mammals are common in these rich Pacific waters with Humpback Whales expected. Northern or Guadalupe Fur Seal, California and Steller sea lions, Harbor Seal, Bottlenose and Pacific White-sided dolphins are also regular sights. We may even get lucky with a Killer Whale sighting on one of our pelagic tours. After an amazing day offshore, we will have dinner and get some rest.

NIGHT: Oceano Hotel & Spa, Half Moon Bay



Black Oystercatcher © Brian Sullivan

September 14, Day 4: Half Moon Bay to Monterey

Well-rested from our offshore adventures, we will head south along the Pacific coast. Moss Landing and Elkhorn Slough are two of the most famous birding destinations around Monterey Bay. We will scour these locations for birds and Sea Otters that inhabit the bay in the area. In close proximity is a mosaic of open beaches, jetties, salt pans, mudflats, and marshland. Nearby, Moss Landing State Wildlife Area and the Elkhorn Slough reserves hold some of the state's largest remaining tidal salt marsh. Tidal conditions will certainly play a role in the productivity of our birding, and in which sites we choose to visit, but this area always offers "good" birding under any circumstances, and at times is simply amazing. Open beaches and tidal flats may hold many species of shorebirds and terns, including Snowy and Semipalmated plovers, Willet, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Western and Least sandpipers, Dunlin and Forster's, Caspian, and elegant terns. Along the coastline and in the harbor at Moss Landing, we may be treated to Surf Scoter; Double-crested, Brandt's and Pelagic cormorants; Brown Pelican; Western, Clark's, Eared, and Horned grebes; to name a few. This area is also excellent for gulls, and we may be treated to an impressive variety. Western, California, and the lovely Heermann's Gull should all be easily found. Tricolored Blackbird is a California "specialty species," that we will try to find, and it is also a species of great conservation concern due to the steep

decline of its population in recent decades. Once numbering in the millions, the total population is now under 145,000 birds, having declined by more than 60% since 2008 alone. Researchers have pinpointed several factors contributing to the bird's decline, but habitat loss and destruction of nesting colonies in agricultural lands are primary causes. It is for these reasons that we will make an effort to see this special bird.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn Monterey

September 15, Day 5: Big Sur birding and Rocky Coastline south of Monterey



Chestnut-backed Chickadee © Brian Sullivan

This morning we'll head south from Monterey to start our day on the famous Big Sur coast. Our objective is to observe the reintroduced California Condor in its coastal refuge, in addition to the suite of other western birds. Our travels will take us to several areas, including stands of towering coast redwoods and other forested habitats where we'll watch for an array of birds typical of foothill and montane habitats. We'll have lunch at a gorgeous hillside lodge offering excellent food and grand vistas of the Pacific Ocean. Aside from scenic highlights and a lovely redwood forest, the appeal of a trip to Big Sur is a chance to observe North America's largest bird, the California Condor. Here, among mountains, coastal canyons, valleys, and rugged coastline, a bird that once came within a whisker of extinction in the wild exists today as part of an ongoing managed reintroduction program, and the opportunity to see these magnificent birds free flying over the forests and coast makes for an inspiring and unforgettable experience. The story of the California Condor can be told in many chapters, from its heyday in the Pleistocene period to its imperiled survival in a remnant population in the mountains of southern California, to human-assisted recovery. In summary, by the

1980s, the condor population was dwindling, and the long-term survivability of the species in the wild appeared in doubt. The drastic decline of condors in the twentieth century has been attributed to shooting, lead poisoning, collisions with electric power lines, egg collecting, and habitat loss. In 1987, the last wild California Condor was taken into captivity to join the twenty-six remaining condors in an attempt to bolster the population through a captive breeding program. Spearheaded by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and involving a host of partners, including the San Diego Zoo, Los Angeles Zoo, and California Department of Fish & Wildlife, the condor population reached a point where the bird could be returned to the wild. One of the key reintroduction sites was Big Sur, a part of the species' historic range. Enough open space existed that Fish & Wildlife, working with the Ventana Wildlife Society, oversaw the reintroduction of the birds at what became the Big Sur Condor Sanctuary. Today, nearly one hundred condors inhabit the greater area.



California Condor © Brian Sullivan

Our chances of seeing condors are high, but we may need to check several areas throughout the morning and early afternoon hours before we can claim success. If we are fortunate, we may see condors soaring at eye level over coastal cliffs along Highway 1 or perhaps perched on a beach feeding on a seal carcass. At all times we'll keep eyes to the skies as the birds may be seen high overhead riding great updrafts of heated air. Among the many possibilities today are birds widespread in distribution and those more restricted in range to the Pacific Coast. Among them are California Quail, Anna's Hummingbird, White-tailed Kite, Golden Eagle, Band-tailed Pigeon, White-throated Swift, Acorn and Nuttall's woodpeckers, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Steller's Jay, California Scrub-Jay, Black Phoebe, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Bushtit, Pacific Wren, American Dipper, California and Spotted towhees, and Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's), and Townsend's warblers.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn Monterey

September 16, Day 6: Pelagic on Monterey Bay

We will venture offshore again today. In Monterey Bay a massive deepwater canyon brings pelagic birds close to shore. Many of the pelagic species will be the same but every day offshore is different. Risso's and Northern Right Whale dolphins are possible as is the striking black and white Dall's Porpoise. Again, Humpback Whales are possible but other leviathans inhabit Monterey Bay too, such as Fin and Gray whales. Even before leaving the docks, we will search for Pigeon Guillemot and Western Gulls. Sea Otters and Harbor Seals also inhabit the nearshore waters of Monterey Bay. Among the many birds we could encounter this morning are Black-footed Albatross, Northern Fulmar, five or more species of shearwaters (Sooty, Pink-footed, Buller's, Black-vented, and maybe a Manx), Brandt's and Pelagic cormorants, Red and Red-necked Phalaropes, Parasitic and Pomarine jaegers, Western and Heermann's gulls, Common Murre, Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets. Our timing is right to encounter flocks of the small, elegant Sabine's Gulls migrating from their arctic breeding grounds to their wintering areas further south in the Pacific.



Buller's Shearwater © Brian Sullivan

NIGHT: Hampton Inn Monterey

September 17, Day 7: Carmel Valley Inland Birding

Today we will venture into the dry oak-studded valleys inland from Monterey. The endemic, Yellow-billed Magpie is one of our targets along with California Quail and Thrasher. Acorn Woodpeckers and Oak Titmouse are other birds we will seek among the oaks.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn Monterey



California Quail © Brian Sullivan

September 18, Day 8: Monterey Birding and transfer to San Jose

Our final day of birding will see us seeking out any misses from coastal Monterey to inland valleys. Perhaps we need a better view of the Black Oystercatcher or a longer view of the frenetic Oak Titmouse. We will strive to fill the gaps and find every bird possible before we return to San Jose for our final group dinner.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn & Suites San Jose Airport

September 19, Day 9: Departures for Home

Participants may make their own way to the airport any time today.

Essential Tour Information

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

TOUR LEADER(s): This tour is led by Brian Gibbons and Brennan Mulrooney.



Brian Gibbons grew up in suburban Dallas where he began exploring the wild world in local creeks and parks. Chasing butterflies and any animal that was unfortunate enough to cross paths with the Gibbons boys occupied his childhood. A wooden bird feeder kit sparked a flame that was stoked by a gift of the Golden Guide and family camping trips to Texas state parks. Thirty years ago, Brian attended two VENT camps for young birders. Birds are now his primary interest, but all things wild continue to captivate him. After college, Brian undertook a variety of field biology research jobs that have taken him to the Caribbean, the Bering Sea, and the land of the midnight sun, arctic Alaska. He enjoys working with kids, hoping to spark environmental awareness through birds. For many years Brian's field research has involved bird banding. His most amazing recoveries were a female Wilson's Warbler that had been banded in Alaska and was captured by Brian in Colorado, and a Sooty Tern that perished after a hurricane on the Texas coast; it had plied the Gulf of Mexico and the oceans of the world for 24 years. Brian's recreational bird-seeking has taken him to Machu Picchu in Peru, the Great Wall in China, the plains of East Africa, and the Himalayas in Nepal. Brian leads birding trips in the United States, Central America, the Caribbean, and Europe. As well as being a fanatical birder, he loves capturing birds with photography. He lives in Tucson, Arizona with his wife, Lacrecia Johnson, and their son, Grayson.



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 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: **$10,195** per person based on double occupancy or **$11,875** for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 9, all lodging as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. This fee does not include airfare to nor from your San Jose, California. The fee also excludes laundry, personal expenses, gratuities, 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 (May 14, 2027) prior to the tour departure date.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can 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 destination - 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 travel sellers 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**.** 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 expenses 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 ensure all non-refundable trip costs to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

About Medjet's MedjetAssist Plan

MedjetAssist is a membership program that functions like AAA for motorists. The company's primary service is air medical transport. Critical benefits of MedjetAssist include a staff on call and ready to provide assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; all-expenses-paid air medical transport in the United

States and internationally to medical facility of choice, regardless of medical necessity; repatriation of remains; and no exclusions for pre-existing conditions.

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

For a price quote or to purchase MedjetAssist, please visit: Medjet.com/VentBird or call 1-800-527-7478. Pricing is based on type and terms of membership.

GETTING THERE

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 have 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.

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.

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTHING: Our time in California could bring exposure to a variety of weather conditions ranging from warm and dry to foggy, chilly, and damp. Please bring different clothing layers appropriate for changing conditions. Dress will be casual throughout, and we recommend clothing that is both comfortable and practical.

- Lightweight field clothing (e.g. cotton shirts and pants/jeans) Many people prefer field-type clothing, sold by outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI, that include pants and shirts made of lightweight yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams.
- Light jacket
- Several shirts (long-sleeved and short-sleeved)
- One or two pairs of long pants; denim is acceptable, though lightweight fabrics are more comfortable if the weather is damp.
- A water-repellent jacket and rain pants - essential in case of cooler weather, such as wind, rain, or fog; especially useful during our pelagic trips out of Half Moon Bay and Monterey Bay.
- A hat for protection from the sun is equally essential. A wide-brimmed hat is best, but participants should bring a baseball cap at the very least.
- Swimsuit if you like to swim, as one hotel does have a pool.
- Stocking hat and gloves could be useful for chilly mornings and on the boat trips.

FOOTWEAR: A good walking shoe (such as an athletic shoe) may be preferred for the boat trip and when not in the field, such as before evening social hours and dinners.

A light hiking boot or trail shoe will be appropriate for all outings.

Athletic shoes are acceptable but will not keep your feet dry and can become soiled from muddy conditions.

EQUIPMENT: One of the most important aspects of having an enjoyable travel experience is being prepared with proper equipment. The following items will come in handy during your trip.

- Daypack – Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment during all land excursions
- Notebooks and pens
- Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection
- Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions
- Personal toiletries
- 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 trip 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 & TOUR CONDITIONS

CLIMATE & WEATHER: The Monterey/Carmel Valley area is usually mild in mid-September, due to the cooling influence of the ocean. However, the region's varied topography means that conditions along the coast can vary greatly from those a short distance inland. While beautiful, clear days are often the norm, also possible are days dominated by overcast, fog, and light precipitation. An early cold front could bring rain, while warmer than average temperatures could prevail inland. Typically, days will begin with cool mornings, with temperatures in the high 50s or low 60s, before warming into the 70s, even the 80s, in the afternoon. In the event of a front from the north, we should be prepared for wind, rain, and temperatures in the 40s.

CONDITIONS: This trip is not physically demanding. All walks will be over even terrain on established roads, paths, and trails. Most walks will be short distances, although we may offer an outing or two of up to half a mile round-trip in length. Travel will be aboard vans of varying size, probably a minivan and a fifteen-passenger vehicle.

BOAT TRIPS: The boat trips out of Half Moon Bay and Monterey Bay have been arranged as all-day events, lasting 8-10 hours. Most of the trips here are generally smooth experiences. That said, if windy or stormy conditions prevail on the day of our boat trips, we may elect to cancel the excursion without hesitation. Please see the information under "Motion Sickness" under the HEALTH section below. Should cancellation occur, we will recalibrate the day with alternative activities. One option is for the entire group to visit the Monterey Bay Aquarium while we are in Monterey.

Motion Sickness (Sea Sickness): While we anticipate and hope for a boat trip with calm water conditions, we cannot rule out the possibility of choppy seas with swells. While many people are fine in any water conditions, some people are particularly vulnerable to motion sickness. Because motion

sickness (seasickness) will be a concern for many, we recommend that you consult with your physician on an appropriate motion sickness prevention medication. We emphasize that we will not attempt to go offshore under rough or stormy conditions.

CALIFORNIA FIRE SEASON: While we hope for pleasant days under clear skies, we emphasize that fall is wildfire season in California. Due to the effects of climate change and other factors, the fire season here is longer now than in historic times, running from June through November. It is highly likely that many fires will be burning in the state during the time of our visit, and participants should come prepared for the real possibility of fire and smoke in the area. The itinerary may be altered to work around such conditions. When fires are bad and winds are offshore, smoke can be present even when the fires are hundreds of miles away. On a hopeful note, large fires have already burned through much of the region in the last five years, perhaps reducing the threat a bit for this year.

TIME ZONE: California operates on Pacific Daylight Time (PDT). It is two hours behind Eastern Standard Time (EST).

HEALTH & SAFETY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

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

The US EPA offers a search tool to help choose a repellent that is best for a particular situation. For example, some repellents work for mosquitoes, but not for ticks. https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/which-insect-repellent-right-you

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

SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION

Several traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour.

Birds:

Dunn, Jon L. & Jonathan Alderfer (Editors). *National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. National Geographic. 2017 (seventh edition).

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. National Audubon Society. Alfred E. Knopf Publishing, 2014 (second edition).

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Field Guide to the Birds of Western North America*. National Audubon Society. Random House, Inc., 2016 (second edition). This is the slimmed down version of the larger *Sibley* guide and features only the birds of Western North America rather than the whole continent.

Mammals:

Kays, Roland W. and Don E. Wilson. *Mammals of North America.* Princeton University Press: Princeton and Oxford, 2009 (second edition).

CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY APPS & ONLINE RESOURCES

eBird: Among the largest and most successful citizen science projects in existence, eBird is an essential tool in promoting bird study and conservation. Among a range of benefits, eBird allows users

to keep a variety of lists in a single application. When taxonomic splits are incorporated, lists are automatically updated. Additionally, trip leaders can share daily lists, so one only need accept a shared list and it will upload to your files! **Highly recommended.**

MERLIN BIRD ID: Merlin is an app designed as a birding coach for beginning and intermediate bird watchers. Excellent for use in the field, Merlin asks the observer a series of questions regarding 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, followed by the appropriate regional "pack."

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 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 October 19, 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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