



CALIFORNIA SPECIALTIES

April 30 - May 9, 2027

Southern California has long been regarded as one of the great birding areas in the country. This is due to a wide variety of habitats including deserts, mountains, shoreline, chaparral, grasslands and pelagic waters—all regions visited by the tour. It's no accident that some of the highest Christmas Count and Big Day Lists come from this region. As a further attraction, California is characterized by a high degree of endemism. Where else in the country would one go to look for Scripps's Murrelet, Allen's Hummingbird (two races), Nuttall's Woodpecker, Island Scrub-Jay, Yellow-billed Magpie, California Gnatcatcher, California Thrasher, California Towhee, and the recently split Oak Titmouse and California Scrub-Jay? This tour is planned in a manner to provide maximum opportunity to see all these specialties. Mountain Quail, White-headed Woodpecker, Western Flycatcher, and LeConte's Thrasher are best seen here, and we will attempt to find any wintering Yellow-footed Gulls, which may be lingering at the Salton Sea.

Our route takes us from coastal San Diego through the Anza-Borrego Desert, to the Salton Sea, to interior plains and mountains, and back to the coast at Santa Barbara, culminating in a boat trip to Santa Cruz Island for Island Scrub-Jay and pelagic birds along the way.

The San Diego segment will focus on the California Gnatcatcher and associated chaparral birds such as California Thrasher and Bell's Sparrow (recent split), as well as Western and Clark's grebes at an adjacent lake. Birding the county's interior may yield Gray Vireo, Black-chinned Sparrow and—we hope—Lawrence's Goldfinch.

We'll travel to the Salton Sea via the starkly beautiful Anza-Borrego Desert, named after an early Spanish explorer and home to the rare Desert Bighorn Sheep, which inhabit its rugged mountains.

At over 600,000 acres, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is the largest state park in the forty-eight contiguous states. Species we may encounter in this area include Greater Roadrunner, White-throated Swift, Costa's Hummingbird, Verdin, Black-throated Sparrow, Rock and Canyon wrens, Phainopepla, and

western migrants in a desert oasis. We also have a chance to see the enigmatic Lawrence's Goldfinch in our travel this day.

An entire day will be devoted to birding the southern end of the Salton Sea, a unique body of water in a below-sea-level desert sink, whose only outlet is through evaporation. For this reason, its water is much saltier than the ocean and supports only three or four species of fish. Due to its unlikely location in the middle of a desert, however, the sea functions as a natural magnet for gulls and shorebirds. The waterbird spectacle here can be truly remarkable! Sometimes, a few Yellow-footed Gulls stay to overwinter and we will attempt to find one. These gulls are rare in the Salton Sea at this time of year, but this is the only place outside Mexico where they may be found. The desert scrub in the region holds Gambel's Quail, Burrowing Owl, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Crissal Thrasher, Common Ground Dove, Inca Dove, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Gila Woodpecker, and Abert's Towhee, all of which we will endeavor to see first thing in the morning.

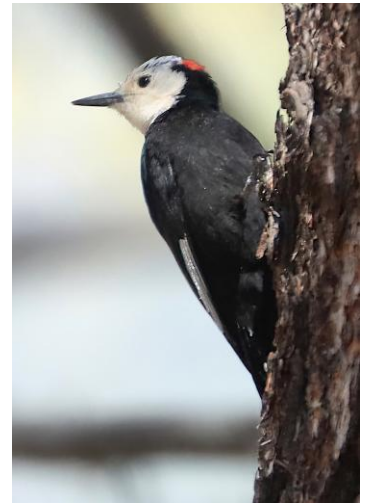




Lawrence's Goldfinch
© Tom Wilberding



Yellow-footed Gull © Sue Taylor



White-headed Woodpecker © Gary Small

In the southwest corner of the San Joaquin Valley, our base in Taft provides close access to the habitat of the virtually mythical LeConte's Thrasher. We'll try for this very local, difficult species in a location considered the best in California for seeing this phantom bird. Following our morning thrasher quest, we will travel well up the slope on nearby Mount Pinos, whose summit exceeds 8,000 feet in altitude. The old-growth Jeffrey pine forests here are a delight, and birding in the cool, higher elevations should produce encounters with Band-tailed Pigeon, White-headed Woodpecker, Steller's Jay, Mountain Chickadee, Pygmy Nuthatch, Green-tailed Towhee, the thick-billed stephensi race of Fox Sparrow (a likely future split candidate), and Cassin's Finch. Mountain Quail, while difficult, are resident here.

The route through Cuyama Valley to Shell Beach will take us through classic oak savanna and chaparral habitats. Both Tricolored Blackbird and Lawrence's Goldfinch are possible—although these species are irruptive and unpredictable, with many occurring in some years while being totally absent in others.

Our motel in Pismo Beach sits atop a sea cliff complete with nearby Peregrine Falcon eyrie and nesting Pelagic Cormorants and Pigeon Guillemots. A morning watching Brandt's and Pelagic cormorants, Pigeon Guillemots, gulls and other shorebirds always proves interesting. Moving downcoast toward Santa Barbara, we'll stop at a variety of good birding venues, looking for birds that inhabit rocky shorelines and woodland/savanna species, including the endemic Yellow-billed Magpie.



Peregrine Falcon © Sue Wright



Brandt's Cormorant © Peter LaTourette



Island Scrub-Jay © Linette Mansberger

The last birding day of the tour combines the romance (although, hopefully, not the pain) of a pelagic trip with the opportunity to find one of North America's most restricted endemics, the Island Scrub-Jay of Santa Cruz Island. After leaving Ventura Harbor, we'll watch for both Sooty and Pink-footed shearwaters. Flocks of beautiful, breeding plumaged Pacific Loons fly swiftly up-channel on their way to their tundra breeding sites. We may be fortunate and see Pomarine and/or Parasitic jaegers as well. Nearing the island we hope to encounter Scripps's Murrelet, which breeds on the Channel Islands. The island itself should produce endemic races of Allen's Hummingbird (non-migratory), Western Flycatcher, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Song Sparrow, as well as the occasionally difficult Island Scrub-Jay.

April 30, Day 1: Arrival in San Diego

Participants should make arrangements to arrive at the San Diego (airport code SAN) Airport and transfer to our hotel today by taxi or Uber. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 6:00 p.m. for a short orientation session prior to dinner.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn San Diego Mission Valley, San Diego

May 1, Day 2: Murray Lake, Mission Trails Regional Park, Santee Lakes Reserve, and San Diego Coast

Our morning will begin at Murray Lake and Mission Trails Regional Park searching for California Gnatcatcher, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Cassin's Kingbird, California Thrasher, Wrenit, Bell's Vireo, Spotted and California towhees, and hopefully many migrant species that move through this canyon. This is a good place to see Western Flycatcher and migrant vireos and warblers. A quick trip to nearby Santee Lakes Reserve will be made to see if there are any lingering winter visitor ducks, to view the resident, exotic-looking Wood Ducks that breed there, and to try to find the now countable Scaly-breasted Munia, formerly called Nutmeg Manakin.

After lunch we will enjoy some coastal San Diego birding where Elegant Terns, Black Skimmers, Western Gulls and many shorebirds and other waterbirds are possible. Near the Mexican border we will visit the Birds and Butterfly Garden where migrating species flock to *Grevillea* trees and Common Ground Dove is possible. We will end our day at the Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge where we hope to see the recently split Ridgway's Rail and maybe Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, a species only reliably found near San Diego in California.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn San Diego Mission Valley, San Diego



California Gnatcatcher © Larry Martin



Wrenit © John Dixon



Scaly-breasted Munia © Bill Adams

May 2, Day 3: Inland Oak Savannas; Anza-Borrego Desert

Today begins with a drive to inland San Diego County to look for Gray Vireo; Bell's, Black-chinned and Lark sparrows; Oak Titmouse; Rock Wren; and Scott's, Hooded and Bullock's orioles. We usually hear Mountain Quail, but seeing one is very difficult. As we climb into the mountains, we will look for Mountain Chickadee, Pygmy Nuthatch, and Acorn Woodpecker. In the Anza-Borrego Desert, we will look for such specialties as Costa's Hummingbird; Cactus, Rock and Canyon wrens; Verdin; and Black-throated Sparrow. We will then drive to Brawley, our base for the Salton Sea.

NIGHT: Brawley Inn, Brawley



Scott's Oriole © Dave Drake



Nuttall's Woodpecker © Tom Wilberding



Cactus Wren © Chris Conard

May 3, Day 4: Salton Sea

Although difficult to find at this time of year, we'll try for any lingering, wintering Yellow-footed Gulls, but also search for Crissal Thrasher, Gila Woodpecker, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Cactus Wren, Abert's Towhee, Ridgway's Rail (a recent split from Clapper Rail) and the thousands of waders and gulls found this time of year. You will be amazed at the spectacle. Burrowing Owl is guaranteed with our record being 29 in one day. Finney Lake is our best bet for Common Ground Dove, Inca Dove, and Least Bittern (rare) while Ramer Lake has hundreds of breeding birds, including rare Neotropic Cormorants and some

residents mentioned above. Early returning Bronze Cowbirds are best looked for in residential areas in Brawley.

NIGHT: Brawley Inn, Brawley

May 4, Day 5: Brawley to Salton City to Big Morongo

Today we will check any areas around the south end of the Salton Sea that were missed on the previous day and work our way up to Salton City or instead drive along the eastern edge of the Salton Sea on our way to Big Morongo. There are many locations to check here, especially for Yellow-footed Gulls, which often have one individual somewhere in this vast shoreline. This seems to be the best place to also see Red Knots and White Pelicans. If time permits, we will make it to Big Morongo by late afternoon and have a chance to check this wonderful desert oasis for migrating and resident birds. We can relax while watching the birds that come to feed at 12 bird feeders or bathe in the water drip area or the wonderful new waterfall. Target birds here are both Hooded and Bullock's orioles, Brown-crested and Vermilion flycatchers, Lawrence's and Lesser goldfinches, and Summer Tanager.

NIGHT: Best Western Joshua Tree Hotel & Suites, Yucca Valley

May 5, Day 6: Big Morongo to Taft, Kern County

We will get an early start today at Big Morongo, which will permit us to walk some of the trails as well as check the feeders again for any target birds we may have missed yesterday. Then we will start the drive to Taft in Kern County via the road that leads up to Mount Pinos. Here we often pick up White-headed Woodpecker, Mountain Chickadee, White-breasted, Red-breasted and Pygmy nuthatches, Red-breasted Sapsucker, and Steller's Jay. If we arrive in sagebrush lowlands early enough, we will search the desert sagebrush vegetation between Taft and Maricopa for the elusive and shy LeConte's Thrasher and also look for the recently split off Bell's Sparrow.

NIGHT: Best Western Plus Taft Inn, Taft



Bell's Sparrow © Larry Martin



Red-breasted Sapsucker © John Dixon



Mountain Quail © John Dixon

May 6, Day 7: Taft to Mount Pinos to Pismo Beach

The day will start early with a search for LeConte's Thrasher and Bell's Sparrow if we did not see them the previous evening. At nearby Mt. Pinos we'll look for Mountain Chickadees, White-headed and Nuttall's woodpeckers, Golden Eagle, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Green-tailed Towhee, Thick-billed or *stephensi* race of Fox Sparrow, Cassin's Finch, and possibly, Mountain Quail. California Condors are occasionally being seen here again so we will spend some time at three special lookout spots before heading across the Cayuma Valley to our final destination at the fancy Pismo Beach hotel where you will have balcony views of the Pacific. In some years, from their balconies, several participants watched Bottlenose Dolphins cavorting just offshore and sometimes Gray Whales are seen from our dinner table at the Ventana Grill.

NIGHT: Shore Cliff Lodge, Pismo Beach

May 7, Day 8: Sea Cliffs, Savanna, and Chaparral

Today we will travel through country known for the California endemic, Yellow-billed Magpie, whose populations have been vastly reduced by the West Nile virus and thus are more difficult to locate. Before

breakfast we will stop at a rocky cliff overlook to scan for Black Oystercatcher and late-departing winter visitors like Wandering Tattler, Black Turnstone and Surfbird. Pigeon Guillemots nest here in large numbers and Sea Otters are usually seen.



Yellow-billed Magpie © Gary Small



Wandering Tattler © Chris Conard

Traveling down the coast on our way to Santa Barbara, we will bird coastal southern San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties for western migrants and breeding species including Allen’s Hummingbird, Nuttall’s Woodpecker, Western Flycatcher, Wrentit, American Goldfinch, California Towhee and Hutton's Vireo.

Depending on our luck, we may have time to visit a few other locations on our way to Santa Barbara.

NIGHT: Best Western Plus, Santa Barbara



View of Santa Cruz Island's Prisoners Harbor © Jeri Langham



Santa Cruz Islandt Fox © Sue Taylor

May 8, Day 9: Pelagic Trip; Santa Cruz Island

Our catamaran departs at 9:00 a.m. for Santa Cruz Island via Ventura Harbor. Pelagic birding to and from the island should produce Pacific Loon in breeding plumage, Sooty and maybe Pink-footed shearwater, possibly Pomarine or Parasitic jaeger, and a good chance of Scripps's Murrelet. Rhinoceros and Cassin's auklets and whales are sometimes seen on our way to and/or back from the island. Red-necked and Red phalaropes are also possible. Once we dock at Prisoners Harbor, we will look for Island Scrub-Jay along with endemic subspecies of Allen's Hummingbird, Western Flycatcher, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Song Sparrow.

NIGHT: Best Western Plus, Santa Barbara

May 9, Day 10: Departure for Home

Participants may plan to depart for home from Santa Barbara (airport code SBA) any time today. Since we will be driving the van back to San Diego, there is another option for you. You can accompany the van if you are willing to stop in Ventura where Jeri visits a college classmate that takes him out in a small electric boat in the Ventura Harbor. The boat is rented, and the cost split between willing participants at that time. We picked up 1 new tour species in 2024. Plan for a late afternoon or early evening flight.

ESSENTIAL TOUR INFORMATION

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 7 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Jeri Langham



Jeri M. Langham has a Ph.D. in plant ecology from Washington State University, and after 38 years as a professor of biological sciences at California State University in Sacramento, retired in May 2008. He received the first Outstanding Teacher Award from the newly formed College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics in 1997; the Outstanding Faculty Award from the Science Educational Equity and Minority Organization of Science Students organizations in 2005; and his university's third annual Lifetime

Achievement Award for Community Service in 2006. Jeri has ardently birded all over North America, as

well as Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Venezuela, Ecuador, the Galapagos Islands, Peru, Brazil, Argentina, Kenya, Borneo, South Africa, Cuba, and Australia. Born and raised in Venezuela, he speaks fluent Spanish. Known for his enthusiasm and boundless energy, Jeri thoroughly enjoys searching for birds and sharing them with others. His passion for teaching and his natural teaching abilities soon become apparent as his tour participants enjoy learning more about the biological world around them. Jeri is a former member of the California Bird Records Committee. He is a Founding Director and the Fundraising Director for the Neotropical Grassland Conservancy.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$5,595** per person in double occupancy from San Diego (tour ends in Santa Barbara). This includes all meals beginning with dinner on Day 1 through dinner on Day 9, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, pelagic trip on Day 9, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leader. It does not include airfare from your home to San Diego with return from Santa Barbara, airport departure taxes, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$1000**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person. If you would like to pay your deposit using a credit card, the deposit must be made with MasterCard, Visa, or American Express at the time of registration.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard, 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 31, 2026) prior to the tour departure date.

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: 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 their **Ripcord** plan. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most comprehensive travel protection programs available.

Critical benefits of Ripcord include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation and rescue services** from your point of injury or illness to your **hospital of choice**; comprehensive travel insurance for **trip cancellation/interruption**, primary medical expense coverage, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as security evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or other security events, **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: ripcordtravelprotection.com/ventbird; or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help and Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, mid-payment, 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 cost in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Coronavirus (COVID-19):

In line with the decision made by the federal government (including the CDC), Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy.

Redpoint maintains a **Coronavirus FAQ** page on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

Please visit the **Coronavirus FAQ** page at the following link:

https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/

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

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per-person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international.* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

*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 AND TRANSPORTATION: As space in the vehicle will be tight, we ask that you limit your luggage to one medium bag and a carry-on bag. As a precaution, we urge you to pack a change of clothes, your binocular, medication, toiletries, walking shoes and other essentials in your carry-on bag for your airline flight. We will log approximately 1,600 miles in the van during the tour. Although we will stop to bird many times, some days will be predominantly spent in transit.

CLIMATE: The weather in southern California is generally quite pleasant at this season. Daytime highs should range from the upper 50s to the low 80s, with 100 degrees possible in the desert. Nighttime lows should be in the 40s. Rain is not normally expected at this season; however, rain gear could prove useful. Altitudinal changes will vary from sea level to over 8,000 feet elevation. Most walks on this tour will be over short distances (a mile or less) and will be conducted at a moderate to leisurely pace. To take advantage of the best time for bird activity, we will usually begin birding during the dawn hours.

CLOTHING: Basic field clothing is appropriate for this tour. **PLEASE AVOID BRIGHT COLORS SUCH AS WHITE, YELLOW, ORANGE, PINK, RED and BABY BLUE** on clothes you will wear while we are birding. These colors are fine when not birding. A combination of long-sleeved and short-sleeved shirts may be useful, given the widely varying temperatures. Cool mornings will call for sweaters, light jackets, or possibly a heavier jacket if temperatures dip low enough. A warm jacket, gloves, and a warm hat (all water-proof) are recommended for the pelagic trip and for potentially cold mornings. Be sure to have a comfortable pair of light, ankle-high hiking boots for occasional rocky terrain and a second pair of lightweight shoes. Casual attire will be acceptable for all restaurants in which we dine. You may wish to bring a swimsuit.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a binocular that is in good condition, along with a belt pack or day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, extra digital storage media, etc.). As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binocular, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. If you have a scope and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. It will be useful when we scan mudflats and coastlines. Other items should include a flashlight or headlamp, sunglasses, lip ointment, gloves (for chilly mornings and the pelagic trip), tissue paper, alarm clock, and earplugs (for unlikely noisy nights). For the pelagic trip, bring the motion sickness remedy of your choice, if applicable.

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

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

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

Insect Repellents – Mosquitoes and other biting insects may be a problem, but it is unlikely.

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.

An 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 is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment has to 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>

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

- Conant, Roger, Robert C Stebbins & Joseph T. Collins. *Peterson First Guides: Reptiles and Amphibians*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992.
- Dunn, Jon L. and Jonathan Alderfer, editors. *Field Guide to the Birds of Western North America*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2008. Excellent and easy to carry in the field.
- Elder, Tamara. *Mammals of California*. Lone Publishing International, 2005
- Farrand, John Jr. *The Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding*. Volumes 1, 2 and 3. New York: Chanticleer Press, Inc., 1983.
- Floyd, Ted. Smithsonian. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. 1st Edition. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008.
- Glassberg, Jeffrey. *Butterflies Through Binoculars: The West: A Field Guide to the Butterflies of Western North America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Jameson, E.W. Jr. and H.J. Peeters. *California Mammals*. California Natural History Guide Series. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.
- Kaufman, Kenn. *Birds of North America* (Kaufman Focus Guides). New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000.
- National Geographic Society. *A Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. 7th Edition. Washington, D.C. National Geographic Society, 2017. Be sure you get the newest edition.
- Peterson, Roger T. *Peterson Field Guide to birds of North America*. 1st Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2009.

- Pough, Richard H. *Audubon Western Bird Guide*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1975. Contains beautifully written, concise compilations of the habits of western specialties.
- Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western North America*. New York: Knopf, 2003. Excellent and easy to carry in the field.
- Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. 2nd Edition. New York: Knopf, 2014 Excellent, but large & heavy.

General Reading & Reference

- Garrett, Kimball and Jon Dunn. *Birds of Southern California: Status and Distribution*. Los Angeles: Artisan Press, 1981.
- Schram, Brad. *A Birder's Guide to Southern California*. 5th Edition. Colorado Springs: ABA Press, 2007.
- Small, Arnold. *California Birds: Their Status and Distribution*. Vista, CA: Ibis Publishing, 1994.
- Stallcup, Rich. *Ocean Birds of the Nearshore Pacific*. Stinson Beach, CA: Point Reyes Bird Observatory, 1990.
- Zimmer, Kevin J. *Birding in the American West: A Handbook*. Cornell University Press, 2000.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel your VENT leader has given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that tips are not expected and are entirely optional. Tips should be given directly to your tour leader; they should not be sent to the VENT office.

RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, “**VENT**”) act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

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

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

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure 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 December 10, 2024, 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.

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