

BORNEO

JULY 7-25, 2022

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Borneo—the very name conjures images of teeming jungles and a profusion of strange and little-known plants and creatures. Giant flying squirrels, hairy primates, gliding snakes and flying frogs, orchid-like praying mantis, goggle-eyed tarsiers, the world’s largest flower, weird monkeys, carnivorous pitcher plants, and much more all characterize this fabulous island.

The tropical dipterocarp forests of Borneo are among the world’s oldest, supporting an amazing diversity of animal and plant life, surpassed only by the lowland communities of the Amazon Basin. The sheer number of charismatic species found here, including Bornean Orangutan, Bornean Pygmy Elephant, Proboscis Monkey, Bornean Clouded Leopard, Great Argus, eight species of hornbills and Bornean Bristlehead, endows these forests and provides their visitors with one of the most exciting tropical rainforest experiences anywhere on our planet. Borneo’s smaller birds are no less exciting, with numerous little-known endemics plus a plethora of tropical Asian pigeons, parakeets, cuckoos, trogons, kingfishers, barbets, woodpeckers, broadbills, pittas, bulbuls, babblers, flowerpeckers, sunbirds and more.



To see some of these wonders of Borneo we will focus on four areas: the magnificent montane forests of Kinabalu National Park, the tropical lowland forest at Sepilok Reserve, the mangrove and swamp forests along the lower Kinabatangan River, and the incomparable primary rainforests of the Danum Valley. Between them they offer the full spectrum of the best of Borneo. Add to this great food and accommodations in a very friendly and pleasant multi-ethnic country and you have all of the makings for a great tour.

Towering over the surrounding landscape, the awe-inspiring granite peak of Kinabalu has long lured travelers and naturalists to explore her lush cloud-enshrouded forests. The highest landmark between New Guinea and the Himalayas, Mt. Kinabalu is virtually an island in the sky, and as such supports a number of extremely local endemic birds. Here we will search among the huge epiphyte-clad sentinels, lush and thick understory, and flowering rhododendrons for such specialties as the Crimson-headed Partridge, Whitehead's Trogon (rare), Golden-naped and Mountain barbets, the sumptuous Whitehead's Broadbill, Mountain Wren-Babbler, Bare-headed and Chestnut-hooded laughingthrushes, the diminutive Bornean Stubtail, and Whitehead's Spiderhunter.

From the mountain we will travel to the Sepilok Reserve, a wonderful introduction to the lowland forests of Borneo, including access to the canopy on a very sturdy walkway and a maze of forest interior trails. Then we transfer to boats for our explorations of the lower reaches of the Kinabatangan River, from the vast complex of mangrove forests at its mouth, upriver to the swamp forests along its banks. Numerous special creatures are found in this region, from Orangutan and Bornean Pygmy Elephant (if we are lucky) to the comical Proboscis Monkey, endangered Storm's Stork, a variety of raptors and many large hornbills.

The highlight of the tour will undoubtedly be our visit to the Danum Valley and the thrill of exploring these towering dipterocarp forests cannot be overstated. We will do so from the comfort of perhaps the finest and most beautiful lodge in the whole of Southeast Asia, the Borneo Rainforest Lodge, set in the heart of the Danum Valley amidst some of the most magnificent rainforest remaining on the island of Borneo. With four full days and five nights here, we will have an enviable chance to fully appreciate the richness of this forest haven and observe many of the fascinating birds and animals that live here.

July 7-9, Days 1-3: Travel to Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Borneo. Participants should plan to arrive in Kota Kinabalu on or before July 9. Please keep in mind that travel to Borneo from the USA requires crossing the International Dateline, which means the loss of one day in transit. Upon arrival at the airport in Kota Kinabalu (locally known as KK; airport code BKI), you will be met by a representative of our ground agent and escorted to our hotel. Please arrange your departure from home to ensure that you arrive in sufficient time to meet with the group and your leader in the hotel lobby bar area at **6:30 p.m. on July 9**, for a preliminary get together followed by dinner.

NIGHTS (July 7 & 8): In transit (overnight flight)

NIGHT (July 9): Shangri La Tanjung Aru Beach Hotel, Kota Kinabalu

July 10, Day 4: AM Kota Belud Area; PM Birding Around KK. We must depart **early** this morning for the drive north to the coastal wetlands of Kota Belud and the Tempasuk Plain. Although largely altered by agriculture, these wetlands, associated scrub, and swamp forests support many species, which we are unlikely to encounter elsewhere: with a bit of luck Cinnamon, Yellow and perhaps Black bitterns; four species of egrets; Purple Heron; possibly Slaty-breasted Rail; White-browed Crake; Watercock; Oriental Pratincole – breeds occasionally; Little Green-Pigeon; Pink-necked Pigeon; Lesser Coucal; Blue-throated Bee-eater; Paddyfield Pipit; Pied Triller; White-breasted Woodswallow; Ashy Tailorbird; Malaysian Pied-Fantail; Striated Grassbird; Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker; Olive-backed Sunbird; Asian Glossy Starling; and Dusky and Chestnut munias. With good fortune, we may find the recently discovered Buff-banded Rail, Australasian Grass-Owl or what was once regarded as a vagrant to Borneo, Black-winged Stilt.

As the day heats up, we will make our way back to our lovely hotel on the edge of Kota Kinabalu. The grounds of the hotel are extensive and, in addition to offering the opportunity to rest and relax around a series of very attractive swimming pools, they also host a number of interesting birds including Green Imperial-Pigeon, the very localized Blue-naped Parrot, Collared Kingfisher, Sunda Woodpecker, Pied Triller, Common Iora, and Chestnut and possibly Dusky munias.

NIGHT: Shangri La Tanjung Aru Beach Hotel, Kota Kinabalu

July 11, Day 5: Crocker Range National Park and Drive to Kinabalu Park. This morning we will depart for the scenic drive into the Crocker Range National Park. Although access to this large reserve is notably sparse, we should be able to locate a handful of endemics and other specialties that are difficult to find within, or absent from, Kinabalu Park. With a bit of luck, we may encounter the diminutive Pygmy White-eye, in addition to Mountain Barbet and the rather uncommon but attractive Bornean Barbet, Bornean Bulbul and the peculiar-sounding Whitehead's Spiderhunter. Other possibilities might include Mountain Serpent-Eagle (with luck), Mountain Imperial-Pigeon, Ruddy (uncommon) and Little cuckoo-doves, Gold-faced Barbet (a split from Gold-whiskered), Bornean Leafbird, Orange-headed Thrush (uncommon), the glorious Temminck's Sunbird and the mysterious Mountain Black-eye to finish the day. In addition, if we are very fortunate, we may also see a *Rafflesia* in flower. However, this is a rare event and often requires a long and rather steep walk.



Cute Mountain Black-eyes are usually a common sight during our visits to the Crocker Range. © Machiel Valkenburg

After lunch at a local Malay café, we will drive on to a very attractive waterfall set in some glorious forest where several new birds are possible including White-fronted Falconet, Orange-breasted Trogon and Bornean Whistling-Thrush. From there we will continue on to our accommodations near Kinabalu National Park.

NIGHT: Hill Lodge, Kinabalu National Park, Sabah

July 12-13, Days 6-7: Kinabalu National Park. Mt. Kinabalu is the highest mountain between the Himalayas and the Snow Mountains of New Guinea. This huge, granite massif rises to over 13,000 feet and totally dominates the surrounding landscape. Functioning as an ecological island, it supports a wealth of biota not found elsewhere, or only shared with one or two nearby Bornean mountains. For example, over half the plants above 3,300 feet elevation are endemic. There are approximately 1,200 species of orchids on the mountain and no less than nine species of pitcher plant (*Nepenthes*), including the world's largest, reputed to be capable of holding a quart of water! True montane forest begins above ca. 9,000 feet and is characterized by gnarled, stunted trees (including many rhododendrons – 24 species!) encrusted with mosses, lichens, and orchids which are nourished by the frequent mists and high rainfall.

Finally, above the tree-line, there is an open, subalpine area of bushes and dwarf shrubs below the formidable crags and gigantic rock buttresses of the summit.

The magnificent Kinabalu National Park encompasses an area of 300 square miles and ranges in altitude from 1,000 to 13,455 feet, although the greater portion of the area lies above 4,000 feet. Approximately 300 species of birds have been recorded from the park, including a number of extremely local endemics. We will bird along forest-lined roads and forest trails in search of these specialties. Be aware that birding here can be extremely slow but rewarding. Although the purpose of most people visiting the park is to climb to the summit, we can see most of the specialties well below the high elevations. Characteristically in the mountains, it can suddenly become very chilly and wet; participants are advised to bring along warm clothes and wet weather gear.



Breath-taking views are the norm around Mt. Kinabalu. © Machiel Valkenburg

We have two full days to sample some of Kinabalu's biological diversity, concentrating on mid-montane elevations and above, where we are likely to encounter the greatest degree of endemism. We can drive up to 6,100 feet and walk down the road in order to see canopy species, but we will also explore narrow forest trails to enjoy the full lushness of these forests and some of the more secretive denizens. One day we will visit the nearby Poring Hot Springs. This intriguing area provides access to an elevation and habitat that is otherwise difficult to explore in Borneo, plus it has a superb canopy walkway. With a bit of luck, we may turn up several species unlikely to be encountered elsewhere on the tour.

Birds that we hope to find in the Kinabalu region include Mountain Serpent-Eagle; Mountain Imperial-Pigeon; Little Cuckoo-Dove; Mountain Scops-Owl (with luck); Whitehead's Trogon – lovely but very scarce and elusive; Golden-naped and Mountain barbets; Checker-throated and Maroon woodpeckers; the fabulous Whitehead's Broadbill; Sunda Cuckoo-shrike; Gray-chinned Minivet; Bornean Whistler; Blyth's Shrike-Babbler; Black-and-crimson Oriole; Ashy and Hair-crested drongos; White-throated Fantail; Bornean Green-Magpie; Bornean Treepie; Flavescent Bulbul; Mountain Tailorbird; Sunda Bush Warbler; Mountain and Yellow-breasted Warblers; Chestnut-crested Yuhina;

Mountain Black-eye; Black-capped White-eye; Gray-throated Babbler; Mountain Wren-Babbler; Sunda, Chestnut-hooded and Bare-headed laughingthrushes; the endemic Eyebrowed Jungle-Flycatcher plus Indigo, Snowy-browed and Little Pied flycatchers; Black-sided Flowerpecker; Temminck's Sunbird; and Whitehead's Spiderhunter. With luck we may also find some of Kinabalu's more elusive species, such as Red-breasted and Crimson-headed partridges, Fruit-hunter, Everett's Thrush and Bornean Stubtail. If time permits, we will hike to higher elevations where we might find Island Thrush and Friendly Bush Warbler. Mt. Kinabalu also harbors a number of interesting although infrequently seen mammals including Malay Weasel – a gorgeous orange and white predator; two species of flying squirrels; and Whitehead's Pygmy Squirrel – with ear-tufts nearly as long as its body, plus a variety of other squirrels and tree-shrews.

NIGHTS: Hill Lodge, Kinabalu National Park, Sabah

July 14, Day 8: AM Birding Kinabalu Park; PM Drive to Sandakan and Sepilok. After a final morning of birding in Kinabalu Park we will drive east to the Sandakan area. Once the capital of Sabah, Sandakan is a bustling port on Borneo's east coast with an imposing harbor. It is still the major commercial center for such forest products as rattan, timber, and bird nests (for bird's nest soup). Our lovely lodge lies not far from the city, but adjacent to the Sepilok Forest Reserve, and we should arrive in time to explore the bird-rich grounds a bit.

NIGHT: Sepilok Nature Resort, Sandakan, Sabah



Spectacular Black-crowned Pittas are always a delight. © Machiel Valkenburg

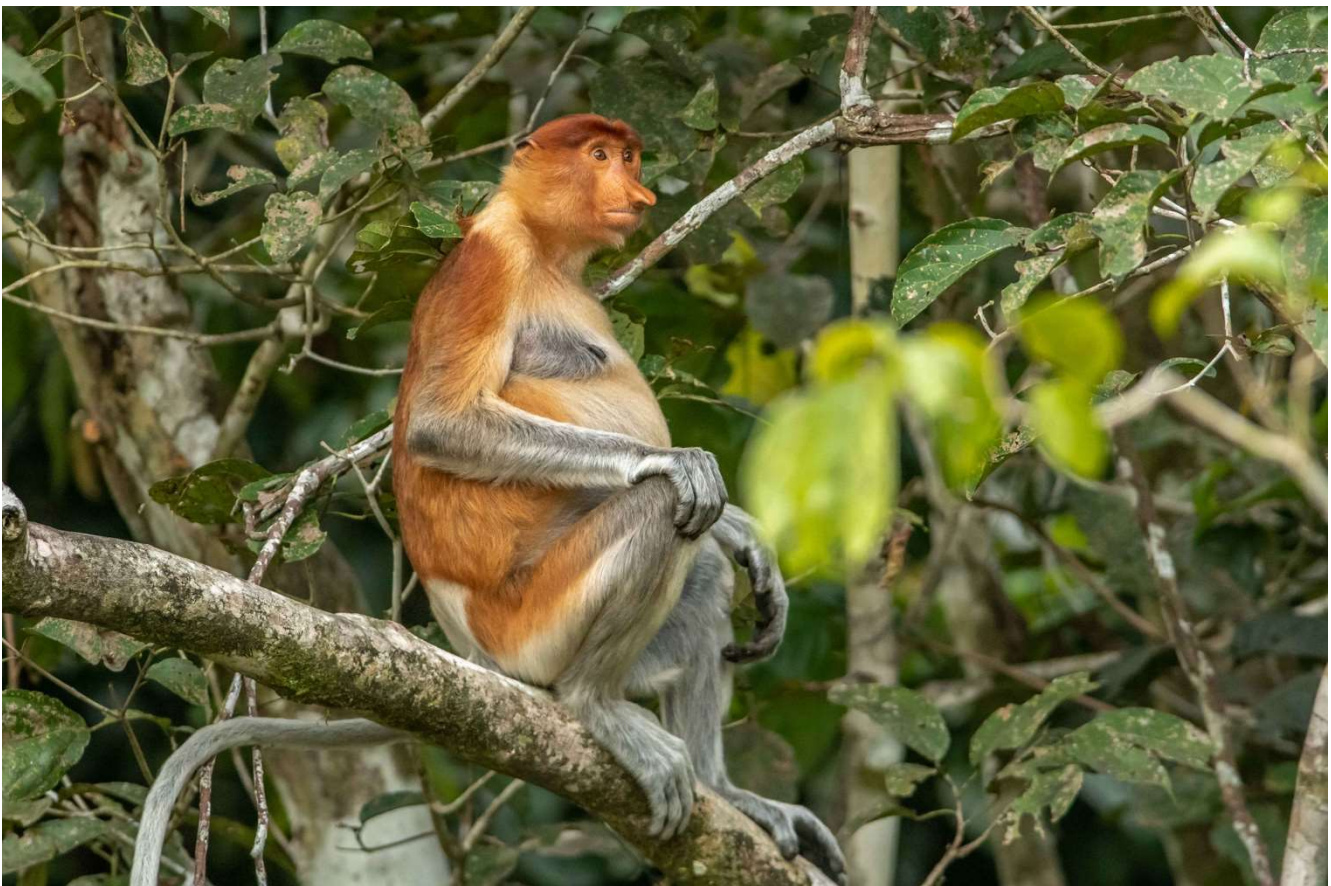
July 15, Day 9: Sepilok Rainforest Discovery Centre. The Rainforest Discovery Centre with its superb canopy walkway and fine system of well-established trails will be a great start to our exploration of Borneo's magnificent lowland forests. The walkway is built of steel and consequently very stable and thus unusually good for birding and photography. We will work this facility in addition to the trails and forest edge in our search for Borneo's birds, mammals and other wildlife. This is one of THE sites for the incomparable Bornean Bristlehead—one of the weirdest

and most exotic looking of all of Borneo's endemic birds—and we will make a special effort to find this very elusive species. For those who wish, there will be an opportunity for a forest night-walk during which we may encounter Slow Loris or some other surprising nocturnal mammal, Brown Hawk-Owl, and with patience and fortune, at least one species of frogmouth. During our 2018 tour we were treated with a wonderful show by a very obliging Black-crowned Pitta. The family of pittas are called “jungle jewels” as they are difficult to come across but when you do, the reward is huge. We have a good chance of finding one of these “jewels” in Sepilok!

NIGHT: Sepilok Nature Resort, Sandakan, Sabah

July 16, Day 10: AM Sandakan; PM Drive to Sukau Rainforest Lodge. This morning we will revisit the Rainforest Discovery Centre, undoubtedly finding many birds not seen the day before. After lunch we will make our way to Sukau Rainforest Lodge, with an early evening stop at the Gomantong Caves Forest Reserve, where we will watch the swifts go in, the bats emerge, and the raptors hunt them—a spectacular sight!

NIGHT: Sukau Rainforest Lodge, Sabah



Wonderful Proboscis Monkeys are seen along the Kinabatangan River during every Borneo tour. © Machiel Valkenburg

July 17-18, Days 11-12: Kinabatangan River Area. We will have two full days to explore the forests along the river, where we may encounter such specialties as Cinnamon-headed Pigeon and other green-pigeons, Crimson-winged Woodpecker, Malaysian Blue Flycatcher, and Copper-throated Sunbird, among many other birds. Nearby, a very attractive forest-lined oxbow lake may harbor the globally-endangered Storm's Stork, Purple Heron, perhaps a raptor or two, and the huge and impressive Rhinoceros Hornbill.

We will slip quietly by boat into a forest-lined creek that fringes the Kinabatangan, Sabah's largest river. Here we will search for such specialties as Lesser Fish-Eagle; the very handsome Black-and-red Broadbill; possibly the uncommon White-crowned Hornbill; Diard's Trogon; Blue-eared and Stork-billed kingfishers; Wrinkled, Oriental Pied and Black

hornbills; Hooded Pitta; and White-necked Babbler. This is also a superb area for Proboscis Monkeys and two species of macaques, as well as otters and Bearded Pigs. In addition, we have had some luck in recent years with the near-mythical Bornean Ground-Cuckoo, a huge but very shy bird. As the day heats up and bird activity decreases, we'll return to our lodge to relax and take a *siesta*.

In the late afternoon we will again work the main river, which can be excellent for hornbills and hopefully bathing herds of Bornean Pygmy Elephants, as well as birds like Bat Hawk, Blue-throated Bee-eater, Dollarbird and many others. On one of our evenings at Sukau, we will take a night cruise on the river for a chance to spot some of the nocturnal prowlers, saltwater crocodiles and perhaps even some birds on their night roosts.

NIGHTS: Sukau Rainforest Lodge, Sabah

July 19, Day 13: Drive to Borneo Rainforest Lodge. This morning we will pack up and leave Sukau. From here we will travel to the small city of Lahad Datu, our jumping off point for the world famous Danum Valley and lovely Borneo Rainforest Lodge. We should arrive at the lodge in time for a short afternoon introduction to this incredible area after we check in.

NIGHT: Borneo Rainforest Lodge, Sabah

July 20-23, Days 14-17: Danum Valley. The Danum Valley is a vast area of rolling lowland rainforest set aside as a reserve by the Sabah Foundation. Some of the forest is old-growth (famous for its towering trees), while along the entry road to the area are selectively-logged and secondary forests. All combine to make an incredible mélange of habitats that protect the full spectrum of Bornean lowland species, including a healthy population of Bornean Orangutans (we have a very good chance of seeing these spectacular primates here). The lodge itself is perhaps the finest in all of Southeast Asia and the setting along the Danum River is undeniably gorgeous. There is an extensive system of trails giving access to the forest interior, a wonderful canopy walkway with observation towers, and lots of activity in general around the lodge and access road. We will bird all of these habitats by day and will also have the chance to make night drives where anything could turn up. Civets and giant flying squirrels are the most likely, but who knows? We may get lucky and encounter Bornean Pygmy Elephants or even the enigmatic Bornean Clouded Leopard (closest living relative to the extinct Saber-toothed Tiger). Around the lodge lights we may find a grazing Sambar Deer or even the impressive Buffy Fish-Owl or Brown Wood-Owl.

We will have four full days in which to explore these magnificent lowland dipterocarp forests. Some of the birds possible include Crested Fireback (a stunning pheasant); Great Argus; Bat Hawk; Crested Goshawk; Pink-necked Pigeon, Thick-billed Pigeon, and Little Green-Pigeon; Moustached and Malaysian hawk-cuckoos; Violet and Banded Bay cuckoos; five species of malkohas; Diard's, Scarlet-rumped and Red-naped trogons – all spectacular but elusive; Rufous-backed Dwarf-Kingfisher, Banded and Rufous-collared kingfishers – all deep forest dwellers; Red-bearded Bee-eater; White-crowned (elusive), Wreathed, Black, Rhinoceros and Helmeted hornbills (surely one of the greatest of Oriental birding spectacles); Red-throated, Blue-eared, Yellow-crowned and Brown barbets; Rufous Piculet; Banded, Crimson-winged, Olive-backed (rare), White-bellied, Buff-rumped, Buff-necked, Maroon, and Orange-backed woodpeckers; White-fronted Falconet; Blue-rumped Parrot; Blue-crowned Hanging-Parrot; Blue-headed and Black-crowned pittas (two of the most beautiful members of this notoriously difficult family); Banded, Green, Black-and-yellow and Dusky broadbills; Fiery and Scarlet minivets; Spectacled, Hairy-backed, Cream-vented, Buff-vented, Streaked and perhaps Finsch's bulbuls; Greater Racket-tailed Drongo; Dark-throated Oriole; Black-capped, Short-tailed, White-chested, Ferruginous, Horsfield's, Moustached, Sooty-capped, Gray-headed, Black-throated and Chestnut-winged babblers; Striped and Black-throated wren-babblers (wonderful songsters that are sometimes remarkably confiding but at other times are the very devil to find and see); Asian Fairy-bluebird; Crested Shrikejay (shy); Black Magpie; Sunda Flycatcher and Bornean blue flycatchers; Gray-chested Jungle-Flycatcher; Common Hill Myna; Red-throated and Crimson sunbirds; Little, Bornean, Gray-breasted, Yellow-eared, Purple-naped, and Long-billed spiderhunters (they rarely eat spiders); Scarlet-backed, Yellow-rumped, Yellow-breasted, and Orange-bellied flower peckers; and the endemic Dusky Munia.

We will also make a special effort to find some of Borneo's most elusive specialties, such as Wallace's Hawk-Eagle; Chestnut-necklaced Partridge; the spectacular endemic Bornean Ground-Cuckoo; Oriental Bay-Owl; Large Frogmouth; Giant Pitta (extremely elusive); Blue-banded Pitta (a tough bird to find, but without a doubt one of the real jewels of the Orient); Bornean Wren-Babbler; and the incomparable Bornean Bristlehead.



The prince of the night in Borneo is this amazing Oriental Bay Owl. © Machiel Valkenburg

NIGHTS: Borneo Rainforest Lodge, Sabah

July 24, Day 18: Fly to Kota Kinabalu. Sadly, this morning we will take our leave of the Borneo Rainforest Lodge to drive and bird our way back to the coastal town of Lahad Datu, where we will take a late afternoon flight back to Kota Kinabalu for our farewell dinner.

NIGHT: Shangri La Tanjung Aru Beach Hotel, Kota Kinabalu

July 25, Day 19: International Flights for Home. Participants may schedule their flights home from Kota Kinabalu at any time today. Check-out time from the hotel is noon.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 8 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Machiel Valkenburg with the assistance of local guides



Machiel Valkenburg was born in 1982 in a southern province in the Netherlands. Encouraged by his parents, he began birding at a very young age. During his teens, he studied landscape ecology and conducted bird surveys with the Dutch Centre for Field Ornithology. During this time, he discovered his passion for traveling worldwide, which is present to this day. Machiel's first adventure began in Greece, followed by Hungary, Romania, Scotland, and Morocco. Later, his birding travels led him outside of Europe into the astounding lands of Western Africa and farther east to the grand territories of Russia and Kazakhstan. His fascination with the peculiar nature and avifauna of Central Asia led him to establish his own bird tour company, Rubythroat Birding Tours. From Central Asia, he often ventured to Southeast Asia and India, which became his favorite destinations. Lately, he has focused his attention on Africa, leading expeditions to Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, and Malawi. Machiel has solid knowledge

of the natural history of Asia. In addition to his fondness for the avian world, Machiel devotes much of his attention to the study of butterflies, dragonflies, botany, and mammals. He is an excellent people person with an innate bird-guide ability and adept organizational skills. Machiel enjoys discovering new destinations and sharing his profound knowledge of birds with fellow birders. He has brilliant spotting skills and excellent hearing. Machiel is known for his calm and respectful social approach, which provides a good atmosphere in the field. Machiel and his wife, Bonny, enjoy spending lots of time with their beautiful son, Dion. After ten years of life in Kazakhstan, the family moved to Valencia, Spain, where they lived for five years. Nowadays, the happy family is living in Kazakhstan.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$10,495** per person in double occupancy from Kota Kinabalu. This includes all meals beginning with dinner on Day 3 to breakfast on Day 19, lodging during the tour, all internal ground, water and air transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leader/s. The tour fee does not include round trip flights to Kota Kinabalu, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$1,695**.

PLEASE NOTE: This tour is priced based on estimated 2022 rates. If our ground operators increase their prices, we reserve the right to surcharge for whatever those additional costs may be.

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT: This tour visits remote locations where immediate access to primary medical care may **NOT** be available. **For this reason, travel insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation is required for participation on this tour.** This coverage is included in the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** program. Through Ripcord, “emergency evacuation” can be purchased as a stand-alone benefit or as part of a comprehensive travel insurance policy. If you choose not to purchase insurance through Ripcord, you are required to obtain it through another provider.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The initial deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. A second deposit of **\$3,000** is due 210 days prior to departure (December 9, 2021). If you prefer to pay your deposits using a credit card, the deposits must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your initial deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at <https://ventbird.com>) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

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 150 days prior to the tour departure date (February 7, 2022).

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:

Cancellation by Participant:

Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 210 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$500** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 209 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the tour fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. **For participants' protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

If participant cancels:

210 days or more before departure date

209 to 151 days before departure date

150 days or less before departure date

Participant's refund will be:

Your deposit(s) minus \$500*

No refund of the deposits, but any payments on the balance will be refunded

No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

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 14 days of making your tour deposit. 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 14 days in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. The primary medical expense benefit is available to U.S. residents only. For this reason, non-U.S. residents will pay an adjusted premium when purchasing a comprehensive policy, which includes all of the other benefits available to U.S. residents. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Coronavirus (COVID-19):

The coronavirus pandemic has brought uncertainty for many people currently holding travel insurance policies or who are considering future travel and purchasing such insurance. Redpoint has added a **Coronavirus FAQ page** to its website that addresses questions and concerns regarding its travel insurance and the impact of COVID-19. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of topics such as policy coverage and limitations, policy modifications, cancellation, refunds, and more. Among the most important points: 1) Trip cancellation solely for concern or fear of travel associated with COVID-19 is not covered; 2) Should you request cancellation of your policy, a full refund of your premium is available only under a limited set of conditions; and 3) Should you request cancellation, you may be eligible to receive a pro-rated refund of the unused portion of your premium or a travel insurance credit. Travel insurance credit (“Premium Credit”) is for the value of the policy purchased and may be applied to future policies. Premium Credits have no expiration dates. Rules and regulations apply.

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

https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/

Additionally, as countries begin opening up for travel, many are instituting an array of COVID-19 entry requirements, including mandates to purchase travel insurance covering medical expenses due to COVID-19 illness and accommodation in case of quarantine. Ripcord’s comprehensive travel insurance plans are designed to satisfy the various country-specific travel insurance entry requirements. Those who purchase a Ripcord policy will receive a “letter of confirmation” that affirms that the policy satisfies such requirements.

FUEL & 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 a tour departure. Prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While VENT will do everything possible to maintain the original price of the tour, if fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to implement a fuel surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In most cases, these additional fuel costs are being passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers who reserve the right, in their agreements to provide services for VENT, to raise their prices due to significant changes in fuel costs.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: Again, in the uncertain, often volatile global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour

departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are being passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

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. ***Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be responsible for any air ticket penalties.***

CLIMATE: Most of our time will be spent in tropical lowland and mid-montane forest. The lowlands are generally hot (90°F) and humid except during the early morning hours and at night. However, much of our time in the lowlands will be spent in the shade of the forest. Most days we will take a siesta break in the mid-afternoon before going out again. On Mt. Kinabalu it can be quite cool and night-time temperatures can fall below 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Although this is one of the drier months in Sabah, we will almost certainly encounter some rain, especially in the afternoons and at night.

CLOTHING: Remember that dark-browns, dark-blues and dark-greens are less likely to startle birds and mammals and are the preferred colors for rainforest birding. **PLEASE, no bright colors or loud, crackling plastics.** Bring light-weight and predominantly cotton or new synthetic field clothing that dries easily; a warm sweater or jacket for our mornings on Kinabalu and perhaps thermal underwear to sleep in; a hat with a good brim to keep the sun off while you are seated in a boat; a waterproof poncho, jacket or the like; a good, strong, dark-colored collapsible **umbrella is ESSENTIAL**; comfortable water-resistant hiking boots or hiking shoes with rugged soles – tennis shoes are NOT sufficient for this trip; and you may consider lugging rubber boots with you, as the trails can be muddy sometimes and they do help to repel leeches. Even flat trails can become slippery when wet. You should also have relatively thick socks to cushion your feet during long walks of four to five hours in the Danum Valley. It is ideal that you buy them calf-length so that you can tuck the bottoms of your trousers into them as protection against “bugs.”

SPECIAL NOTE: Leeches can be a nuisance at times, most notably in the Danum Valley, especially if there has been recent rain. While spraying your socks and trousers with insect repellent is some help, a pair of leech-socks is much more effective. A website that sells anti-leech socks is www.mosquitohammock.com, based in Philadelphia.

CONDITIONS: The trails at the Borneo Rainforest Lodge in the Danum Valley are generally good; however, we will need to negotiate short stretches of trail that could be steep or muddy. Some of the walks in the Danum Valley will require four to five hours in the field.

LAUNDRY: Laundry services are available on a 24-hour basis at all of the places where we stay more than one night and are generally reliable and fairly inexpensive.

CURRENCY: Malaysian Ringgit (MYR). The Ringgit is often referred to as the Malaysian Dollar. Visa, MasterCard, Diners Club and American Express are widely accepted throughout Malaysia.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure and with at least one blank page for entry stamp is required for United States citizens to enter Malaysia. Visas are not required; a tourist visa will be issued upon arrival. Non-U.S. citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars (in your carry-on baggage) that are in good condition along with a belt or day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, camera, etc.). Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so (**we encourage you to do so, especially if you wish to digi-scope**). Other items to bring should include a flashlight or headlamp, alarm clock, sunglasses and sunscreen lotion.

HEALTH: Kota Kinabalu and other major Malaysian cities are generally free from most diseases associated with the Far East. Tap water from the municipal water systems is considered safe. In smaller towns and rural areas, assume the water is unsafe and stick with bottled or boiled drinks. Bottled water is widely available and we will carry a supply with us in the vehicle. Sanitation throughout Malaysia is very good compared to most tropical areas of the world. Most hot, freshly cooked food is safe, but peel fresh fruit and raw vegetables before eating and make sure meat is cooked thoroughly. Be sure to bring all necessary prescription drugs, as well as aspirin, antacids, and a supply of antihistamines should you develop a cold.

Insects such as mosquitoes, sand-flies and leeches can be a problem very locally. This is best dealt with by wearing long-sleeved shirts of sufficient thickness and density of weave that the “bugs” cannot bite through, and long trousers tucked into long socks. We also recommend *CUTTER LOTION* in the squeeze bottle or pump-style *OFF!* or a similar insect repellent.

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: The world has been in the grip of a pandemic since early 2020, a result of the uncontrolled spread of SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes the illness COVID-19. COVID-19 is transmitted through person-to-person contact, almost always through inhaling respiratory aerosols or droplets exuded from an infected person. Common signs of COVID-19 illness include fever or chills, fatigue, shortness of breath, cough, loss of taste or smell, and more. Based on what is known about the disease, COVID-19 is far more serious than seasonal flu. Few places in the world have been unaffected. The impact on travel has been substantial, as demonstrated by the fact that VENT did not operate a tour between late March 2020 and late April 2021. The development and deployment of COVID-19 vaccines, particularly in the United States, has allowed VENT to return to tour operations. We emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. **With this in mind, VENT instituted a COVID-19 vaccination requirement.** All tour participants and tour leaders must be fully vaccinated in order to travel with us while we are still in a declared public health emergency. In accordance with the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), full vaccination is defined as an individual being 14 days beyond having received the required amount of vaccine for reaching full immunity to the degree specific vaccines confer. In the United States, so far, this means either the two-shot sequence for the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines or the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Proof of vaccination must be provided to our office at least one week before the start of the tour and kept with you while on the tour. Because the world is a very different place than it was before the pandemic, we’ve made a number of important adjustments to our processes to ensure that our tours can operate as safely as possible. Please visit the **Coronavirus Travel Update** page of our website <https://ventbird.com/covid-19>, where you may view our **COVID-19 Protocols for VENT Tours** document, which details the guidance VENT will follow in the operation of its tours in the time of pandemic. Our decision and policy are firmly rooted in the latest CDC guidance regarding recommendations for avoiding COVID-19. As we move forward, VENT will continue to follow the latest information from the CDC and will update our policy accordingly. Please visit the CDC website for the most up to date information about COVID-19 and associated guidance for proper health and hygiene: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

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.

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>

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

LUGGAGE: Please limit your luggage to one medium-sized roller duffel or soft-sided suitcase, or two small duffels. Dress is informal throughout and most people find that they have brought too much, especially since laundry can be done at a reasonable cost at all of the lodges at which we spend more than one night. Extra bags not needed on the tour may be stored at the Shangri La Tanjung Aru Resort in Kota Kinabalu. As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars (always), a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Electricity - 220 volts, 50 cycles

Language - Malaysian, English, Hindi and Chinese

Time - 12½ to 13 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time

INTERNET: Complimentary internet/Wi-Fi is available in the rooms at the Shangri La Tanjung Aru Beach Resort. It is also available at Sepilok Nature Resort (in the restaurant); at Sukau Rainforest Lodge (in Gecko Lounge and Gomantong Hall) and Borneo Rainforest Lodge (in the main lodge). Please note that service can be inconsistent.

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.

Bird Field Guides:

Myers, S. *A Field Guide to the Birds of Borneo: Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei and Kalimantan*. London: New Holland Publishers, 2009. **Perhaps the best choice of field guides, as it is compact and easily carried in the field, plus it has excellent plates (but less text than the next).**

Phillipps, Q & K. *Phillipps' Field Guide to the Birds of Borneo*. Princeton University Press, 2014 (Third Edition). **Packed with interesting ecological and location information in addition to being a good field guide. A good choice but a bit heavier to carry in the field.**

Field Guides to Other Subjects:

Otsuka, K. *A Field Guide to Butterflies of Borneo and South-east Asia*. Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia: Hornbill Books, 2001. A fine photographic guide to the 200 most commonly encountered butterflies in Borneo.

Payne, J. et al. *The Mammals of Borneo*. Kuala Lumpur: The Sabah Society with the W.W.F., 1985. **This is a superb field guide and one we heartily recommend, especially as we typically see 30-35 species of mammals on our Borneo tour.**

Additional Reading Material:

Alexander, J, Eliot, J. and D. Gardner. *Footprint Borneo*. Bristol, UK: Footprint Books, 2006.

Beebe, W. *Pheasant Jungles*. New York, 1927. A wonderful account of this naturalist's travels collecting data for this fine book on the pheasants.

Caulfield, C. *In the Rainforest*. London: Heinemann, 1984. An exceptionally accurate and insightful account of who is doing what to our rainforests—and the repercussions.

Chapman, F.S. *The Jungle is Neutral*. London: Corgi books, 1949. The classic on jungle warfare during World War II in Malaysia.

Earl of Cranbrook (editor). *Malaysia*. Key Environment Series. Oxford: Pergamon Press in collaboration with I.U.C.N., 1986.

Fauconnier, H. *The Soul of Malaya*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1965. A powerful invocation of the seduction of Malaysia.

Hoi-Sen, Y. *Malaysian Butterflies: An Introduction*. Kuala Lumpur: Tropical Press, 1987.

Hoi-Sen, Y. *Magnificent Plants*. Malaysia: Tropical Press, 1981.

Luping, D.M., Wen, C.L. and E.R. Dingley (editors). *Kinabalu Summit of Borneo*. Sabah Society Monograph. Kota Kinabalu: Sabah Society, 1978. A superb, detailed account of the Kinabalu National Park.

MacKinnon, J. *Field Guide to the Birds of Borneo, Sumatra, Java and Bali*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

MacKinnon, J. *In Search of the Red Ape*. London: Collins, 1974.

McNeely, J. and P. S. Wachtel. *Soul of the Tiger*, 1988. An exceptional book, quite unlike anything else written. Put together by two international conservationists who know the people and nature of the Orient as well as any.

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Polunin, I. *Plants and Flowers of Malaysia*. Singapore: Times Editions, 1988.

Richards, P.W. *The Tropical Rain Forest*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Richmond, S., Atkinson, B., Brown L., Bush, A., etc. *Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei*. Melbourne, Australia: Lonely Planet, most recent edition. An excellent introductory guide to this fascinating region.

Rubeli, K. *Tropical Rain Forest in South-East Asia: A Pictorial Journey*. Malaysia: Tropical Press, 1987.

Ryan, N.J. *A History of Malaysia and Singapore*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Smythies, B.E. and G.W.H. Davison *The Birds of Borneo*. Kota Kinabalu: Natural History Publications (Borneo), 1999. This superb book is really too heavy to carry on tour; however, it is an essential read for anyone with an interest in Bornean birds. This majorly revised edition is a huge improvement over the previous edition and contains a great deal of interesting information.

Wallace, A.R. *The Malay Archipelago*. Revised edition. New York: Dover Publications, 1962.

Whitmore, T.C. *Tropical Rain Forests of the Far East*. London: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Whitmore, T.C. *Palms of Malaya*. 2nd edition. Kuala Lumpur: O.U.P., 1977.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have 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 November 22, 2021, 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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