

GRAND AUSTRALIA

PART I: NEW SOUTH WALES & THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

SEPTEMBER 28-OCTOBER 14, 2022

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This is the first part of our Grand Australia tour; VENT's comprehensive tour of Australia. We will travel to several of the most important bird areas on the continent, searching out birds, mammals and wildflowers from the common to the rare and most elusive. We expect the field list from either of these parts to represent close to 50% of the species of Australia, which is half of Australia's regular birds in two weeks of birding. We have designed all sections to allow flexibility for those who may have already enjoyed a birding trip to Australia, but missed some of the key sites. It also caters to those who have never visited Australia and wish to experience the whole spectrum of this diverse country by taking all three sections.

Travelling in Australia is a delight; friendly people, excellent roads and hotels, reliable airlines, plenty of fresh produce and tasty food. You can drink the water and eat the salads! On this tour we make a number of two and even three night stays and travel in a vehicle that affords excellent viewing and an abundance of seats.

Australia's geographic isolation has resulted in the evolution of a remarkable array of endemic birds and other wildlife. More than 300 species and eight families are endemic (amongst the richest in the world). Colorful parrots, fairywrens, finches and honeyeaters light up the environment while giant Cassowary and Emu, peculiar bowerbirds and birds-of-paradise make their home down under. It is a place to encounter fascinating mammals such as the egg-laying monotremes, the Short-beaked Echidna and the Platypus. There is an extraordinary variety of marsupials including gliders, possums, miniature carnivores, and the huge plains-dwelling Red Kangaroo. There is also a diverse array of marine mammals, bats and obscure native rodents. Australia also hosts the most diverse reptile fauna in the world. This includes such extraordinary creatures as the Thorny Devil, Frilled Dragon, giant monitor lizards and crocodiles.

We begin in Sydney, considered by many to be one of the finest cities in the world. Sydney is special to birders as it is a short distance from the city center to subtropical rainforests, coastal heaths and sandy beaches teeming with birdlife. We will make a pelagic trip to the Tasman Sea and explore the threatened box woodlands just west of the Blue Mountains.

From Australia's east coast we wing our way north-westwards across the heart of this sun-burnt land to the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory is enormously rich in birds and aboriginal art and we will see the best of these in Kakadu National Park. This will include waterbirds (Magpie Geese, Black-necked Storks and Brolgas), gigantic Saltwater Crocodiles and a host of neat "macropods"

including the Agile Wallaby and Euro. The Arnhem Land escarpment is one of the great natural wonders of the world—highlighted by exquisite ancient rock paintings and such localized specialties as Black-banded Fruit-Dove, Chestnut-quilled Rock-Pigeon and Sandstone Shrikethrush. Further to the south we will seek out such localized rarities as Hooded Parrots, Purple-crowned Fairywren and with luck, the spectacular but sadly endangered Gouldian Finch.

Next we continue to Australia's "Red Centre" and "The Alice" (Alice Springs). Amidst starkly beautiful red sandstone gorges, hidden waterholes, mulga woodland, and spinifex plains, we will search for some of Australia's true "Outback" birds: gorgeous Major Mitchell's Cockatoos and confiding Western Bowerbirds, elusive mice-like Dusky Grasswrens, and a host of nifty parrots and honeyeaters. Our last day will be spent in and around Uluru (Ayers Rock), where in addition to viewing this huge, red rock monolith at sunset, we will have the opportunity to see yet more of Australia's elusive desert dwellers.



Grand Australia Part I can be taken by itself or, for those desiring a more extensive Australian experience, in combination with Grand Australia Part II: Queensland, Victoria and the Plains-wanderer (October 12-29, 2022) and the Tasmania Extension (October 29-November 4, 2022).

September 28-30, Days 1-3: Travel to Sydney. There are direct flights from various western U.S. cities including Dallas, Honolulu, Los Angeles and San Francisco, which will depart on September 28, cross the International Dateline and arrive in Sydney on the morning of September 30. Upon arrival and clearing customs, please make your way by taxi, Uber or Lyft (expect to pay less than AUD\$60) to the Pullman Sydney Hyde Park where a room will be reserved in your name.

Participants wanting to avoid the risk of misconnecting with the group should consider arriving in Sydney on or before September 29 and spending the night. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with these arrangements. The hotel is strategically located and if you arrive early, it is easy to visit the Opera House, Sydney Harbour, Royal Botanic Gardens, Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Australian Museum. Ferries at Circular Quay can take you to Taronga Zoo or Manly Beach.

After time to unpack, rest, and enjoy lunch, we will at last experience our first Australian birds by visiting nearby parklands and forests. Our activities will depend on where the best birding is to be had. It may include Sydney Olympic Park, Centennial Park or even Hyde Park and the Royal Botanic Gardens. Among the many birds we encounter here, we will hope to see the strange Tawny Frogmouth, Laughing Kookaburra, gaudy Rainbow Lorikeet, Pied Currawong, gargantuan Channel-billed Cuckoo, the aptly named Superb Fairywren and hyperactive Yellow Thornbill. As well as many new and unfamiliar species, this first excursion on the “Great South Continent” will probably produce three new families of birds for first time visitors to Australia; just a quick example of how very different the “Island Continent” really is.

NIGHT (September 30): Pullman Sydney Hyde Park, Sydney



Variegated Fairywren © Dion Hobcroft

October 1, Day 4: Royal National Park. This morning we will drive south from Sydney to the Royal National Park, a very diverse national park (one of the first declared in the world) with pockets of subtropical rainforest, wet and dry *Eucalyptus* forests, woodlands and plant-rich sandy heathlands. There are more species of flowering plants here than in the entire United Kingdom.

We will enjoy being distracted by Satin Bowerbird, Sacred Kingfisher, Laughing Kookaburra and the comical, noisy and boisterous Sulphur-crested Cockatoo. Our first walk will take us along Lady Carrington Drive, where we will search for the incredible Superb Lyrebird, a pheasant-sized passerine with an extraordinary powerful song of complex mimicry. Lyrebird populations in the park have recently declined so we will need to walk into the best areas. Fortunately the trails are level and the lyrebirds reasonably tolerant of people, if somewhat aloof. Undoubtedly we will be distracted by new bird after new bird. We should have good chances of encountering Wonga Pigeon; Brown Cuckoo-Dove; Topknot Pigeon (a bizarre rainforest fruit pigeon); Eastern Rosella; Crimson Rosella; Australian King-Parrot (all of these are knockout birds); Shining Bronze-Cuckoo; Fan-tailed Cuckoo; Azure Kingfisher; Black-faced Cuckooshrike; Eastern

Whipbird (with its sonic whip-cracking call); Eastern Yellow Robin; Golden and Rufous whistler; Gray Shrike-thrush; Black-faced Monarch; Gray and Rufous fantails; Variegated Fairywrens (a real gem); Yellow-throated, Large-billed and White-browed scrubwrens; Brown Gerygone; Striated and Brown thornbill; Red Wattlebird; Noisy Friarbird; Noisy Miner; Lewin's, Yellow-faced, Scarlet and New Holland honeyeater; Eastern Spinebill; Silvereye; Spotted Pardalote; Gray Butcherbird; and Green Catbird. With luck and local expert knowledge, we may encounter Rockwarbler.

After a delicious cafe lunch we will explore some coastal heathlands to try for Tawny-crowned Honeyeater, Little Wattlebird, Chestnut-rumped Heathwren, Southern Emu-wren and Beautiful Firetail. These last three species are tough. Walking trails are all level and the pace will be relaxed as we try and take in all of these birds.

NIGHT: Pullman Sydney Hyde Park, Sydney

October 2, Day 5: Sydney Pelagic Boat Trip. The rich marine waters off the coast of Sydney regularly produce some of the most spectacular pelagic birding in the southern hemisphere. In early spring, schools of baitfish attract flocks of shearwaters. There are often lingering albatrosses from winter and a good mix of both warm and cold water oceanic birds. Among the likely possibilities are no less than four species of albatross including Black-browed, Yellow-nosed, Shy and the unbelievably huge Wandering. These, without doubt, are some of the most beautiful of all seabirds. Other species we may encounter include Little Penguin (scarce); Wedge-tailed, Short-tailed, Fluttering, Hutton's and Flesh-footed shearwaters; Southern and Northern giant-petrel; Gray-faced and Providence petrels; Australasian Gannet; White-faced and Wilson's storm-petrel; and Brown Skua. Almost any rarity is possible such as Kermadec Petrel, Red-tailed Tropicbird, and perhaps Buller's or Royal albatross. We have an excellent chance to encounter Humpback Whales and a variety of dolphins also.



Wandering Albatross at sea off Sydney © Dion Hobcroft

NIGHT: Pullman Sydney Hyde Park, Sydney

October 3, Day 6: Drive to Blackheath via Blue Mountains National Park. Today we will drive west from Sydney to the Blue Mountains with some birding en route. Just on the other side of the ranges, we will visit a nearby wetland, which will give us the chance to see the bizarre Musk Duck among a good diversity of Australian waterfowl. With a bit of luck, we may see native mammals including the impressive Euro as well as Eastern Gray Kangaroo, Red-necked Wallaby and maybe a Swamp Wallaby.

NIGHT: Blackheath Motor Inn, Blackheath

October 4, Day 7: Capertee Valley; Transfer to Sydney. This little-known valley tucked away on the west side of the Great Dividing Range is both a superb birding locale and very scenic. We will have most of the day to bird the area. Among the many birds we may see are such specialties as Little Eagle; Turquoise Parrot (scarce); Red-rumped Parrot; Little Lorikeet; Black-chinned, Yellow-tufted and the threatened Regent honeyeaters—Capertee National Park is one of the few places one can reasonably hope to see this most critically endangered of honeyeaters; Brown Treecreeper; Jacky Winter; Hooded Robin; Dusky Woodswallow; Plum-headed Finch; and Diamond Firetail. After a picnic lunch below stunning sandstone cliffs with friendly kangaroos and the odd Common Wombat, we will return to Sydney.

NIGHT: Stamford Airport Hotel, Mascot

October 5, Day 8: Travel to Darwin; Afternoon at East Point Reserve. This morning we will transfer to the airport in time for the 8:20 a.m. departure of Qantas Flight 840 to Darwin, which is scheduled to arrive in Darwin at 11:25 a.m. (subject to change).



Red-collared Lorikeet is a common species around Darwin. © Dion Hobcroft

Named after Charles Darwin, Darwin is the capital city of the Northern Territory in the region widely referred to as the "Top End." We have now entered the tropics, as will be apparent with high temperature and humidity. Here we will be observing a very different array of birds and animals. Our exploration of this area begins with a visit to a nearby area of mudflats, mangroves and monsoon woodland. Birds we may see include Pacific Reef-Heron; Brahminy Kite; Beach Thick-knee (rare); Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove; Torresian Imperial-Pigeon; Red-tailed Black Cockatoo; Red-collared Lorikeet; Little Bronze-Cuckoo; Torresian Kingfisher; Rainbow Bee-eater; Green-backed Gerygone; and White-gaped, Brown, Rufous-banded and Red-headed honeyeater. Shorebirds should be excellent with the chance to see rarer species including Great Knot, Terek

Sandpiper with some chance for Little Curlew, and hopefully Oriental Plover. Agile Wallabies (a small kangaroo) will be feeding on the edge of the monsoon rainforests.

NIGHT: Adina Vibe Hotel, Darwin

October 6, Day 9: Birding the Darwin Area.

In the morning we will explore Howard Springs Nature Park, a delightful area of monsoon vine forest and home to our target bird, the beautiful Rainbow Pitta. At this time of the year they should be quite vocal, which will increase our chances considerably of finding it. There will be nonstop birding action in the morning as we will also try to seek out Brush Cuckoo, Varied Triller, White-bellied Cuckooshrike, Shining Flycatcher, Northern Fantail, Gray Whistler, Dusky and Blue-faced honeyeater, and Yellow Oriole. If we have early success, we will explore the mangroves for Australian Yellow White-eye, Mangrove Gerygone and, if the tides are good, hopefully the rarely encountered Chestnut Rail. Before our midday siesta we will visit Knuckey Lagoon, which will provide our first taste of the incredible abundance of wetland birds in the Top End. We will find huge numbers of Magpie Geese and in amongst them Radjah Shelducks, Brolga, Black-necked Stork, Whiskered Terns, Australian Pratincole and much more. After lunch we will visit the Darwin Botanic Gardens to try for both Rufous (now elusive) and Barking owls.



Rainbow Pitta at Howard Springs © Dion Hobcroft

NIGHT: Adina Vibe Hotel, Darwin

October 7, Day 10: Darwin to Kakadu National Park. From Darwin we will travel south and then west via the towns of Humpty Doo and the Fogg Dam to the World Heritage Kakadu National Park. After checking in at Cooinda, we will do some relaxed afternoon birding in the surrounding tropical woodland.

World Heritage Kakadu National Park encompasses some 13,000 square kilometers (about 8,000 square miles) of flood plains, paperbark swamps, savannah woodlands and extraordinary sandstone escarpments. The park is home to several of Australia's most localized birds. It also harbors cave galleries of superb Aboriginal rock art. This afternoon we will focus our attention on the area around Nourlangie Rock and the very best of the aboriginal cave paintings we are allowed to see. By a fortunate coincidence, most of the Arnhemland specialty birds can be found here, including Black-banded Fruit-Dove, White-lined Honeyeater and Sandstone Shrikethrush. We also have a chance for two rare kangaroo species—the endemic Black Wallaroo and the tiny, shy, Wilkin's Rock Wallaby.

NIGHT: Gagadju Lodge Cooinda (Yellow Waters), Kakadu

October 8, Day 11: Kakadu National Park. We have the entire day to explore Kakadu National Park. We will begin with a dawn cruise along Yellow Waters billabong. The diversity and tameness of birds along this exquisitely beautiful waterway has to be seen, to be believed. While exploring from a very comfortable canopied boat, we will glide to within a few meters of many species, including Azure Kingfisher (and hopefully Little Kingfisher), Black-fronted Dotterel, Whistling Kite and White-bellied Sea-Eagle. We should have some incredible photographic and video opportunities and great binocular viewing. We should also see several giant Saltwater Crocodiles, which represent the top of the food chain in this part of the world. Eventually we will leave this piece of paradise and go off in search of elusive woodland birds.

Species we will be searching for include Chestnut-backed Buttonquail (scarce); Partridge Pigeon (also tough); Bush Thick-knee; Northern Rosella; Varied Lorikeet; Barking Owl; Spotted Nightjar; Forest Kingfisher; Blue-winged Kookaburra; Buff-sided Robin; Leaden Flycatcher; Gray-crowned Babbler; Red-backed Fairywren; Black-tailed Treecreeper; Double-barred, Masked and Long-tailed finch; Black-faced Woodswallow; Pied Butcherbird; and Great Bowerbird. This is a great location to look for two endemics, both of which are quite elusive—the Sandstone Shrikethrush and Chestnut-quilled Rock-Pigeon.

NIGHT: Gagadju Lodge Cooinda (Yellow Waters), Kakadu

October 9, Day 12: Travel from Kakadu National Park to Katherine. Today after a visit to the Aboriginal Cultural Centre we will drive 250 kilometers south to the township of Katherine. This is finch and parrot country and we will be making an effort to locate special birds like the Masked and Long-tailed finch plus the luminous Red-winged Parrot. We will try and find one of the Top End's most sought after and difficult birds, the Hooded Parrot. This scarce parrot is very unusual in that it nests in the giant termite mounds, which are such a feature of this area. In the late afternoon we will try our luck to see some of the Katherine locals like Apostlebird, Northern Rosella and the impressive Great Bowerbird with his impressive bower.

NIGHT: Knotts Crossing Resort, Katherine

October 10, Day 13: Victoria River Bridge and Timber Creek. We will depart very early this morning for the Victoria River in order to be there for dawn. Our target this morning is one of the most beautiful and localized of all Australian birds, the Purple-crowned Fairywren. This species, together with Yellow-rumped and Chestnut-breasted munias, and Crimson and Star finch inhabit the tall grass bordering the river and provide our only opportunity of the entire tour to see at least four of these species. The incredibly beautiful and endangered Gouldian Finch has also been recorded in the area. VENT tour groups have regularly been successful in finding this rarest of Top End birds. If we are lucky, we may find a Freshwater Crocodile basking on the rocks. There will be many other local and scarce birds to look for including Australian Bustard, Black-breasted Buzzard and with great fortune, perhaps a Gray Falcon or Red Goshawk.

NIGHT: Knotts Crossing Resort, Katherine

October 11, Day 14: Travel to Darwin and Fly to Alice Springs. After some morning birding or a visit to the Aboriginal Cultural Centre, we will transfer to Darwin in time for the 3:30 p.m. departure of Qantas Flight 1960, which is scheduled to arrive in Alice Springs at 5:35 p.m. (subject to change). “The Alice,” capital of the “Red Centre,” lies almost at the geographical center of Australia. Surrounded by classic, albeit somewhat stark desert country, it is home to some very special birds. The scenery and plants are very different to anything we will have seen on our journey so far.

NIGHT: Alice Springs Resort, Alice Springs

October 12, Day 15: Alice Springs. Bird density in the desert is often low and with many species being nomadic, the amount of rain which has fallen recently may dictate how we find the birds and exactly how we spend our time. The West McDonnell Ranges, which we will explore today, have permanent water and that is the key to success in finding the birds here. We will start off at Simpson’s Gap to find Splendid Fairywren, Red-capped



Western Bowerbird working on its bower in Alice Springs
© Dion Hobcroft

Robin, Rainbow Bee-eater, Western Gerygone, Little Woodswallow, and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, to name a few. We will also try and find the endangered Black-footed Rock Wallaby. If conditions are appropriate, we will continue on to Ormiston Gorge, to be joined by hopefully a few Spinifex Pigeons and a Western Bowerbird. We will roadside bird back and a stop at the Ochre Pits may reveal a Red-browed Pardalote, Crested Bellbird and much more. In the afternoon we will explore along the Santa Theresa Road to the east. Here dense spinifex and patches of dwarf Eucalypts and Mulga is home to the Mulga Parrot, White-browed Treecreeper, Rufous-crowned Emuwren, Dusky Grasswren and Spinifexbird.

NIGHT: Alice Springs Resort, Alice Springs

October 13, Day 16: Drive to Uluru (Ayers Rock). A morning visit to the Alice Springs Power and Water Wetlands is guaranteed to produce an excellent variety of arid zone birds and wetland species, both nomadic and international migrant. We are likely to see such special birds as Red-necked Avocet, Pink-eared Duck and Black-tailed Native-hen. Hiding in the saltbush are White-

winged and Purple-backed fairywrens. We often pick up a rare bird here and on previous visits we have seen Orange Chat, Oriental Plover, Little Curlew, Australian Spotted Crake, and even Sanderling and Red-necked Phalarope. It is an exciting place to visit. After taking in the best of the wetlands, we will spend the day birding from the roadside as we drive to the World Heritage Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. The country becomes increasingly arid and red sand dunes and salt lakes make an appearance as we head west. We can hope to see White-backed Swallow and a number of Wedge-tailed Eagles. In the evening we will enjoy sunset at “The Rock,” the spiritual heartland of Australia, complete with a glass of champagne and canapes.

NIGHT: Desert Gardens Hotel, Ayers Rock

October 14, Day 17: Morning at Uluru and Kata Tjuta; Departure for Home or Travel to Brisbane to Begin Part II. Uluru is THE classic site of Australia and we will have the morning to explore it and its equally impressive neighbor, Kata Tjuta (The Olgas). Although we are now in the heart of Australia’s largest desert, it supports remarkably rich vegetation comprising over 300 species of flowering plants. On the plains and dunes, the

vegetation community is dominated by spinifex (*Triodia*), with scattered trees and shrubs including Desert Oak; Mulga; Witchetty Bush; Desert Poplar; and Desert, Honey and Rattlepod grevilleas. Small waterholes can be found at the base of the rock monoliths and are good birding sites. Much depends on the rains; it can either be quiet for birds or if the season has been good, quite outstanding. We will be on the look-out for Black-eared and Horsfield's bronze-cuckoo, Pied Honeyeater, Masked Woodswallow, Redthroat, Australian Ringneck, and Little Crow. Rarities include Banded Whiteface and Striated Grasswren. If the rains have been really good, we may be in for clouds of Budgerigars and some Major Mitchell's Cockatoos.

We will transfer to the Ayers Rock airport in time for the 12:20 p.m. departure of Qantas Flight 729 to Sydney which is scheduled to arrive at 4:45 p.m. Participants continuing on Grand Australia Part II will connect to Qantas Flight 542 which is scheduled to depart at 5:35 p.m. and arrive in Brisbane at 6:05 p.m. (flight schedules subject to change).

For participants not continuing on Grand Australia Part II, we suggest spending the night in an airport-area hotel and departing for home on a morning flight on October 15. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with any additional lodging arrangements.

TOUR SIZE: This section will be limited to 10 participants. However, VENT reserves the right to increase the tour limit by one in order to accommodate a couple when only one space is available.

TOUR LEADER: Dion Hobcroft with the assistance of local guides



Dion Hobcroft has been working for VENT since 2001. He has led many tours (more than 180) to Australia, New Guinea, New Zealand, Bhutan, Indonesia, India, China, Southwest Pacific, Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, Malawi, Myanmar, Japan, Russia, Alaska, Tanzania, Uganda, Madagascar, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and the Antarctic. In 2007 and 2013–2019 alone, Dion showed more than 2,000 species of birds to VENT clients. His informative, relaxed, and educational nature, combined with sharp eyes and ears, has established Dion as a favorite of many tour participants. His fieldwork for over 40 years on birds and other terrestrial vertebrates has allowed him to amass an extraordinary knowledge of the biodiversity in the Asia-Pacific region. Born in Tasmania and based in Sydney, Dion has traveled widely throughout Australasia, listing over 1,200 species, placing him in the top echelons of the region's birders. He is very tuned-in to the songs of bird species in the Asia-Pacific region and specializes in rare and elusive species. He is delighted to show these skulking rarities to his travel companions. Dion has published several papers on field ornithology, served on national and state rare bird committees, managed *Birdline NSW*, run introduction to ornithology courses for Sydney University, and, before he traveled so continuously, was a popular speaker with various natural history societies. Dion has worked for many research and government agencies ranging from the Antarctic Division, Department of Environment NSW, Agriculture Protection WA, Taronga Zoo, Australian Museum, and the Queensland Department of Primary Industry. Dion lives in Sydney with his wife, Lise, and two children, Grace (age 19) and Daniel (age 15).

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for this section is **\$9,445** per person in double occupancy from Sydney (tour ends in Ayers Rock) including all meals from lunch on Day 3 to lunch on Day 17. Each tour fee includes accommodations as stated in the itinerary, entrance fees to all parks, ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leader. Fees do not include international airfare from your home to Sydney and return from Ayers Rock, internal commercial Australian flights (see AIR INFORMATION below), 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 section is **\$1,490**.

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

Note that there are specific internal commercial Australian flights associated with this tour part, the cost of which is not covered by the tour fee. Due to the complicated nature of these flights, you are strongly encouraged to contact Victor Emanuel Travel for assistance with these arrangements about four months prior to departure.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, the deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your 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 www.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 (May 1, 2022) prior to the tour departure date.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic 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 or cruise 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 passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS: Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 180 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 179 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre- and post-tour extensions. **For your protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

If you cancel:

180 days or more before departure date

179 to 151 days before departure date

150 days or less before departure date

Your refund will be:

Your deposit minus \$500*

No refund of the deposit, 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.

Upon cancellation of the transportation or travel services, where you, the customer, are not at fault and have not cancelled in violation of the terms and conditions of any of the contract for transportation or travel services, all sums paid to VENT for services not received by you will be promptly refunded by VENT to you unless you otherwise advise VENT in writing.

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.

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.

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: <https://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.

CLIMATE: You will be visiting Australia during spring. In the tropical north (Northern Territory) you can expect warm to hot temperatures from 60-90°F, sometimes higher, especially in Kakadu, Katherine and Victoria River where temperatures may exceed 100°F. Humidity can also be high in these regions. In the "Red Centre," humidity is lower and morning temperatures often cooler, but the middle of the day can be hot. In southern Australia in spring, the temperatures fluctuate between the influence of the Southern Ocean and the hot inland. Typically the temperature range is 40-90°F, but at times it can exceed 100°F in the inland locations on occasions. Blackheath can be cold at night, so warm clothing is important.

DRIVING: Depending on group size, we will use either a 19-seat Toyota or Mitsubishi Coaster bus or a 12-passenger van. These vehicles are comfortable, air conditioned and enable every participant to have their own window seat. Australia is an enormous country and we will be doing some lengthy drives to get ourselves into the correct habitat for many localized and scarce birds (this is especially the case in the Katherine area). Participants are welcome to take a morning or afternoon off in locations where we spend two or more days.

CLOTHING: In the warmer areas, lightweight field clothing is adequate. Please wear dull-colored clothing, shades of brown and/or green being desirable. Shorts can be particularly useful in warmer sites. However, do bring a warm sweater and jacket, as well as gloves and a windbreaker for cooler areas. Sound footwear and a broad-brimmed hat are recommended, as are a rain jacket and slip-on waterproof "overpants." A swimsuit will be useful at times. Dress will be casual.

CURRENCY: Australian Dollar (AUD) exchange facilities are available for all incoming and outgoing flights at all international airports. It is recommended that you change money at the airport or at city banks. Visa, MasterCard, and American Express are accepted; however, use may be limited in small towns and "Outback" areas. The best exchange is always from automatic teller machines as opposed to changing at dealers.

DOCUMENTS: In order to visit Australia, a passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure and an Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) are required for citizens of most countries including the USA and Canada.

Upon your request, this will be obtained for you by the VENT office at no extra charge. You need only to send us a legible copy of the picture page of your passport at least a month prior to the tour's departure. Non-U.S. and non-Canadian citizens should check with your local Australian consulate/embassy for instructions.

As of this writing (March 29, 2022), fully vaccinated travelers from the USA and Canada can enter Australia but must follow a specific set of instructions including completing an electronic Digital Passenger Declaration (DPD) and present proof of a negative PCR COVID-19 result from a test taken with 72 hours of departure. Details of Australia's requirements and procedures can be found on the link below:

<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/covid19/vaccinated-travellers/temporary-visa-holders/entering-transiting-australia>

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good condition, along with a belt or day pack (You will find this very useful 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. Other items to bring should include a flashlight or

headlamp, water bottle, alarm clock, and sunscreen. As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag.

HEALTH: There is no risk of malaria and sanitary conditions are excellent in Australia, and both the water and food are safe. If a pelagic trip is part of the tour you are taking, medication to prevent seasickness may prove very useful.

Insects can be a problem at times in some localities. We recommend the use of Cutter and OFF! for chiggers (virtually absent in Australia) and mosquitoes. The Australian bush fly, a non-biting, nuisance insect similar to the house fly, can be quite troublesome in certain seasons. Repellents are ineffective; a lightweight head net will prove very useful at these times.

Drinking water is fine throughout Australia. Water served in restaurants and hotels is always safe. It is recommended to always carry a water bottle with you that can be re-filled at all times.

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.

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).

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 trip 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.

INTERNET: Expect Wi-Fi to be available at all or most hotels and lodges with the exception of the Gagadju Lodge Cooida.

MISC:

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| Electricity: | 220/240 volts with three-pronged outlets |
| Adapter: | Type I or AS/NZS 3112 |
| Language: | English and aboriginal languages |
| Time: | Western Australia, 14 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time Central Australia, 15½ hours ahead of EST East Coast, 16 hours ahead of EST |

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. We also recommend Andrew Isles books for the Asia-Pacific region at <http://www.andrewisles.com> for difficult to find and out of print books for Australia.

This list includes some basic field guides and reference volumes of use to the visitor. A great deal has been written about all aspects of Australia's natural history. You will find a variety of selections in any library. Browse around a little and you will discover many resources not listed here.

Cogger, Harold G. *Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia*. AH & AW Reed Pty. Ltd., 2015. Technical but thorough account of Australian herpetofauna. Too large to be easily carried by travelers.

Menkhorst, P. and Knight, F. *A Field Guide to the Mammals of Australia* South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, (latest edition). The concise field guide to Australian mammals we have all been waiting for. Highly recommended.

Menkhorst, P., Rogers, D., Clarke, R., Davies, J., Marsack, P. and Franklin, K. *The Australian Bird Guide*. CSIRO Publishing, 2017. The best available field guide to Australian birds with fantastic plates and a lot of information. A bit heavy.

Pizzey, Graham and Knight, Frank. *A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. Angus and Robertson, (latest edition). A thorough text with excellent information about song, range, and behavior combined with very good plates make this field guide recommended for all participants.

Simpson, Ken, and Nicolas Day. *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. New York: Viking Penguin, Inc. (latest edition). Outstanding plates, maps, with up-to-the-minute information. The handbook section in the back contains very valuable information. Recommended for all participants.

Slater, Peter, Pat Slater and Raoul Slater. *The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds*. Dee Why West, N.S.W.: Rigby Publishers, (latest edition). Excellent plates, maps, text and portrait organized similarly to the National Geographic guide to U.S. birds. Recommended for all participants.

Wilson, Steve and Gerry Swan. *A Complete Guide to Reptiles of Australia*. Reed New Holland Pty. Ltd., 2003. A superb and very usable publication.

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. 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. Notwithstanding the foregoing, VENT will not provide any participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to any 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, when and to the extent such failure or delay is caused by or results from acts beyond VENT's control, including, without limitation, the following force majeure events: (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 in effect on or after the date of the scheduled tour; (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.

If a participant cancels any tour or any portion of a tour, VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by any participant (see VENT Registration & Deposit policy and Cancellation & Refunds policy contained in the itinerary). Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on April 8, 2022 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. If a participant is removed from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed 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.