



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

GRAND AUSTRALIA

PART II: QUEENSLAND, VICTORIA & PLAINS-WANDERER

OCTOBER 4–21, 2024

TASMANIA EXTENSION

OCTOBER 21–27, 2024

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This is the second part of our Grand Australia tour; VENT's finest, most 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 (making it one of 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.

In Part II of our tour, we travel to O'Reilly's and the lovely Lamington National Park, located on the border of Queensland and New South Wales. O'Reilly's is world famous, especially among birders in the know. Set in cool, upland forests, it is a haven for wildlife and spectacular species such as Australian Brushturkey, Australian King-Parrot, flocks of Crimson Rosella and Regent Bowerbird—

they all come to feed out of your hand. Further into the rainforest lives Albert's Lyrebird, Paradise Riflebird and Noisy Pitta.

Then we continue on to Cairns in the balmy tropics of northeast Queensland, the most bird rich region in Australia. From our tranquil base at Kingfisher Park, we'll range from the azure waters of the Great Barrier Reef to the magnificent rainforests of the Atherton Tableland. We will be searching for birds in rainforests, tropical woodlands and savannas, mangroves, freshwater wetlands and grasslands. Imagine seeing a gigantic flightless Southern Cassowary, the peculiar Tooth-billed Catbird or Great Bowerbird working their stages or a pair of weird Chowchillas duetting back and forth. This and so much more awaits the visitor to Australia.

Next we venture to Victoria, in the southeast of Australia, where we will first explore the Bendigo district and Hattah-Kulkyne National Park. These impressively large conservation areas protect some of the finest remaining semi-arid mallee habitat and some super birds and mammals: the Emu, the extraordinary mound-building Malleefowl, Regent Parrot, Pink Cockatoo—perhaps the most beautiful member of its family, Mallee Emuwren—rare and elusive, Southern Scrub-Robin, Gilbert's Whistler, Chestnut Quail-thrush, Shy Heathwren and Gray Currawong.

We will then cross into New South Wales and reach the attractive township of Deniliquin. This is another bird rich area and here among the native grasslands, saltbush flats, River Red Gums and billabongs, we will search for a number of localized and difficult to find species: Blue-billed Duck, Black-tailed Nativehen, Black Falcon, beauties such as the Red-rumped and Superb parrots, perhaps the Budgerigar, White-backed Swallow, White-winged Fairywren and Apostlebird. However, above all, Deniliquin is home to the peculiar and endangered Plains-wanderer (the only member of its family). We will spend one evening looking for this and a number of other rarely seen species such as Stubble Quail and Little Buttonquail, all of which we will be able to study literally at arm's length. From Deniliquin, we will return to Melbourne for the final night of the tour.



Tasmania is a beautiful island greened by regular rains and cooled by seas that roar in from the Antarctic far to the south. As a result of its isolation, Tasmania not only supports a number of exciting endemic birds, but it also provides safe haven to a number of species, especially Australia's beleaguered mammals, which have declined or disappeared completely on the nearby mainland. VENT's exploration of this little piece of heaven will begin in Launceston. From here we wind our way into the mountains, including Cradle Mountain National Park—the beauty and serenity of this park has to be experienced to be believed—and on to the historic city of Hobart. Our itinerary takes us to Mountain Valley in search of Tasmanian Devil and Bruny Island for Swift Parrot and Forty-spotted Pardalote. Some of the other special birds we can hope to see include all 12 of Tasmania's endemic bird species and some other elusive southern specialties including Cape Barren Goose; Little Penguin; the huge Tasmanian Nativehen; Hooded Plover; Pacific Gull; Green Rosella; Southern Emuwren; the exquisite Pink Robin and Flame Robin; Dusky Robin; Scrubtit; Tasmanian Thornbill; Yellow Wattlebird; Yellow-throated, Strong-billed, and Black-headed honeyeaters; Beautiful Firetail; and Black Currawong. A spectacular array of mammals includes Platypus, Short-beaked Echidna, Spot-tailed Quoll, Tasmanian Devil, Common Wombat, Tasmanian Pademelon and Red-necked (Bennett's) Wallaby.

Both sections of Part II can be taken by themselves or, for those desiring a more extensive Australian experience, in combination with Grand Australia Part I: New South Wales & The Northern Territory (September 20-October 6, 2024).

October 4-6, Days 1-3: Travel to Brisbane. Those participants not continuing from Part I can arrive in Brisbane at any time on October 6 and take the shuttle to the nearby Novotel Brisbane Airport Hotel where a room will be reserved in your name. There are non-stop flights in addition to connections through such cities as Sydney, Melbourne and Auckland which depart Los Angeles, cross the International Dateline and arrive in Brisbane two days later. If you arrive on the morning of October 6, you will have the rest of the day at leisure to rest up from your long journey. Participants continuing from Part I will arrive from Uluru (Ayers Rock) in the evening.

NIGHT (October 6): Novotel Brisbane Airport, Brisbane

October 7, Day 4: Drive to O'Reilly's, Lamington National Park. Today we travel to O'Reilly's, an incredible lodge located on the Lamington Plateau in the spectacular McPherson Ranges. Lamington National Park is a World Heritage listed area of subtropical rainforest and diverse *Eucalypt* forests. This plateau is the border between New South Wales and Queensland and is a world-famous birders' delight. At the highest altitudes are forests of Antarctic beech (*Nothofagus*) of tremendous age. They are gnarled, moss covered giants which support tremendous epiphytes including staghorns, elkhorns and birdsnest ferns.

The birding will become considerably more challenging here as we attempt to spot birds in a sea of green (after our time in the desert in Part I of Grand Australia).

NIGHT: O'Reilly's Guest House, Lamington National Park

October 8, Day 5: O'Reilly's, Lamington National Park. O'Reilly's is famous for the profusion and extraordinary tameness of its bird life. Some of the exciting species we may see include Gray Goshawk; Pacific Baza; Variegated Fairywren; Australian Brushturkey; Wompoo Fruit-Dove; Topknot, White-headed and Wonga pigeon; Brown Cuckoo-Dove; very tame Crimson Rosellas and Australian King-Parrots; Noisy Pitta; Red-browed and White-throated treecreeper; Russet-tailed and Bassian thrush; White-eared Monarch (rare); Australian Logrunner; Eastern Whipbird; Paradise Riflebird; Green Catbird; the incredible Regent Bowerbird (which will feed from your hands); and Satin Bowerbird. We will search for regional endemics, especially the elusive Albert's Lyrebird, scarce Glossy Black Cockatoo and Marbled Frogmouth. Spotlighting may reward us with various



Crimson Rosella © Max Breckenridge

species of possum, wallabies and hopefully nocturnal birds including Southern Boobook and Australian Owlet-Nightjar. Unfortunately, it is unrealistic to expect to see the near invisible Rufous Scrub-bird during our stay here, which involves a 16-mile jungle hike with a low chance of success. We will make a visit into the Lamington valley, adding several birds including: hopefully Striped Honeyeater, Speckled Warbler, Latham's Snipe, and Bell Miner to mention a few, and a chance for Koala.

NIGHT: O'Reilly's Guest House, Lamington National Park

October 9, Day 6: O'Reilly's; Afternoon Flight to Cairns. This morning we will be trying to find any birds we have missed. After lunch, we will drive to Brisbane in time for the 3:25 p.m. departure of Qantas Flight 1884, which is scheduled to arrive in Cairns at 5:50 p.m. (subject to change). After settling into our hotel we will, depending upon tides and our actual arrival, bird along the Cairns Esplanade. This area is excellent for many birds including Far Eastern Curlew, Terek Sandpiper, Bar-tailed and Black-tailed godwits, Curlew Sandpiper,

Asiatic Dowitcher (rare), Varied Honeyeater, Metallic Starling, Australian Swiftlet and Scaly-breasted Lorikeets, to name a few.

NIGHT: Rydges Esplanade Resort, Cairns

October 10, Day 7: Cairns to Kingfisher Park; Julatten via Mareeba. This morning we will explore Centenary Lakes in Cairns. At this bird rich site, we can expect to encounter a bunch of tropical honeyeaters like Brown-backed and Yellow, maybe a Black Butcherbird, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Torresian Kingfisher, White-browed Crake, Sahul Sunbird, Large-billed Gerygone or Bush Stone-Curlew. After lunch in Mareeba, we will stop off at Lake Mitchell and Mount Molloy to try for a host of rare and not so rare tropical woodland birds including Squatter Pigeon, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Pale-headed Rosella, Red-winged Parrot and Great Bowerbird. We will then arrive at our home for the next three nights—Kingfisher Park, a birders' delight. Here we will let the birds come to us and we should enjoy views of the elusive Red-necked Crake; Macleay's, Yellow-spotted, Cryptic and Scarlet honeyeaters; Pacific Emerald Dove; Spotted Catbird; Gray-headed and Pale-yellow robin; Spectacled Monarch; Red-browed Finch; and much more coming into and around the feeders. At dusk we will try to see the Platypus. It sometimes co-operates and gives us fabulous views of this perhaps most unusual mammal in the world, a genuine living fossil.

NIGHT: Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge, Julatten

October 11, Day 8: Kingfisher Park and Mount Lewis. After breakfast we will be heading up to Mount Lewis to try and find all of the high altitude endemic birds this special place has to offer. These include Bower's Shrikethrush, Chowchilla, Barred Cuckooshrike, Fernwren, Mountain Thornbill, Atherton Scrubwren, Bridled Honeyeater, the aberrant Tooth-billed Catbird, Victoria's Riflebird and maybe a Blue-faced Parrotfinch. With good fortune, we may encounter the scarce Golden Bowerbird. Lower down we will be looking out for Pied Monarch, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Barred Cuckooshrike, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, and possibly the Southern Cassowary or the spectacular Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher that with some luck may have just arrived on migration from New Guinea. This is jungle birding at its finest. At dusk we will again try for the Platypus and spotlight for the Sooty Owl and maybe a Striped Possum.

NIGHT: Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge, Julatten

October 12, Day 9: Daintree River Cruise, Kingfisher Park, and Maryfarms. We begin today with an early morning boat trip on the Daintree River. High on our wish list will be the monolithic Great-billed Heron, the elusive Black Bittern and with local expertise, perhaps a Little Kingfisher or nesting Papuan Frogmouth. Upon returning to Kingfisher Park, we will be able to enjoy a well-earned siesta or perhaps another Platypus stake-out before heading west of Mount Molloy to the scenic area of Maryfarms. Here in the afternoon light, we may witness the spectacular display of male Australian Bustards as they compete for females.

NIGHT: Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge,
Julatten



Australian Bustard on display © Dion Hobcroft



Southern Cassowary near Kuranda
© Dion Hobcroft

October 13, Day 10: Atherton Tablelands and ETTY Bay. Today's plan will depend on where Southern Cassowaries are most reliable. We will likely either visit the rainforest around Kuranda, or the scenic ETTY Bay. Aside from our cassowary quest, we will have a fantastic day on the tablelands, visiting a variety of locations. Granite Gorge beckons with close encounters with Squatter Pigeon and the cute Mareeba Rock-Wallaby. Further south, we will scan the fields for flocks of Sarus Crane and Brolga and visit wetlands full of waterfowl. Patches of rainforest and quiet creeks will give us a very good chance of seeing Platypus and any of the wet tropics endemics we may still be missing.

NIGHT: Rydges Esplanade Resort, Cairns

October 14, Day 11: The Great Barrier Reef. Today we will visit the largest and one of the most spectacular and biologically diverse coral reefs in the world. Australia's Great Barrier Reef harbors tens of thousands of tiny coral cays and islets and a wonderful array of marine life. We will

take an all-day boat trip to visit the outer reef and Michaelmas Cay, where tens of thousands of terns should be nesting in addition to other patrolling tropical seabirds such as Greater Frigatebird; Brown, Red-footed and perhaps Masked boobies; Great Crested, Lesser Crested, Common, Roseate, Bridled, Sooty and stunning Black-naped terns; and Common and possibly Black noddies. There will also be plenty of opportunity for those who wish to snorkel and explore the reef itself. We will see a stunning array of colorful reef fish, coral gardens and a good chance for marine turtles. Please read the section specifically on this day later in the itinerary.

NIGHT: Rydges Esplanade Resort, Cairns

October 15, Day 12: Flight to Melbourne; Drive to Bendigo. This morning, we will transfer to the Cairns Airport in time for a morning flight to Melbourne (specific flight and time to be announced). A relatively short drive to the town of Bendigo will give us access to diverse woodlands. Nearby protected areas will give us the

chance for Dusky Woodswallow, Brown Treecreeper, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater and Pallid Cuckoo. Further afield at Kamarooka, whipstick mallee ash is habitat for the scarce Gilbert's Whistler, shy Purple-gaped Honeyeater, Western Whistler, and Shy Heathwren amongst others.

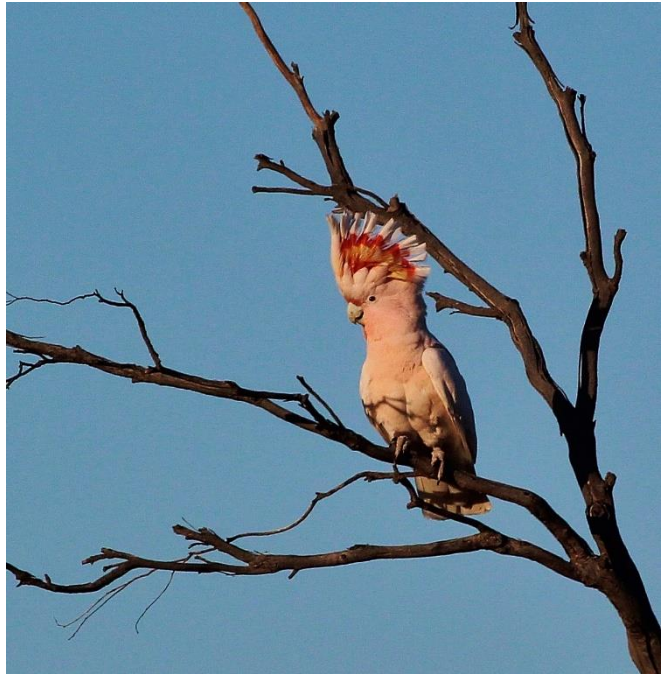
NIGHT: Mercure Bendigo Schaller, Bendigo

October 16, Day 13: Birding in Bendigo; Drive to Ouyen. After some morning mallee birding, we will make the lengthy drive to Ouyen in the far north-west of Victoria. Stops along the way will give opportunities for Long-billed Corella, Australian Shelduck, Rufous Fieldwren, Greater Bluebonnet and Splendid Fairywren amongst others.

NIGHT: Hilltop Motel, Ouyen

October 17, Day 14: Hattah-Kulkyne National Park.

A full morning and afternoon (with a siesta in the middle) will help us track down some of the most elusive mallee birds and enjoy iconic Australian wildlife with Emus and Western Gray Kangaroos amidst woodlands with a great variety of parrots. Ouyen is the gateway to Hattah-Kulkyne National Park. This wonderfully serene park with its subtle beauty encompasses approximately 20,000 hectares of pristine mallee woodland. The three major vegetation communities are riverine woodland dominated by River Redgum and Black Box, Mallee Eucalypts, and Porcupine Grass, named with good reason! Depending on the spring rains, the park can be blanketed with a fabulous variety of flowering plants and shrubs. Hattah is also home to some 220 species of birds and a number of neat mammals and reptiles. One of the area's specialties is the gorgeous Pink Cockatoo. The late afternoon sun warming the subtle pinks of these birds is very special.



Pink Cockatoo in Hattah © Dion Hobcroft

We will also make a visit to a private Malleefowl sanctuary where we have a good chance to connect with this shy, endangered, most unusual semi-arid megapode. There are a large number of very interesting birds here, including a number of really skulking characters. Some of the species we hope to see include Emu; Brown Falcon; Regent Parrot; Australian Ringneck; Mulga Parrot; Common Bronzewing; Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo; Inland Thornbill; Weebill; Southern Whiteface; Striated Pardalote; Dusky, Masked and White-browed woodswallows; Red-capped Robin; Splendid Fairywren; Chestnut Quail-thrush; Striated Grasswren and Mallee Emuwren (both Grasswren and Emuwren are shy and scarce); Shy Heathwren; Crested Bellbird; White-eared, Brown-headed and White-fronted honeyeaters; Apostlebird; White-winged Chough; and Gray Currawong.

NIGHT: Hilltop Motel, Ouyen

October 18, Day 15: Ouyen to Deniliquin via Kerang. Today we will drive south and then east to Deniliquin, crossing the Murray River and entering the state of New South Wales. On the way we will explore wetlands in the Kerang district, home to nesting colonies of Straw-necked and Australian White ibis. We can find (depending on rainfall conditions) birds like Australian Shelduck, Musk and Blue-billed duck, delicate Banded Stilt, Red-necked Avocet, Gray-crowned Babbler and in the samphire that surrounds spectacular salt lakes, the Rufous Fieldwren.

Deniliquin is located on the broad, flat floodplains of the Edward's River. Encompassing a fascinating mosaic of semi-arid woodland, sand ridges, marshes, saltpans and flooded forests including fine stands of the impressive River Red Gum, it is home to countless sheep as well as huge Red and Eastern Gray kangaroos. Furthermore, it is also very rich in birds, in particular the peculiar, monotypic Plains-wanderer.

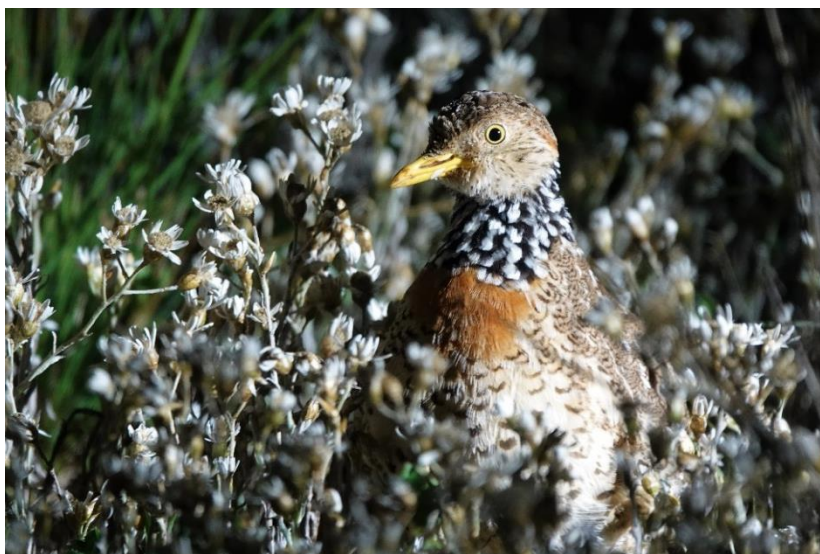
NIGHT: Deniliquin Country Club Motor Inn, Deniliquin



Superb Parrots near Deniliquin © Dion Hobcroft

October 19, Day 16: Deniliquin Area. Today we will visit a wide variety of different habitats dependent upon local rainfall. In ponds and marshes we can search for such secretive species as Australasian Bittern; Baillon's, Spotless and Australian crakes; Australian Reed-Warbler; Little Grassbird; and, if we are fortunate, the rare and endangered Freckled Duck. In the more open grasslands we will be on the lookout for Black Falcon, Banded Lapwing, Ground Cuckooshrike (rare), the dapper White-fronted Chat, Apostlebird and Australian Raven. We will visit forests of River Redgum, which host one of Australia's most lovely and localized parrots, the Superb Parrot. Also in this area are a number of other special birds including Little Eagle, Long-billed Corella, Crimson (Yellow) Rosella, White-browed Babbler, Gilbert's Whistler, White-plumed Honeyeater, and the beautiful, but increasingly scarce Diamond Firetail. In a variety of other habitats ranging from Saltbush flats, Box Eucalypt and Acacia woodlands, we can hope to see such species as Red-rumped Parrot; Greater Bluebonnet; Budgerigar (nomadic); Cockatiel; White-winged Fairywren; Western Gerygone; and Singing, Painted (scarce), Striped and Spiny-cheeked honeyeaters.

Without doubt, the star attraction of the Deniliquin area is the strange, diminutive, buttonquail-like Plains-wanderer. The sole representative of an endemic Australian family, it was until recently very poorly known. We will go out at night with Phil Maher, the acknowledged expert on this species, and thus have a very good chance of finding this normally very difficult to find, in fact critically endangered, native grassland inhabitant. Other birds we may encounter on this nocturnal foray include Banded Lapwing, Little Buttonquail, Stubble Quail, Barn Owl, Tawny Frogmouth, Australian Owlet-Nightjar, Australian Pratincole, Inland Dotterel, Horsfield's Bushlark and the Brown Songlark. Our day in Deniliquin is one of the great birding days in the world.



The beautifully patterned female Plains-wanderer © Max Breckenridge

NIGHT: Deniliquin Country Club
Motor Inn, Deniliquin

October 20, Day 17: Deniliquin to Melbourne. After a bit of a lie-in after our evening of Plains-wandering, we will take our leave and make our way to Melbourne. If weather permits, we can make a couple of stops on the way to try for some of the scarcer honeyeaters like Fuscous, Black-chinned and Yellow-tufted, and in fact any birds that have eluded us up until now. Our beautiful, quiet and convenient hotel is located adjacent to the International Airport in Melbourne.

NIGHT: Parkroyal Melbourne Airport, Melbourne

October 21, Day 18: Departure for Home or Begin Tasmania Extension. Participants not continuing on the Tasmania Extension can depart at any time today. Please note that if participants wish to stay on in Melbourne a while longer, VENT will be happy to assist with local birding arrangements and additional lodging.

TASMANIA EXTENSION

OCTOBER 21-27, 2024

Tasmania is a lush, green, and mountainous island drenched by regular rains and cooled by seas that roar in over the Southern Ocean from the Antarctic. Lying 150 miles south of the Australian mainland, it was once connected, but was isolated about 10,000 years ago when sea levels rose at the end of the Ice Age. Now it is one of the world's most pristine places, with almost 45% of the land protected in World Heritage Areas, national parks, and reserves. As a result of its isolation, Tasmania is a world of the past that supports a number of exciting endemic birds and provides a safe haven for many of Australia's rarest birds and mammals. Tasmania was once a part of the prehistoric supercontinent of Gondwana, and that legacy remains on show. The rugged Central Highlands are formed by massive dolerite intrusions from Jurassic volcanoes, since weathered and shaped but not defeated by long periods of glaciation. Ancient and majestic forests, dripping with mosses and ferns, show the unique signature of Gondwanic plant families such as the Proteaceae (e.g. Banksia species), the southern beeches (Nothofagus species), and the towering Gondwana pines (Auricariaceae). The bizarre mammals either lay eggs (the monotremes) or carry their infant young in pouches (the marsupials). The rivers run clean and swift, and the shores are pounded by surf and spray. The air is clean and fresh, and the climate is temperate with four distinct seasons.

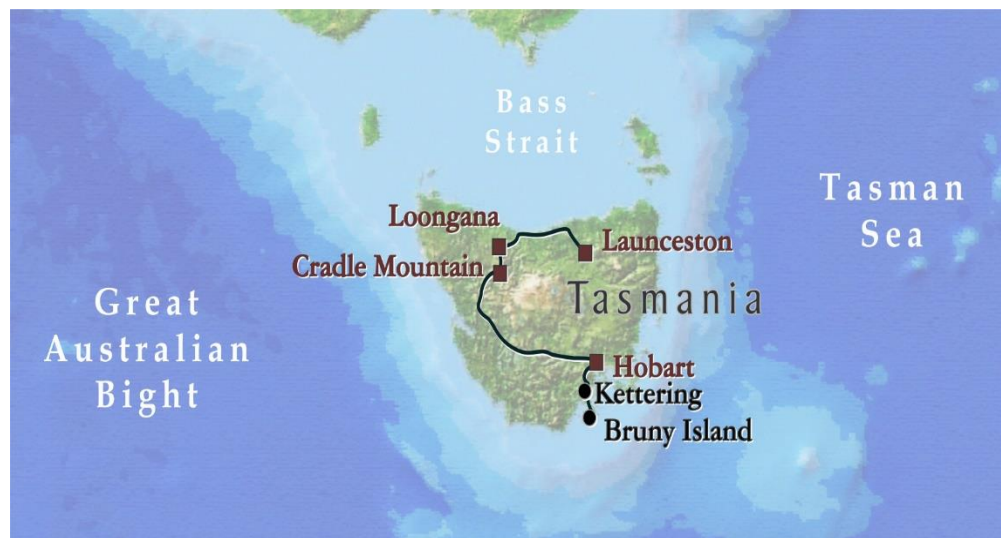
Our tour is timed for the height of spring when the weather is mild and fair and the birds are at their peak. We begin in Launceston, exploring the Tamar River wetlands in search of ducks, Cape Barren Goose, Tasmanian Nativehen (a large flightless rail) and more. Making our way westwards, we will look for more of Tasmania's endemic birds like Green Rosella, Yellow-throated Honeyeater, and Dusky Robin, and we may also find the bizarre egg-laying mammal, the "duck-billed" Platypus, on the first day. Late in the day we will journey to the lost valley of Loongana where we have a dinner date with the Devil—The Tasmanian Devil, that is. Overnight, we will stay in fully appointed, but wonderfully rustic log cabins at the Mountain Valley Wilderness Resort. As night falls, the wilderness comes alive as Tasmanian Devils and Spotted-tailed Quolls climb onto our verandahs for their evening meal, kindly coaxed there by our hosts, an experience you will never forget.

On Day 2 we will head to the heart of the Tasmanian Alps, the iconic Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park. The serene beauty of this mountain wilderness is nothing short of transfixing. We will bird the ancient Gondwanic forests and also the highland open country, seeking more endemic and signature species like the Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, the Black Currawong, the elusive Scrubtit, Striated Fieldwren, and the most beautiful trio of Australian Robins: Flame, Scarlet, and Pink. In the

quiet afternoon we may find the enigmatic Short-beaked Echidna probing for ants and some Common Wombats grazing in the grassy alpine meadows. In the evenings a short stroll around our lodge may reveal a bevy of strange nocturnal animals, including the Tawny Frogmouth, Tasmanian Boobook, Brush-tailed Possum, Tasmanian Pademelon, or even a Spotted-tailed Quoll. The next day we will explore the Alps further before an afternoon visit to the shores of Bass Strait in search of shorebirds, terns, and seabirds. After dusk, we will watch the Little Penguins come ashore from a day's fishing to feed their chicks.

With the mountains thoroughly explored, we'll take a scenic drive through the Central Highlands and Great Lake Districts towards Hobart and southeastern Tasmania, stopping at selected spots to look for Wedge-tailed Eagle, Musk Duck, Freckled Duck, Hoary-headed Grebe, Musk Lorikeet and more. At our hotel in Hobart's historical waterfront, home for three nights, we will find panoramic views, fine restaurants, and also some excellent birds like Black-faced Cormorant, Pacific and Kelp gulls.

The next morning, we will cross by ferry to Bruny Island in search of the rare, endemic Forty-spotted Pardalote, the most migratory of all the parrots—the critically endangered Swift Parrot, and a host of Tasmania's other endemic and signature birds. We'll also scour the coastline for Pacific Gull, Hooded Plover, and Pied and Sooty oystercatchers, and hopefully glimpse a White-capped Albatross offshore. We may even encounter a rare population of albino wallabies.



On our last full day, we will take a relaxed tour of the Hobart area, visiting dramatic lookouts, forest reserves, wetlands, and historic sites, with a last opportunity to find any target birds we may have missed so far. In the evening we will enjoy a sumptuous farewell dinner of world-famous Tasmanian produce and fresh seafood. The next morning, we are in easy reach of the Hobart Airport for our return flight to Melbourne and connecting flights home.

October 21, Day 1: Travel to Launceston. Those continuing from Grand Australia Part II will transfer to the Melbourne Airport in time for the 8:30 a.m. departure of Qantas Flight 2281, which is scheduled to arrive in Launceston at 9:55 a.m. (subject to change). For the remainder of the day, we will explore the wetlands of the Tamar Valley and then make our way west along the Bass Strait coast. Later in the afternoon we will head to Mountain Valley, to prepare for dinner with the devil—the Tasmanian Devil, that is. The proprietors Len and Pat of Mountain Valley Wilderness Resort have spent over thirty years protecting land and animals and in particular the Tasmanian Devil. After a scrumptious home-cooked meal served with traditional Tasmanian hospitality, we will retire to our rustic cabins, sit by the fire, and wait for the Tasmanian Devils to come dining on the lawn outside (lured to treats placed by our hosts.) With this species in dramatic decline from a virus, this is by far our best chance to see this most

enigmatic corgi-sized black and white marsupial carnivore and hear the screaming that gave rise to its name. Note, there are no Wi-Fi or mobile phone connections at the Mountain Valley Wilderness Resort.

NIGHT: Mountain Valley Wilderness Resort, Loongana

October 22, Day 2: Drive to Cradle Mountain. Today we drive higher into mountains towards the World Heritage Area of Cradle Mountain-Lake St. Clair National Park. Along the way we will visit patches of wet forest seeking Pink Robin and Olive Whistler, dryer woodlands seeking Scarlet Robin and Yellow-Tailed Black-Cockatoo, and open grassy country seeking Flame Robin and Wombat. In the afternoon we will reach the famous Cradle Mountain Lodge nestled high in the Tasmania alpine district, which will be our home for the next two nights.

Cradle Mountain National Park encompasses 130,000 hectares of wild alpine country which has been sculpted by enormous glaciers to produce some of the most stunning scenery in Australia. A land of immense contrasts—from magical temperate rainforests to majestic alpine vistas which stretch as far as your eye can see—the opportunities for the birder, naturalist, photographer, and hiker are seemingly endless. Cradle Mountain Lake itself just has to be seen to be believed. It is surely one of the most beautiful lakes on earth. The adjoining ancient cool temperate rainforests are equally exquisite. Here King Billy Pine, Celery-top Pine, and Myrtle Beech are twisted and gnarled and dripping with every kind of moss and lichen imaginable. Some very special birds and mammals dwell here, including the stunning Pink Robin, Dusky Robin, Olive Whistler, Tasmanian Thornbill, the endemic and elusive Scrubtit, Crescent Honeyeater, and massive Yellow Wattlebird.

In the more open areas, we may find Green Rosella, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, Australian Pipit, Flame Robin, Striated Fieldwren and Forest Raven. The endemic Black Currawong is common around our cabins. The mammals may steal the show, however. Wombats can be found grazing in the Button Grass meadows, Platypus feed in the pond behind our cabins, Short-beaked Echidnas trundle along the pathways, and Tasmanian Pademelons are tame. With luck we may encounter nocturnal birds like the Tawny Frogmouth or Tasmanian Boobook. The photographic opportunities are exceptional.



The unusual egg-laying Echidna maintains healthy populations in Tasmania but may still be difficult to bump into. © Max Breckenridge

NIGHT: Peppers Cradle Mountain Lodge, Cradle Mountain-Lake St. Clair National Park

October 23, Day 3: Birding the Cradle Mountain Area. In the morning we will explore more of the spectacular country around Cradle Mountain, enjoying the scenery while we search for wildlife. We may take a short walk around scenic Dove Lake and also seek out some more isolated locations off the main tourist circuit. In the afternoon, we will visit the Tasmanian Arboretum, where we will find some of Tasmania's 12 endemic birds, like the flightless Tasmanian Nativehen, Green Rosella and Dusky Robin. This also may be the most reliable place anywhere to see the bizarre egg-laying, aquatic mammal, the Platypus. Later we will visit the seaside town of Burnie, searching for shorebirds, terns and seabirds on the Bass Strait coast and estuaries, with Fairy and Little terns a particular target. After a delicious dinner, we will wait in the twilight for the Little Penguins to come ashore and feed their chicks, almost at our feet—a truly unique experience.

Note that the itinerary can change slightly during our stay at Cradle Mountain, depending on the weather.

NIGHT: Peppers Cradle Mountain Lodge, Cradle Mountain-Lake St. Clair National Park

October 24, Day 4: Drive to Hobart. Bidding farewell to Cradle Mountain, we will drive south towards Hobart via the Central Highlands and the Great Lakes. On this scenic drive we will search the Jericho hills for Wedge-tailed Eagle and stop at the historic town of Oatlands in search of waterbirds on Lake Dulverton, including Musk Duck and Hoary-headed Grebe. Closer to Hobart, a visit to Gould's Lagoon may reveal rare waterbirds like Freckled Duck, Blue-billed Duck and Spotless Crake. Eastern Rosellas and Musk Lorikeets are usually common here. In the evening we will dine at one of the many excellent restaurants within walking distance of our hotel.

NIGHT: Hotel Grand Chancellor, Hobart



Beautiful Firetail is uncommon and inconspicuous in Tasmania and any good sighting will be a trip highlight. © Dion Hobcroft

October 25, Day 5: Bruny Island. This morning we will drive to Kettering and catch the ferry to Bruny Island. Bruny Island is a place of sweeping beaches pounded by the ocean rollers that storm in from the Antarctic. Here jagged capes and inlets hide all sorts of mysteries, not to mention some fine birds. Lying off the east coast of Tasmania, about 35 km. south of Hobart, Bruny Island is the best place to find the increasingly rare, endemic Forty-spotted Pardalote, in addition to a host of other wonderful birds. This is a good opportunity to see Black-faced Cormorant, and Pacific and Kelp gull, if we haven't seen them already. These forests are also home to a good number of other species including the endangered Swift Parrot; Blue-winged Parrot; Green Rosella; Pallid and Fan-tailed cuckoos; Black-faced Cuckooshrike; Scarlet, Flame, Pink and Dusky robin; Golden and Olive whistler; Gray Shrikethrush; Satin Flycatcher; Gray Fantail; Superb Fairywren; Brown and Tasmanian thornbills; Yellow Wattlebird; Yellow-throated, Strong-billed, Black-headed, Crescent and New Holland honeyeaters; Eastern Spinebill; Spotted Pardalote; Silvereye; Beautiful Firetail; and Dusky Woodswallow. Along the beach we may find Pied and

Sooty oystercatchers, as well as the beautiful and rare Hooded Plover. Watch out overhead for patrolling White-bellied Sea-Eagles, a fine sight on any day.

NIGHT: Hotel Grand Chancellor, Hobart

October 26, Day 6: Hobart Area. On this last day we will explore some nearby parklands at a leisurely pace, targeting any species we may be missing. A drive to the top of Mount Wellington will give us spectacular views over the harbor city of Hobart, Bruny Island and Storm Bay. Its cool temperate forests may provide a last chance to see the wet forest specialties like Pink Robin, Scrubtit and Olive Whistler. Waterworks Reserve on Hobart's fringe provides an opportunity to see many of Tasmania's woodland birds one last time. We will enjoy a farewell dinner in Hobart's historic waterfront district, ready for departures home tomorrow.

NIGHT: Hotel Grand Chancellor, Hobart

October 27, Day 7: Departure for Home. We will transfer to the Hobart Airport in time for early flights to Melbourne or Sydney in order to connect with direct flights to the USA which, after crossing the International Dateline, are each scheduled to arrive early on the same day and enable homeward connections.

TOUR SIZE: Grand Australia Part II will be limited to 10 participants. The Tasmania Extension will be limited to 8 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 LEADERS: Part II will be led by Max Breckenridge and David James. The Tasmania Extension will be led by Max Breckenridge.



Max Breckenridge was born in the UK, but has lived virtually his entire life in Sydney, Australia. At age 12, his passion for birds was fostered when his parents took him and his brother out of school for 10 weeks to travel across Australia. After completing high school in Sydney, Max drove solo from Darwin to Broome, birding all the way, and spent the next month volunteering at the world-renowned Broome Bird Observatory. He is currently working on his Bachelor of Biodiversity & Conservation at Macquarie University. Max has birded across every state and almost every corner of the Australian landmass. He has an excellent eye, and especially ear, for Australian birds. Some of his birding exploits in Australia include two separate trips to the remote rainforests of Iron Range National Park on Queensland's Cape York (including a fly-in-fly-out trip during the middle of the wet season where he spent two weeks under a tarp in order to see some of the

key migrants from Papua New Guinea). Max has also birded the key sites of Sabah in Malaysia, some of Thailand, Cambodia, most of Vietnam, the length of India from Rajasthan to Kerala, Sri Lanka, and New Zealand, and is also familiar with the birds of Western Europe (the UK, France, Switzerland, and Germany). He is incredibly passionate about wildlife conservation. In addition to his focus of study, he has spent much of his spare time volunteering alongside PhD researcher Ross Crates studying the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater and conducting paid bird surveys. Max receives immense pleasure from birding and showing birds to others, and takes pride in writing detailed trip reports.



David James is an Australian birder and ecologist. In 1982, a teenaged David joined a pelagic trip off Sydney Australia, just for a lark. He was instantly hooked on seabirds and has been a birder ever since. David has birded widely in Australia (where he has seen over 750 species), North America (over 600 species) Southeast Asia (he's lost count), Antarctica, and a few other countries. He has written several identification articles on gulls, honeyeaters, and frigatebirds, and is recognized as an international expert on the latter. In the 1990s, David worked as a staff editor for the *Handbook of Australian New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*, contributing many texts for this definitive reference. He has been a member of the Birdlife Australia Rarities Committee for over 20 years. David is also a professional ecologist who studied in Tasmania and northern Queensland, Australia. At various times he has studied

land birds, seabirds, whales and dolphins, Koalas, bats, frogs, reptiles, land crabs, and insects. David has been a guide not only for many bird tours, but also has many years' experience as a whale-watch guide in Australia and the U.S.A. In 2006 he organized and led the birding itinerary for the inaugural Christmas Island Birdweek. David currently lives in Sydney, Australia, with his partner Brigitte. ,

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for Grand Australia Part II is **\$8,995** per person in double occupancy from Brisbane (tour ends in Melbourne), which includes all meals from breakfast on Day 4 to breakfast on Day 18, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, entrance fees to all parks, ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. Fees do not include airfare from your home to Brisbane and return from Melbourne, 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 Grand Australia Part II is **\$1,140**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you. This fee does not cover nor guarantee single accommodations at Kingfisher Park (Days 7, 8 & 9) where you may be asked to share (most likely a two-bedroom unit with a shared bath & living room). However, if available, single accommodations will be provided at no additional cost.

The fee for the Tasmania Extension is **\$4,195** in double occupancy from Launceston (tour ends in Hobart), which includes all meals from lunch on Day 1 to dinner on Day 6, 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 airfare from your home to Launceston and return from Hobart, 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 the Tasmania Extension is **\$930**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you. This fee does not cover nor guarantee single accommodations at Mountain Valley Wilderness Resort (Day 1) where you may be asked to share. However, if available, single accommodations will be provided at no additional cost.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person per section. 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 7, 2024 for Part II; May 24, 2024 for the Extension) 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:

Cancellation by Participant:

Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 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 from the date of participant tour cancellation, 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 tour 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 participants' protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

If participant cancels:

180 days or more before departure date

179 to 151 days before departure date

150 days or less before departure date

Participant's refund will be:

Participant's deposit minus \$500*

No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance of the tour fee 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 from the date of participant tour cancellation, 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.

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 its **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 from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice**; comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, medical expense coverage, death of pet, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or political or security reasons, waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.*

For a price quote, or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: <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 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, mid-payment, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip cost in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Coronavirus (COVID-19):

In line with the decision made by the federal government (including the CDC), Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy. Redpoint maintains a **Coronavirus FAQ** page on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

Please visit the **Coronavirus FAQ** page at the following link: https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/.

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

*An air ticket will be purchased by Victor Emanuel Travel on behalf of the traveler with the traveler's consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveler (i.e. voluntary change of plans), the same fee rates apply for the reissue process, in addition to any fees that may be charged by the airline.

Note that there are specific internal commercial Australian flights associated with this tour section, 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.

BAGGAGE: The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. Please consult your airline to find out specific weight restrictions. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security we recommend that you check the website of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for the most updated information: <http://www.tsa.gov/>.

CLIMATE: You will be visiting Australia during spring. In the tropical north (North Queensland) you can expect warm to hot temperatures from 60-90°F, sometimes higher. Humidity can also be high in these regions. 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 occasion. In the far south such as Tasmania, temperatures rarely exceed 75°F and are often cold in the morning, particularly if there is a wind blowing. You will not see any snow, with the possible exception of montane areas in Tasmania.

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 but insects can be a problem if you do not have repellent. 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 and essential for snorkeling on the Great Barrier Reef. Dress will be generally casual.

CURRENCY: Australian Dollar (A\$) exchange facilities are available for all incoming and outgoing flights at all international airports. It is recommended that you change money at automatic teller machines that give the best rate and have little or no commission. Visa, Diners Club, MasterCard, Carte Blanche, and American Express are accepted; however, use may be limited in small towns.

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. Please use the link below to initiate the application process:

<https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/electronic-travel-authority-601>

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.

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

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

GREAT BARRIER REEF: Our day on the “Seastar” on the Great Barrier Reef offers excellent snorkeling and seabird watching. Since the seas can occasionally be rough, seasickness medication is recommended if you suffer with this condition. Our hotel will provide towels for the day. Sunscreen, hats, sunglasses, swimsuits and sun protective clothing are recommended. The boat prefers if you do not wear shoes on board so as to protect people's feet from being trodden on. The boat can provide all masks, fins and snorkels with prescription masks available for rent as well as underwater cameras. You can snorkel at both major stops, Michaelmas Cay and Hastings Reef. Our principal birding is at Michaelmas Cay where you can see thousands of tropical terns, boobies and some frigatebirds. We go ashore in a small zodiac. It is a wet landing (i.e. no shoes). We will normally spend some time observing the seabirds, and if the tide and weather conditions are suitable, we will attempt a zodiac trip around the cay. You can easily bring your camera ashore (plastic bag recommended to protect from salt and sand). While waiting for our zodiac trip, you are welcome to snorkel. At Hastings Reef, it is all about snorkeling. Glass bottom boat rides are available.

DENILIQUIN AND THE PLAINS-WANDERER: We can only search for the Plains-wanderer at night because during the day it is too well camouflaged to find. At night we can find it with a spotlight or thermal when it runs ahead of us. We may either break the group into three “four-wheel drive” vehicles as we explore private property by driving cross-country or we will all walk together searching for the bird. Once we find a Plains-wanderer, it is easy to drive/walk up to and get an excellent view.

On this day, we go birding in the morning, then return to Deniliquin for lunch and a siesta. At lunch we also purchase our sandwiches, drinks and dessert for dinner (covered by the tour-leader) to take with us, as we are searching in a remote area far from civilization! We keep the sandwiches, dessert (usually a pastry or cookies) and drinks in a cooler. We have dinner under the stars and once totally dark, commence searching. Hopefully after success, we return to Deniliquin, although it can sometimes be quite late. There are a number of other birds we typically see at night including Stubble Quail, Little Buttonquail, Australian Pratincole, Banded Lapwing, Inland Dotterel, Brown Songlark, and Australian Pipit, plus the tiny marsupial carnivore called the Fat-tailed Dunnart. The next morning after a “sleep-in” to make sure we are well-rested, we will have breakfast at the hotel.

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. Participants are welcome to take a morning or afternoon off in locations where we spend two or more days.

INTERNET: Expect Wi-Fi to be available at all hotels and lodges except the Mountain Valley Wilderness Resort.

MISC:

Electricity:	220/240 volts with three-pronged outlets
Adapter:	Type I or AS/NZS 3112
Language:	English
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., 1986. 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. 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. **Compact version now available.**

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 and light weight.

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 February 15, 2024 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant’s Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. 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.

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