

ITALY: BIRDS & ART IN TUSCANY

MAY 7-18, 2019

© 2018



Giglio Island, set like a jewel in the blue Mediterranean. Photo: Rick Wright

Tuscany, the heart of the ancient kingdom of Etruria, is as rich in culture as it is in birds. Famous artistic centers perch in a landscape dotted with medieval villages, while a fine network of archaeological parks provides excellent birding amid ancient ruins.

With late morning starts (usually between 7:00 and 9:00 am) and a minimum of hotel changes (with three nights at our first hotel and five at our last), this is a relaxed experience of some of the greatest historical and artistic treasures of Europe, combined with low-key excursions in search of a surprising array of breeding birds and migrants. We'll also have the opportunity to taste world-class wine from some of Italy's finest vineyards. Most of our scheduled group activities leave individual participants the possibility of taking the morning, the afternoon, or the day off to simply enjoy the bright skies, warm air, and easy-going lifestyle of Tuscany.

This flexibility and our relaxed approach make this an ideal tour for spouses, partners, and traveling companions whose interest in birds is less than all-consuming, but who still want to experience one of Europe's most inviting landscapes at its most appealing season.



May 7, Day 1: Departure from Home. Participants should arrange to **arrive in Florence no later than noon on May 8.** Most flights from the United States depart in the evening, with connecting flights that arrive in Florence (airport code FLR) the following morning.

NIGHT: In transit (overnight flight)

May 8, Day 2: Florence to Castelnuevo. We will meet at Florence North Airport Hotel (Novotel Firenze Nord Aeroporto) at 2:00 p.m. this afternoon. The hotel offers complimentary shuttle service from the Florence airport. Once assembled, we'll drive north approximately two hours to Castelnuevo di Garfagnana, our base for the next days. One of our stops along the way will be the legendary Ponte della Maddalena, where we hope to see our first Crag Martins.

NIGHT: La Lanterna, Castelnuevo di Garfagnana

May 9, Day 3: The Apuan Alps. Castelnuevo lies at the heart of the lush Garfagnana region, nestled between the



An arch so high could only be the devil's work--at least according to medieval legend. Photo: Rick Wright

high Apennines and the Apuan Alps. The massive Apuan Alps are famous for their deep canyons, steep slopes, and striking marbles, quarried since antiquity. Rising to over 6,000 feet, these dramatic peaks hold such desirable (and sometimes elusive) high-altitude species as Alpine and Red-billed Choughs and Crag Martin. The mixed forests and open pastures can produce Woodlark or Red-backed Shrike.

High in the mountains at the beautiful Campo Catino, we'll walk a short way up a gravel road, keeping an eye out for raptors and montane passerines such as Western Bonelli's Warbler and Red-backed Shrike. We'll have lunch near Pieve San Lorenzo, the site of one of the most charming churches in Tuscany. Afterwards, we will take a short stroll through the wildflower-strewn fields of the Carpinelli Pass, which connects Tuscany and Liguria. On our way back to Castelnuovo, we'll stop to admire the striking and weird early Romanesque sculptures in the parish church of Codiponte.

NIGHT: La Lanterna, Castelnuovo di Garfagnana

May 10, Day 4: The Apennines. The mountains of northern Italy remain surprisingly wild, though we'll be fortunate indeed to glimpse a wolf. Among our more realistic hopes today in the Apennines are such high-elevation and forest species as Coal Tit, Firecrest, and Serin. We will walk a little-traveled road above timberline along the Apennine Crest, watching for Stonechats, Skylarks, and Tree Pipits, then descend through the beautiful beech forest to the 15th-century pilgrim's hostel of San Pellegrino. After lunch, we will return to Castelnuovo to check the fast-flowing Serchio River for Gray Wagtails and other species of rocky streams.



The Red-backed Shrike is one of the most handsome members of a handsome family. Photo: Rick Wright

NIGHT: La Lanterna, Castelnuovo di Garfagnana

May 11, Day 5: Castelnuovo to Arezzo. We'll bid a reluctant farewell to Castelnuovo after breakfast and drive a bit more than two hours to Arezzo, where we will have lunch and check in to our hotel. We will have plenty of time before dinner for shopping, strolling, and simply enjoying the sights here in what remains one of the best-preserved and most impressive medieval cityscapes in Europe.

NIGHT: Hotel Aretino, Arezzo

May 12, Day 6: Florence. We'll leave Arezzo by train after breakfast, arriving a scant half an hour later in Florence, the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance. First we'll pay a visit to Santa Maria Novella, the most beautiful Gothic church in all of Italy and home to Giotto's incredibly moving Crucifix of ca. 1295. We should have time to wander a bit more of the compact city before lunch, taking in a few of the dozens and hundreds of important cultural monuments or strolling the Ponte Vecchio with its many elegant boutiques.

After lunch we face one of those wrenching choices that Florence is so full of. Some of us will prefer to spend a couple of hours in the treasure-laden salons of the magnificent [Uffizi Gallery](#), one of the very finest art museums anywhere. Whether you choose to wander from famous object to world-famous object, to concentrate on a single favorite artist, or to bounce at random from one masterpiece-filled room to the next, the Uffizi beggars description – and exhausts the eyes as much as it fills the mind and heart.



Santa Maria Novella and its peaceful cloister, right in the heart of Florence.
Photo: Rick Wright

Those who decide to forgo the Uffizi can accompany one of the leaders to the archaeological park of Fiesole, twenty minutes from the city by bus. The Roman theater here is one of the most imposing still in existence, and the wooded surroundings can make for good birding as we wander among the ancient monuments.

Whichever choice we make, both groups expect to be back in Arezzo – quieter and more relaxing than Florence, but every bit as captivating – for dinner.

NIGHT: Hotel Aretino, Arezzo

May 13, Day 7: Arezzo to Manciano.

Arezzo's second most famous resident – after Marco Valtriani – was Piero della Francesca, whose fresco cycle

depicting the story of the True Cross, from the Garden of Eden to Constantine's Rome, is a highlight not only of the Basilica of San Francesco but of the entire Italian Renaissance. Our visit to the Basilica will be followed by a break at the elegant nineteenth-century Caffé dei Costanti across the street; then we will drop in to the huge, high Santa Maria della Pieve, one of Italy's loveliest Romanesque churches.

After lunch in Arezzo, we will visit nearby Gropina, an early medieval church with fantastic sculptural ornament. Anywhere else in the world, Gropina would be shoulder to shoulder with gaping tourists, but with so much competition in nearby cities, this lovely site is likely to be entirely deserted on our visit, with only the sounds of Black Redstarts and Wood Pigeons interrupting.

We'll continue on our two-hour drive to Manciano where we expect to arrive in the late afternoon.

Our elegant and comfortable country inn stands beneath the walls of the medieval village, in the middle of olive groves, woods, and grain fields that are full of birds, from Golden Orioles and Hoopoes to Sardinian Warblers, European Rollers, and noisy but invariably elusive Scops Owls; we'll have time for some birding on the grounds before enjoying our first dinner from the hotel's outstanding kitchen.

NIGHT: Tre Querce e Locanda il Poderino,
Manciano



The pigeon-sized European Roller is a characteristic, if sometimes elusive, countryside species. Photo: Rick Wright

May 14, Day 8: Vulci. After breakfast we'll drive half an hour to one of the most remarkable archeological sites in Italy. Vulci, a thriving city-state in the sixth century BC, was conquered 400 years later by the Romans, who

were eager to take advantage of the city's strategic position on the Tyrrhenian Sea. We'll walk along the Roman road past Etruscan fortifications and the ruins of lavish palaces, with Hoopoe, European Bee-eater, Crested Lark, and Corn Bunting among the birds we can expect to see; Common Cuckoo and Common Nightingale should both be heard, but can be more difficult to glimpse. A piquant bit of history: in the early nineteenth century, Vulci was the property of Lucien Bonaparte, whose son Charles would become one of the most important ornithologists of his day in America.

After lunch we will move on to Pitigliano, a picture-perfect medieval city perched high on a tufa plateau. First settled by the Etruscans, Pitigliano reached its political and cultural zenith in the fourteenth century, when it engaged in a fierce, often violent rivalry with other Tuscan cities. We may run across a Black Redstart or Blue Rock Thrush on the ancient stone roofs of the town, but even if it were entirely birdless, Pitigliano would still be a scenic high point of our tour.



Among the most colorful birds in the world, European bee-eaters are often common on the fields of southern Tuscany. Photo: Rick Wright

NIGHT: Tre Querce e Locanda il Poderino, Manciano

May 15, Day 9: Giglio Island. We'll have breakfast in the hotel, then make the hour-long drive to Porto Santo Stefano, where we'll board the ferry to Giglio Island, ten miles off the Argentario Promontory. The ferries on this route are not designed for birding, but we have a reasonable chance at seeing Scopoli's and Yelkouan shearwaters on the hour-long crossing. After landing on Giglio, we will have a brisk five-minute walk to catch the public bus that takes us nearly 2,000 feet up the mountain to the twelfth-century Castello.

We'll take some time to explore the narrow alleyways and steep staircases of this remarkably well-preserved (and still inhabited) fortress, then have lunch high above the blue Mediterranean. Birding on Giglio can be exciting, though we'll be hard pressed to repeat one recent tour's sighting of Eleonora's Falcon. We'll ride back downhill to the harbor to catch the ferry to Porto Santo Stefano, and be back at our hotel in time for a short break before dinner.



Nestled between the hills and the sea, the Poderino invites us to enjoy Tuscan life at its best.
Photo: Rick Wright

NIGHT: Tre Querce e Locanda il Poderino, Manciano

May 16, Day 10: The Maremma. We'll leave the hotel slightly earlier this morning, stopping for breakfast in the small town of Albinia, the gateway to the marshes and fields of the Maremma coast. An hour's drive from our hotel, the fields and lagoons support good populations of many typical Mediterranean species, including Little Egret, Yellow-legged Gull, Little Tern, and European Bee-eater; the shallow, enclosed bay itself provides roosting and nesting sites for several heron species. In some years, a good variety of shorebirds can be found on the mudflats, among them the endangered Kentish Plover, Eurasian Golden-Plover, or Bar-tailed Godwit. Montagu's Harrier and Great Spotted Cuckoo are rare but regular in the area. We'll return in time to bird around the hotel or to relax with a glass of wine before dinner.

NIGHT: Tre Querce e Locanda il Poderino,
Manciano

May 17, Day 11: Diaccia-Bottrona. We'll have another café breakfast on the road this morning as we make our way to Diaccia-Bottrona Natural Reserve, where we'll board a flat-bottomed boat to move slowly through the extensive marshes in search of Squacco Heron, Greater Flamingo, Pied Avocet, and Ashy-headed Wagtail.



The shy little Squacco Heron often gives good views along the canals of Diaccia-Bottrona. Photo: Rick Wright

We'll stop at a couple of blinds along the way, hoping to see lingering shorebirds and waterfowl.

We'll be on the boat for about two hours, then have lunch beneath the medieval citadel of Castiglione della Pescaia before returning to our hotel for a break and our final dinner together.

NIGHT: Tre Querce e Locanda il Poderino, Manciano

May 18, Day 12: Departure for Home. We'll leave Manciano after an early breakfast for the two-hour drive to Rome's Fiumicino Airport (code FCO), most likely arriving between 10:00 and 11:00 am. Your outbound flight should be scheduled for no earlier than 1:30 pm.

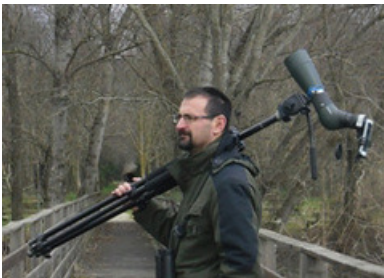
TOUR SIZE: This tour is limited to 12 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: Rick Wright and Marco Valtriani



Rick Wright, a native of southeast Nebraska, studied French, German, philosophy, and life sciences at the University of Nebraska, where he worked in the bird collections of the State Museum and served as teaching assistant to Paul Johnsgard. After a detour to Harvard Law School, Rick took the M.A. and Ph.D. in German at Princeton University. His years as an academic included appointments as assistant professor of German at the University of Illinois, reader/scholar at Princeton University's Index of Christian Art, and associate professor of medieval studies at Fordham University. Among his scholarly publications are two books on the Latin and German animal literature of the late Middle Ages. He is also the author of the American Birding Association's

field guides to birds of New Jersey and of Arizona, and of the Peterson Reference Guide to North American sparrows. A prolific contributor to the birding literature and a sought-after lecturer, Rick lives with his wife, Alison Beringer, and their chocolate lab, Gellert, in Bloomfield, New Jersey.



Marco Valtriani holds a degree in biology with an ornithology major from the University Pisa; his thesis was on the ecology of the Dunlin in the Mediterranean basin. A passionate hiker, birder, and field researcher, Marco has spent years exploring wild areas around the world, from France to Nepal, Syria, and Venezuela. He is a licensed private guide and tour planner, creating and leading itineraries for international conservation organizations, schools, and private travelers. Marco specializes in the natural and cultural history of the Mediterranean, above all his native Italy. He is the author of numerous scientific papers and popular articles on the birds and natural landscapes of

central Italy, and has co-authored guides to Tuscany's natural habitats, trails, and wildlife. Marco lives with his family in Arezzo, where he devotes his free time to exploring new natural sites and discovering new aspects of familiar localities.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$4,245** per person in double occupancy from Florence (the tour ends in Rome). This includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 12, all lodging and ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Italy and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$400**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The initial deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person. If you would like to pay your initial deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay the initial deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard, Visa or American Express at the time of registration. The VENT registration form (available

from the VENT office or by download at www.ventbird.com) should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

PAYMENTS: Initial tour deposits may be made by MasterCard, Visa, American Express check, money order, or bank transfer. All other tour payments, including second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc., must be made by check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$250** 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 120 and 90 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 90 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.***

If you cancel:

120 days or more before departure date
Between 120 and 90 days before departure

Less than 90 days before departure date

Your refund will be:

Your deposit minus \$250*

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.

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.

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 Resolutions as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™**. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most highly regarded travel insurance programs available.

Critical benefits of **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance** 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. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available but must be purchased within 14 days of tour deposit.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as security evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or other security events, and a "Cancel for Any Reason" clause (must be purchased within 14 days of tour deposit). Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.

For a price quote, or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: ripcordrescuetravelinsurance.com/ventbird; or click the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** 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.

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 on the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to impose 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.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market, it is impossible to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based on the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and a wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any air travel arrangements from your home and return. 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 responsible for any air ticket penalties.***

BAGGAGE: Please limit your baggage to one piece of luggage and one smaller carry-on or daypack. Hard-sided suitcases are not recommended; soft-sided luggage is preferred. As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag.

CLOTHING: As this tour combines birding with walking in cities and at historical sites, you should consider bringing a mix of clothing that prepares you for all activities. The following items are recommended:

- **Pants:** A couple of pairs of pants are essential. Denim is certainly acceptable for wearing in the field, but is not as warm – especially when damp – as other materials.
- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI carry clothing that many birders find appealing.
- **Shirts:** Comfortable long-sleeved or short-sleeved shirts are good for field wear.
- **Hats and Gloves:** A sun hat is essential; light gloves will come in handy at higher elevations.
- **Sweater and Jacket:** Temperatures on this tour typically range from about 50 to 80 degrees F, making a sweater helpful on some mornings and evenings. Though this is generally a dry season in central Italy, rain can fall at any time; it is good to have an umbrella and a rain jacket along.

FOOTWEAR: Sturdy shoes will stand you in good stead in the field and on our city walks, while lighter footwear will be more comfortable for the evening.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is usually available at an extra charge in our Manciano hotel, but it is always best to bring enough clothes to get you through the entire tour.

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

- Small daypack for extra clothing, books, supplies, and optics.
- Notebook and pencils.
- Alarm clock.
- Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection; high-SPF sunscreen.
- Lip balm and lotions.
- Cameras, lenses, and extra batteries and memory cards.
- Telescoping walking stick – highly recommended for those with difficulty walking.
- Personal toiletries.

- Pocket packages of Kleenex.

BINOCULARS & SPOTTING SCOPES:

Binoculars – Good views of the birds make any of our tours more fun for you. We strongly recommend good binoculars of 7x35, 8x42, 10x40, or 10x42 magnification; be sure to check yours well in advance of the tour in case they require repair or replacement. We recommend that you NOT bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight, but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. Trying to find a bird in your binoculars using minis is like trying to read a book through a keyhole. You will be very frustrated, and even if you do manage to get the bird in your binoculars before it flies, you will have a poor view. You will find that 7x35 or 8x42 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Spotting Scopes – Scopes will be used on most days of this tour. Your tour leader will have a scope available for group use on visits to lakes and ponds, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

OTHER ITEMS: Bring your binoculars and field guide. We recommend the second edition of *Birds of Europe* by Lars Svensson, Killian Mullarney, and Dan Zetterström. If you bring another guide, it should be in addition to, and not instead of, the Svensson volume.

CLIMATE & WEATHER: Nighttime low temperatures in Tuscany are generally around 50 F, with afternoon highs in the 70s and 80s; it can be ten degrees cooler in the mornings at high elevations in the Apennines and Apuan Alps, and evenings are usually pleasantly mild wherever we are. Rain is always possible, but our schedule is flexible enough that we can generally accommodate itinerary changes made necessary by poor weather.

CONDITIONS: Our days will be full of natural and cultural experiences, but our pace will always be easy and relaxed. Though birding will predominate on some days and cultural tourism on others, most of this tour is characterized by a balance between the two.

The physical demands posed by this trip are easy to moderate, but bear in mind that some of our sightseeing may involve a moderate amount of walking and standing. The pavement in the city can also be uneven. While we are birding, our walking will be restricted to paths and roadsides, and we are not likely to walk more than a mile at a time. You will not be subjected to physical demands exceeding your capabilities.

Some of our activities are optional, and except on our travel days, it is always possible to simply take the day off, or sometimes part of the day off, to rest up or to enjoy the countryside on your own if you'd like. Some free time is built in to our days in Florence and Arezzo for shopping and other activities on your own; Giglio Island also has many small shops.

Extra time in Italy – Both Florence and Rome have excellent rail and air connections to the rest of Europe. Our tour program is intended to include what we think of as many of the area's top historical and natural sites and many of its wonderful birds. But there is much more to see in this region; participants with an interest in enjoying other activities beyond the stated program should come early or stay on after the tour ends.

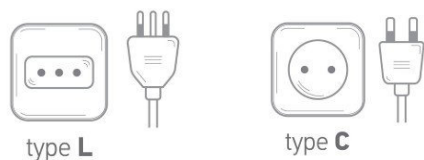
DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months after your return from the tour is required. You will also want to make sure that you have at least two blank pages in your passport for entry stamps. At the time of publication, a tourist visa is not required for stays of 90 days or less.

CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS: Your tour payment includes most necessary expenses while you are in Italy. You will need cash to cover such personal expenses as taxis, gifts, laundry, gratuities, and snacks and meals on your own.

The official currency in Italy is the euro; US dollars are not accepted anywhere in the country. Limited banking hours in Italy make exchanging cash inconvenient. You can order euros through your bank before leaving home,

or withdraw them from ATM's at airports or at banks in Florence, Castelnuovo, Arezzo, Manciano, or Rome. The current exchange rate can be seen at www.xe.com. Please ask your bank or credit card issuer about the use of your ATM and credit cards abroad.

ELECTRICITY: Electrical current in Italy is 220-240V (110-120V in the US). The most common electrical outlets are "Type L" with three round pins and the European "Type C" socket with two round pins; the thicker pins used in northern Europe do not fit most Italian outlets. These outlets are ungrounded. Most newer electronic devices can run on 220V, but if you have items that do not, you will need a step-down transformer in addition to a plug adapter.



LANGUAGE: Italian is spoken throughout the area, but Tuscany is a very popular tourist destination, and many Tuscans speak good English. Marco is entirely bilingual in Italian and English.

TIME: Italy is on Central European Time, which is 6 hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time.

HEALTH: At the time of publication, no major shots or inoculations are required for entry into Italy. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with the "routine vaccines," including influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), polio, measles/mumps/rubella (MMR), and diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT). Additionally, participants should strongly consider inoculations against hepatitis types A and B.

If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, 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.

As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots and strongly consider inoculations against hepatitis types A and B.

Those who are not fit for light to moderate physical activity, including those with physical disabilities that affect mobility and balance, heart or immune deficiencies, or other conditions associated with poor health, are advised not to join the trip.

Sun Exposure – The sun's ultraviolet rays are damaging to the eyes and skin with prolonged exposure. Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. Severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors, and be sure to bring an ample supply of high-SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultraviolet-blocking, polarized sunglasses.

Invertebrates – Ironically, we usually see mosquitoes only in Florence; in the field, the light spring breezes are generally enough to discourage them. Ticks are very uncommon and virtually never encountered on this tour, but it is nevertheless a good idea to stay out of tall grass.

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

SUGGESTED READING: 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.

Birds

Mullarney, Killian and Lars Svensson and Dan Zetterstrom. *Birds of Europe*. Princeton Field Guides. Princeton University Press; Princeton, NJ, 1999.

Mammals

MacDonald, David and Priscilla Barrett. *Mammals of Europe*. Princeton Field Guides. Princeton University Press; Princeton, NJ, 1993.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel that 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: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger 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 passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its Agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. When this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on August 9, 2018 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.