



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

MALAWI: MIOMBO MAGIC

SEPTEMBER 1–18, 2024

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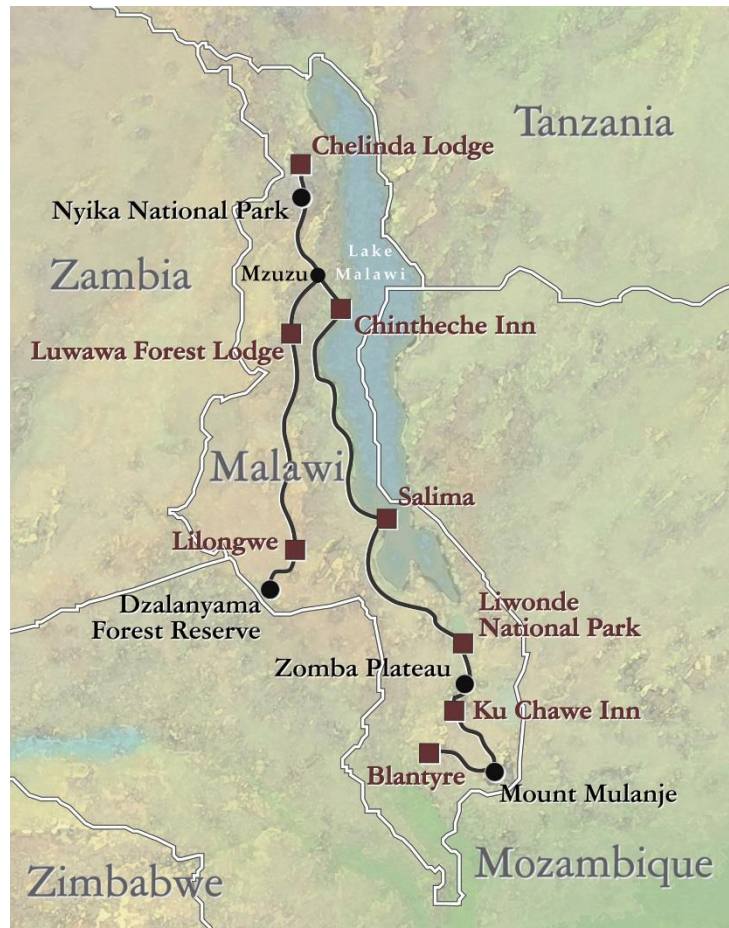
Sable Antelope © Dion Hobcroft

This little-known country is emerging as one of the birding and wildlife gems of the amazing African continent. Best known for the great lake that dominates the east of the country, Malawi, with its low population and relatively large areas of varied habitats, ensures a spectacular list of many African birds difficult to see in more familiar African tourist destinations like South Africa, Uganda and Tanzania. Combined with some amazing conservation efforts and the development of superb accommodations and national park infrastructure, the tourists are starting to arrive in numbers. It is a good opportunity to visit before this well-kept secret becomes widely known.

On this tour we will visit the montane Nyika National Park, Dzalanyama Forest, the lush lowlands of Liwonde National Park, Lake Malawi itself in the region of Chintheche and both the Viphya Plateau and Zomba Massif. All of these locations offer different habitats from the famously bird rich Miombo and Mopane woodlands, cloud forest, stunning wetlands, floodplains and excellent rolling montane grasslands.

Birding is outstanding and we expect a list of between 300-350 species including several Southern Rift endemics. Some of the special birds we will be searching for include Denham's Bustard, Dickinson's Kestrel, Boehm's Bee-eater, Schalow's Turaco, Pel's Fishing-Owl, Rwenzori Nightjar, Montane Blue Swallow, Babbling Starling, Boulder Chat, Yellow-throated Apalis, Red-tufted Sunbird, Locust Finch and Peter's Twinspot, to mention a few.

Beyond the birds we can expect to see a good cross-section of mammals: African Elephant, Black Rhinoceros, Crayshaw's Zebra, Eland, Roan and Sable antelope, Waterbuck, Bushbuck, Klipspringer Gray Duiker, Cape Buffalo, Hippopotamus, Yellow Baboon, Samango Monkey, Thick-tailed Galago, Spotted Hyaena, Lion, Cheetah, Serval and Leopard are all possible.



September 1-2, Days 1 & 2: Travel to Malawi. Tour participants should make plans to arrive in Lilongwe (airport code LLW) no later than 1:00 p.m. on September 3. We suggest that you connect through Johannesburg which may require an overnight layover. Those wishing to arrive early will have plenty of birds to keep them occupied until the start of the tour. Upon request, the VENT office will be happy to assist with any additional lodging and transfer arrangements.

NIGHTS: In Transit

September 3, Day 3: Arrival in Lilongwe. After clearing customs at the airport, we will head to our lodge to check in. Kumbali Lodge is very comfortable and set in great gardens on the edge of a patch of Miombo woodland. After getting settled in, we will explore this area where we can hopefully find a good cross-section of birds including Red-eyed Dove; Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove; African Palm-Swift; Speckled Mousebird; Green

Woodhoopoe; African Gray Hornbill; Brown-hooded and Striped kingfishers; Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird; Black-collared Barbet; Lesser Honeyguide; Cardinal and Golden-tailed woodpeckers; White Helmetsrike; Brown-crowned Tchagra; Gray-headed Bushshrike; Yellow-bellied Greenbul; Yellow-bellied Eremomela; Red-backed Scrub-Robin; Kurrichane Thrush; Miombo Blue-eared Starling; Collared, Olive, Scarlet-chested and Variable sunbirds; Village Weaver; and Southern Cordonbleu. At dusk we have a good chance to see the Fiery-necked Nightjar and Thick-tailed Galago.

NIGHT: Kumbali Lodge, Lilongwe

September 4, Day 4: Dzalanyama Forest Reserve. We will make a full day (with an early start) exploring the Miombo (*Brachystegia*) woodlands that are fabulously diverse and home to a bunch of regional endemics. Unfortunately, the woodlands are under intense pressure from woodcutters although the situation seems to be better managed currently. Birds we will be on the lookout for today include Pale-billed Hornbill; Brown-necked Parrot; Green-backed and with luck Brown-backed honeybird; Scaly-throated and with luck Pallid honeyguide; Stierling's Woodpecker; Pearl-breasted Swallow; Miombo Wren-Warbler; White-breasted Cuckoo-shrike; Retz's and White helmet-shrikes; Souza's Shrike; Greencap Eremomela; Red-capped Crombec; Yellow-bellied and Southern hylia; African Spotted Creeper; Rufous-bellied and with luck Miombo tit; Amethyst, Miombo Double-collared, Western Violet-backed and the scarce Anchieta's sunbirds; hopefully the elusive Shelley's Sunbird; Boulder Chat; Striped Pipit; Miombo Scrub-Robin; and Miombo Rock-Thrush. The forest can be productive for raptors including Lizard Buzzard, Augur Buzzard, Banded Snake-Eagle and Black Goshawk. We will spend the night in the forest guest house that both supports the local environmental initiative and saves us several hours of driving the next day. This is an action-packed birding destination where mixed flocks make for exciting birding.

NIGHT: Dzalanyama Forest Guest House, Dzalanyama

September 5, Day 5: Luwawa. After breakfast we will enjoy a good morning walk in the Dzalanyama Forest hoping to catch up with any last-minute special birds we have not been able to locate. By mid-morning we will head north on a good highway, making certain stops at seasonally flooded wetlands, known locally as *dambos*, as time and seasonality dictate. Kasungu Dam has been reliable on occasion for both Lesser Jacana and a good variety of African ducks including occasionally White-backed Duck and Southern Pochard. We will begin making our way up the Viphya Plateau to an elevation of 6,000 feet. Although much of the area has been converted to farmland and plantation forest, there are still good pockets of mixed woodlands, wetlands and some forest at our ultimate destination for the day, Luwawa. We can expect to see a good cross-section of birds including Schalow's Turaco, Olive Woodpecker, Whyte's Barbet, with luck Fulleborn's Boubou, Red-rumped Swallow, Black Sawwing, Chapin's and Bar-throated apalises, Red-winged Prinia, Dark-capped Yellow Warbler, White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher, White-starred Robin, African Stonechat, Bronzed and Forest Double-collared sunbirds, Bertram's Weaver and the Red-backed Mannikin. We can try our luck to see some particularly skulking birds like Evergreen Forest Warbler and the Red-chested Flufftail. It can be cold here at night so you will need warm clothes.

NIGHT: Luwawa Forest Lodge, between Lilongwe and Mzuzu

September 6, Day 6: Nyika National Park. After a morning walk around the forest edge and reservoir at Luwawa targeting everything we still hope to see, we will drive towards Nyika National Park, arguably Malawi's premier attraction. En route we will make a stop at Mzuzu for any last-minute shopping requirements before we head out on a lengthy drive on an increasingly poor road. We will ascend the Nyika plateau to an altitude of 8,000 feet where several large rivers begin their headwaters to feed Lake Malawi. The drive will be punctuated with various birding stops in different habitats like palm savanna, rolling grasslands and wooded streams. Birds we will be on the lookout for include Hildebrandt's Francolin, Common Quail, Brown Parisoma and Yellow-browed Seedeater. We will arrive at the delightful Chelinda Lodge, nestled in some *Hagenia* woodland, to settle in for a three-night stay.

NIGHT: Chelinda Lodge, Nyika National Park



Red-winged Francolin at Nyika © Dion Hobcroft

September 7-8, Days 7-8: Nyika National Park. There is a varied assemblage of habitats to explore in this spectacular montane national park close to the border of Zambia. The park is dominated by moorlands, rocky outcrops and pockets of forest. The cool mountain air is delicious and at night we can recap our adventures next to a fire. As mentioned at Luwawa, it can be cold at night, especially if it is windy, so you will definitely need some warm clothes.

Mammals are conspicuous in the vicinity of the lodge. We should definitely see Zebra (Crayshaw's is the subspecies here), Eland, the spectacular Roan Antelope and the occasional Bush Duiker. With luck, we may encounter the delightful Serval as it hunts in the grassland, Leopard, Side-striped Jackal or the unusual Honey Badger. Last year, even a Lion had moved into the vicinity of the lodge from Zambia, but we did not see or hear it during our stay. Elephants also occur but are typically secretive, hiding in the forest patches.

Large birds found in the grassland include Denham's Bustard, Red-winged Francolin and Red-necked Spurfowl. Smaller grassland birds include the spectacular Montane Blue Swallow; both Rufous-naped and Red-capped larks; showy Buff-shouldered Widowbird; African Pipit; and Black-lored, Wailing, Wing-snapping and Churring cisticolas.

Forest pockets are home to Lemon Dove, Dusky Turtle-Dove, African Olive Pigeon, Crowned Hornbill, Bar-tailed Trogon, Moustached Tinkerbird, Olive Woodpecker, Black-browed Mountain Greenbul, Yellow-streaked (Sharpe's) Greenbul, Fulleborn's Boubou, White-chested Alethe (very shy), Olive-flanked Robin-Chat, Sharpe's

Akalat (rare), Mountain Yellow-Warbler, Forest Double-collared Sunbird, Malachite Sunbird, Mountain Thrush, Cinnamon Bracken-Warbler, Cape (Malawi) Batis, Slender-billed Starling and Waller's Starling. Other birds we hope to see include the high-altitude endemic Red-tufted Sunbird (very localised), Montane Double-collared Sunbird and White-winged Black-Tit. More widespread species we may encounter include Angola Swallow, Dusky-brown Flycatcher, Cape Robin-Chat, Yellow-crowned Canary, Baglaffeht Weaver, and Yellow-bellied Waxbill with chances for a variety of raptors like Black-winged Kite, the scarce Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk or the enormous Martial Eagle.

At night we can go for a drive where we hope to spot nocturnal mammals and there is a reasonable chance to see some night birds such as the Rwenzori (Usambara) Nightjar, Marsh Owl, Spotted Eagle-Owl and with luck, the rare African Grass Owl.

NIGHTS: Chelinda Lodge, Nyika National Park

September 9, Day 9: Nyika National Park to Lake Malawi. After a final morning exploring Nyika National Park and hopefully tracking down anything we may have missed, we will move towards Lake Malawi for a two-night stay at Chintheche Inn. This hotel is set on a quite beautiful white sand beach on one of Africa's great lakes. Between Nyika and the Lake we will make stops to explore more patches of Miombo close to the area called Vwaza Marsh. This habitat is bird diverse and we can look for Miombo Pied Barbet (scarce), Bohm's Flycatcher, White-headed Black-Chat, Miombo Wren-Warbler, Orange-winged Pytilia, and Red-winged and Violet-backed starlings. With luck we will find the elusive Babbling Starling or localized Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Weaver. From Mzuzu we will descend down into the Southern Rift Valley to the considerably warmer area of Lake Malawi.



African Golden-Weaver at Chintheche © Dion Hobcroft

NIGHT: Chintheche Inn, Bandawe

September 10, Day 10: Lake Malawi. The hotel gardens offer quite good birding and it is possible to see African Barred Owlet, Blue-spotted Wood-Dove, African Golden-Weaver and Purple-banded Sunbird, just to mention a few species. Thick coastal forests dominate areas here and are home to the scarce East Coast Akalat, shy Eastern Nicator, African Broadbill, African Crested-Flycatcher, Red-capped Robin-Chat and timid Gray-olive Greenbul. With patience we have a good chance to encounter some of these shy birds. It is also a great place to relax and have a swim in the crystal-clear water. Every room has its own beach view panorama of the shoreline of Lake Malawi. The lake is home to a famous diversity of colourful Cichlid fish (over 900 species), most famous for their mouth brooding behaviors. Snorkeling is possible (you can rent a mask from the hotel desk). If possible (difficult if the wind is up), we will see if we can get a boat out to a more protected island for fish-watching snorkeling enthusiasts.

NIGHT: Chintheche Inn, Bandawe

September 11, Day 11: Salima. Today we will travel south along the lakeshore of Lake Malawi towards Salima. There is good birding to be had in patches of riparian woodland and Miombo along the way. Once near Salima, a stop at a *dambo* may produce more new species including hopefully African Pygmy-Goose, African Jacana, Lesser Jacana, Temminck's Courser and raptors like African Hawk-Eagle and African Fish-Eagle. After a good day of birding, we will reach our well situated and comfortable hotel where Collared Palm-Thrush is a resident in the gardens. Snorkeling is also possible here; a boat can be organized to a nearby island if conditions are suitable.

NIGHT: Livingstonia Beach Hotel, Salima

September 12, Day 12: Liwonde National Park. After saying farewell to Lake Malawi, we will head to one of Malawi's most famous wildlife sites, the fabulous Liwonde National Park, centered on the Shire River. We will be transported by boat to the wonderful Mvuu Camp. From here we can explore and go birding on foot (chaperoned by an armed ranger) and in safari vehicles.

NIGHT: Mvuu Lodge, Liwonde National Park

September 13-14, Days 13-14: Liwonde National Park. This national park protects a good variety of habitats encompassing floodplain grasslands, riverine forest and mopane woodland. It boasts a bird list in excess of 350 species including a host of wetland birds ranging from Saddle-billed Stork to Pink-backed Pelican. Some of the big-name birds include African Skimmer, the amazing Southern Ground-Hornbill, Giant Kingfisher, White-backed Night-Heron, Pel's Fishing-Owl, Dickinson's Kestrel, Lillian's Lovebird, Brown-breasted Barbet, Racket-tailed Roller, Bohm's Bee-eater, Reichenow's Woodpecker, Livingstone's Flycatcher, Bearded Scrub-Robin, Meve's Starling and Broad-tailed Paradise-Whydah. Beyond searching for some of these more elusive birds, there will be plenty to distract us, including African Green-Pigeon, Green Malkoha, Square-tailed Nightjar, Water Thick-knee, Gray-hooded Gull, Gull-billed and Whiskered terns, African Openbill, Hadada Ibis, the giant Crowned Eagle, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Red-faced Mousebird, Trumpeter Hornbill, Brown-headed Parrot, African Paradise-Flycatcher, Southern Black-Tit, Terrestrial Brownbul, Sombre Greenbul, Burnt-necked Eremomela, Rufous-winged Cisticola, White-browed Robin-Chat, Red-billed Oxpecker, White-breasted Sunbird and Cut-throat, to mention some. Mammal watching is excellent and we hope to see African Elephant, the extraordinary Sable Antelope, Cape Buffalo, Yellow Baboon and at night Thick-tailed Galago, White-tailed and hopefully the shy Meller's mongooses, Side-striped Jackal and Large-spotted Genet. It will be hard to miss hordes of Hippopotamus, Wart Hogs, Impala, Waterbuck and giant Nile Crocodiles. There are also good chances for Black Rhinoceros, Cheetah and Lion. Our lodge has spacious rooms with en suite bathrooms and a private viewing platform over a lagoon.



Bohm's Bee-eater at Liwonde © Dion Hobcroft

NIGHTS: Mvuu Lodge, Liwonde National Park

September 15, Day 15: Zomba. We will head south to the Zomba Plateau to the old colonial capital of Zomba. The mountain, a huge granite outcrop rising to 7,000 feet, has just a few pockets of native forest remaining in gullies. The plateau is home to a number of special African bird species like Livingstone's Turaco, the endangered endemic Yellow-throated and the beautiful White-winged apalis, the endangered Cholo Alethe, Olive Bush-Shrike and timid Red-faced Crimsonwing. On previous visits we have encountered Red-necked Spurfowl, Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, White-eared Barbet, White-tailed Crested Flycatcher, Stripe-cheeked (Olive-headed) Greenbul, Cabanis's (Placid) Greenbul, Yellow-throated Woodland-Warbler, Black-headed Apalis, Singing Cisticola, Mountain Wagtail, Forest Weaver and with luck, the rare Vincent's Bunting. Small numbers of Blue (Samango) Monkeys occur. Our hotel commands spectacular views over the highlands which on a clear day can include Mount Mulanje. Like Luwawa and Nyika, it will definitely cool down at night.

NIGHT: Ku Chawe Inn, Zomba

September 16, Day 16: Zomba. We will have a full day birding in the Zomba district. The special birds here can take some effort finding, and having the time will give us the best possible chance, while keeping a relaxed and comfortable pace.



Yellow-throated Apalis, endemic to Zomba © Dion Hobcroft

NIGHT: Ku Chawe Inn, Zomba

September 17, Day 17: Blantyre via Mount Mulanje. Our last full day in Malawi will require an early start as we would like to make the most of the important birding possible in forest remnants protected in tea-estates near Blantyre. Birds we will be searching for include the rare Green-headed Oriole, Square-tailed Drongo and wing-flipping Yellow-streaked Greenbul. After lunch we will return to Blantyre and enjoy a celebratory meal in a fine restaurant at a very comfortable hotel.

NIGHT: Satemwa Estate, Thyolo

September 18, Day 18: Departure for Home. Participants may schedule their flights home at any time today from Blantyre's Chileka International Airport (airport code BLZ).

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 10 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Dion Hobcroft



Dion Hobcroft has been working for VENT since 2001. He has led many tours (more than 190) to Australia, New Guinea, New Zealand, Bhutan, Indonesia, India, China, Southwest Pacific, Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, Malawi, Myanmar, Japan, Russia, Alaska, Tanzania, Uganda, Madagascar, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and the Antarctic. In 2007 and 2013–2019 and in 2022 alone, Dion showed more than 2,000 species of birds to VENT clients. His informative, relaxed, and educational nature, combined with sharp eyes and ears, has established Dion as a favorite of many tour participants. His fieldwork for over 40 years on birds and other terrestrial vertebrates has allowed him to amass an extraordinary knowledge of the biodiversity in the Asia-Pacific region. Born in Tasmania and based in Sydney, Dion has traveled widely throughout Australasia, listing over 1,200 species, placing him in the top echelons of

the region's birders. He is very tuned-in to the songs of bird species in the Asia-Pacific region and specializes in rare and elusive species. He is delighted to show these skulking rarities to his travel companions. Dion has published several papers on field ornithology, served on national and state rare bird committees, managed *Birdline NSW*, run introduction to ornithology courses for Sydney University, and, before he traveled so continuously, was a popular speaker with various natural history societies. Dion has worked for many research and government agencies ranging from the Antarctic Division, Department of Environment NSW, Agriculture Protection WA, Taronga Zoo, Australian Museum, and the Queensland Department of Primary Industry. Dion lives in Sydney with his wife, Lise, and two children, Grace (age 21) and Daniel (age 17).

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$10,245** in double occupancy from Lilongwe (and return from Blantyre). This includes all meals from Dinner on Day 3 through breakfast on Day 18, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation, park entrance fees, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leader and local guides. It does not include airfare from your home to Lilongwe and return from Blantyre, airport departure taxes, visa fees, 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 be charged.

The single supplement fee for the tour is **\$1,250**.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. A second deposit of **\$3,000** is due 210 days prior to departure February 4, 2024. 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 <https://ventbird.com>) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 150 days prior to the tour departure date (April 4, 2024).

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, 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:

210 days or more before departure date

209 to 151 days before departure date

150 days or less before departure date

Participant's refund will be:

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.

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

TRAVEL INSURANCE: To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with Redpoint Travel Protection as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend their **Ripcord** plan. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most comprehensive travel protection programs available.

Critical benefits of Ripcord include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation and rescue services** from your point of injury or illness to your **hospital of choice**; comprehensive travel insurance for **trip cancellation/interruption**, medical expense coverage, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as security evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or other security events, **waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion**, and a “**Cancel for Any Reason**” benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.*

For a price quote, or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: ripcordtravelprotection.com/ventbird; or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help and Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

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

as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip cost in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Coronavirus (COVID-19):

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

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

https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/

FUEL & 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.

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.

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.

BAGGAGE: To ensure your comfort and that of your companions, please limit yourself to one medium-sized luggage piece or duffel bag and one carry-on bag.

CLIMATE: The temperatures will be warm to hot during the day and pleasantly warm at night in Lilongwe, Chintche, Salima, and Liwonde. At Nyika, Luwawa and Zomba, it can be windy and distinctly cold at night, below freezing on occasions. **You will need warm clothes.** At Lake Malawi and Liwonde, it can become hot at mid-day. We retire for a siesta during the heat of the day when possible. Although this is Malawi's dry season, rain is possible.

CLOTHING: Light-weight, neutral (dull)-colored clothing that can be easily rinsed out and dried quickly (cottons, cotton blends, synthetic fibers) is recommended for the field. Long-sleeved shirts and long pants will help protect you from insects, thorny plants and sunburn. Dress is casual throughout. Shorts will be appropriate for some occasions. Bring a bathing suit as there will be opportunities to swim. A sweater and jacket is useful for colder nights and early mornings. **Participants have recommended gloves, warm hat and scarf or neck gaiter at Nyika, Luwawa and Zomba.** Temperatures can drop to below freezing on occasions, especially overnight at Nyika, and windchill can make it feel even colder. For protection from the sun, a good wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses and sunscreen is highly recommended. You should also bring raingear, including an umbrella. Strong-soled shoes or hiking boots are essential as we will spend a good amount of time on our feet. We have designed this tour to avoid as much of the difficult terrain as possible and overall it is an easy tour. Generally an inexpensive laundry service will be available throughout the tour which should help you in deciding what to pack. Making use of laundry service means you will not need to bring as many items of clothing as you would otherwise.

CURRENCY: *It is only possible to exchange US dollars, South African Rand, Euros and Pounds Sterling in Malawi* and the best place to do it is at the airport upon arrival. Please remember cash notes have to be printed post 2007, and in mint condition to be exchanged, with no tears, discoloration or other damage. The local currency known as Kwacha is the only acceptable or usable form of cash although some of the larger lodges accept multiple currencies. Visa, American Express, MasterCard and Diners Club credit cards are accepted at just a very few locations in Lilongwe, but have limited use elsewhere in the country. Please note Kwacha cannot be changed outside of Malawi when you leave, so if you have surplus currency, please change it back at the International Airport.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least 180 days with at least two blank pages and a Tourist Visa are required for United States and Canadian citizens to enter Malawi. You can apply for an e-Visa at www.immigration.gov.mw. The cost for this at the time of publication is \$50 USD (non-refundable). The Tourist Visa is valid for 90 days from the date of issue. Cover letters for the e-Visa application, if required, will be provided upon receipt of your final payment. Citizens of other countries should check the web link above or with their consulate/embassy for instructions. **It is very important that your passport be on your body at all times. We caution against carrying your passport in your backpack or purse.**

If you have been to certain countries in mainland Africa (excludes South Africa) or Asia or had a stop-over for one night en route, Malawi health authorities may check to see that your cholera and yellow fever inoculations are up to date and shown on your International Health Card, although this has not been the case in recent experience.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars in good condition along with a belt pack or backpack (for carrying books, sunscreen, camera, extra memory cards etc.). As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medication, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leader will have a spotting scope; however, if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. You will want to pack an alarm clock, a water bottle, a strong flashlight or headlamp, a washcloth, digital storage media and batteries for your camera (**Malawi is a very photogenic place and offers lots of opportunity for photography**), and between-meal snacks such as trail mix. Insects are typically few and generally not a problem at higher altitudes. In the lower areas, Tsetse flies occur in the forests at Liwonde (they are attracted by dark blue colored clothes) and mosquitos can build up in numbers at Lake Malawi. We are generally early in the season at the end of the dry, cool months and typically they are not a big issue. The best way to avoid any chance of disease is to not get bitten, so bring a small amount of repellent such as Cutter's or OFF! A collapsible walking stick can be useful. If you think you need one, bring it along.

COMMUNICATION: Wi-Fi is available in the hotels in Lilongwe, Blantyre, Nyika, Salima, Chintheche, Liwonde and Zomba but not at Luwawa. It is often quite slow and frustrating but ok for small emails, not good for sending videos! Generally, it is only available in the restaurant/lobby areas. It is quite easy to get your phone set to international roaming and text message home as an easy alternative. Contact your cell phone provider for the best plan. As a general rule, turn off your mobile data in your phone settings when overseas.

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

It is important to note that modern medical facilities and prescription drugs are not common in Malawi, so you should be in reasonable health to consider this tour. Malaria is present including the chloroquine-resistant strain; all areas are at a moderate risk. There are several options for malaria prophylaxis including atovaquone-proguanil, mefloquine and doxycycline. These medications are available by prescription only. Please consult your physician or local travel clinic for recommendations. Yellow fever is not present in Malawi and vaccinations are required for entry into Malawi only if you are arriving from an infected area. They will check your yellow fever vaccination form at the airport on arrival.

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).

MISC: Electricity - 230 volts, type G power adaptor needed (three prong South African type plugs). Please note the adaptor is best ordered online.

Language - Malawi: English and Chicha is spoken

Time - Malawi is 7 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time

SECURITY: Malawi is considered a safe country but there is quite a bit of poverty. Security boxes are provided at hotels and we recommend that all valuables are lodged securely in these or kept on your person, particularly cash, mobile phones, compact cameras and passports. Do not forget to reclaim them before we leave the hotel! If visiting busy markets and transport hub centers in towns, be aware and take steps to not make yourself vulnerable to pickpockets.

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.

The following two books are highly recommended and offer complete and up to date information on all the birds and mammals of Malawi:

Kingdon, Jonathan. *The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals*. 2nd Ed. London: Academic Press. Also available as an app.

Sinclair, Ian, Phil Hockey, and Warwick Tarboton. *SASOL Birds of Southern Africa*. 4th Ed. Princeton Field Guides. The recommended field guide, also available as an app.

Other useful alternatives include:

Newman, Kenneth. *Newman's Birds of Southern Africa*. 10th Ed. Cape Town: New Holland/Struik Publishers. Also available as an app.

Stuart, Chris and Tilde Stuart. *Field Guide: Mammals of Southern Africa*. 4th Ed. Cape Town: Struik New Holland Publishers.

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

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

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

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

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on December 5, 2023, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant’s Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant’s risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the “**Airline**”) is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline’s aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

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