



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

NAMIBIA, BOTSWANA & ZAMBIA AUGUST 12–29, 2024

NAMIBIA: WALVIS BAY PRE-TRIP AUGUST 9–13, 2024

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Namibia, Botswana, and Zambia—these little-known countries offer some of the greatest wildlife viewing on the African continent. They are huge in size and sparsely populated, with large areas little disturbed by man. We will divide our time between them, contrasting the arid hills and plains of Namibia with the lush swamps and woodland of Botswana's Okavango Delta region. We will focus on two major areas: Etosha National Park and the Okavango Delta. The tour ends in Livingstone, Zambia, affording participants the opportunity to see Victoria Falls, a roaring wall of water that is one of the great sights of Africa.



Crimson-breasted Gonolek (photo by Geoff Lockwood)

These areas of southern Africa, with their great mammal herds still intact and an impressive variety of birdlife, provide a glimpse of Africa as it was fifty years ago. Elephant and Lion are common, Black Rhino and Cheetah still occur, and the bird species include such spectaculars as Goliath Heron, Slaty Egret, Saddle-billed Stork, African Pygmy-Goose, Secretarybird, Martial Eagle, Blue Crane, Kori Bustard, White-quilled Bustard, Pel's Fishing-Owl, Southern Carmine Bee-eater, Monteiro's Hornbill, Bare-cheeked Babbler, Crimson-breasted Gonolek, and Violet-eared Waxbill, plus an endemic thrush in every habitat. Photographic opportunities are excellent and ample time is taken for photography. This is an altogether incredible slice of Africa!

The coastal strip of Namibia is regarded as one of the oldest, and most arid, desert regions in the world—the Namib Desert; and it is characterized by a surprising number of uniquely adapted plant and animal species. On the optional pre-trip, we will explore this fascinating region and look for many of the endemic species that manage to survive in such a harsh environment. Swakopmund, our base for this pre-trip, has a strong German colonial history and character dating back to the days of German South West Africa.

August 12-13, Days 1-2: Travel to Walvis Bay via Johannesburg; Transfer to Damaraland. Participants will need to depart on overnight flights from various cities on August 12 and arrive in Johannesburg on August 13 in time to connect to a mid-morning commercial flight to Walvis Bay (flight details to be announced). Upon arrival and clearing customs, you'll be met by our local agent and transferred to Swakopmund to join the group transfer to Damaraland.

Upon our afternoon arrival, we will begin our exploration of the habitats around the lodge. Hobatere is located in an area of granite outcrops, mopane scrub and woodland, and dry riverbeds lined with large Ana trees, and we will search this area for a number of regional endemics—hoping for sightings of Rüppell's Parrot, Hartlaub's Spurfowl, White-tailed Shrike, Carp's Tit, Violet Wood-Hoopoe, Rosy-faced Lovebird, Chestnut Weaver, Rockrunner, Bradfield's Swift, Damara-, and Montiero's hornbills, and Bare-cheeked Babbler amongst others.



Monteiro's Hornbill (photo by Geoff Lockwood)

Participants are strongly encouraged to avoid the risk of misconnecting with the group by choosing to arrive into Johannesburg or Walvis Bay on August 12 and spending the night at an airport-area hotel. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with these arrangements.

NIGHT (August 13): Hobatere Lodge, Damaraland

August 14-15, Days 3-4: Damaraland. For the next two days we will explore the variety of habitats around the lodge for our target birds—our day typically starting with early tea or coffee and rusks—followed by a drive around the area, returning to the lodge for a hearty brunch and birding around camp. We will head out again in the afternoons to search new areas for birds that we still need. In addition to the birds, the area is home to elephant, Lion, Leopard, a number of antelope species and other game, and we should see a number of these on our drives and walks—beginning an impressive list of mammals that we normally record on these tours. NOTE: The presence of dangerous game will restrict walking and most of our birding will be done from vehicles.

NIGHTS: Hobatere Lodge, Damaraland

August 16, Day 5: Okaukuejo Area; Western Side of Etosha National Park. We depart this morning on a long drive to the Okaukuejo area in the western portion of Etosha National Park, typically reaching the park in time for a late lunch. After settling in, we will bird around camp, spending time observing the procession of game and birds coming to drink at the waterhole next to camp. The scenes at the waterholes in Etosha are so incredible that they should not be seen hurriedly. Typically, we will spend the better part of each morning at one waterhole, returning to camp for lunch and a break before an afternoon game drive. The turnover of animals is phenomenal, as various species have a favorite time to drink. It may be like this scenario from a past tour:

“Just as we arrived a Lioness was walking away from the waterhole to join other members of her pride sleeping under a tree. A Tawny Eagle perched atop another tree and soon afterward forty guineafowl came to drink. Minutes later a herd of over a hundred Zebra appeared from our right. Soon the lead Zebra were up to their knees in the water as thirsty members of the herd pressed in from all sides. Suddenly, a Lanner Falcon swooped past and caught a dove. A little later Gemsbok, Wildebeest, and Black-faced Impala moved in to drink. Finally, a pair of Greater Kudu approached the water with extreme caution, but just as they started to drink, one of the Lions raised its head and the Kudu bolted.”



Common Zebra and Blue Wildebeest (photo by Geoff Lockwood)

The Okaukuejo area is drier than eastern parts of the park. Arid shortgrass plains border the pan, but most of the area is covered in acacia scrub. Southern Oryx (Gemsbok), Steinbok, Bat-eared Fox, and Yellow Mongoose are animals seen more frequently here, and the birds include Lappet-faced Vulture, Pale Chanting-Goshawk, Bateleur, Double-banded Sandgrouse (they drink at dusk at the camp waterhole), Double-banded Courser, Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill, various lark species, Kalahari Scrub-Robin, Barred Wren-Warbler, Chat Flycatcher, Red-headed Finch, and Yellow Canary. The immense, almost unbelievable nests of the Sociable Weaver can be seen in this area, and Shikras and Gabar Goshawks are often seen dashing through the hordes of seed-eating birds. Night-time viewing at the floodlit waterhole at the edge of camp is justifiably famous, and sightings of all the major mammals are possible.

NIGHT: Okaukuejo Camp, Etosha National Park

August 17, Day 6: Western Side of Etosha National Park. We will spend the day continuing to explore the western side of Etosha, visiting a number of waterholes in search of the immense variety of birds and animals that occur in this region. Among the special birds on the plains are the Common Ostrich, Blue Crane (one of the most elegant members of that stately family), Kori Bustard, the handsome White-quilled Bustard (or Korhaan), Secretarybird, Greater Kestrel, Double-banded Courser, Namaqua Sandgrouse, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Cape Crow, Gray-backed Sparrow-Lark, Southern Anteater-Chat, and the gorgeous Violet-eared Waxbill. We have another chance to enjoy the variety of mammals coming in to drink at the floodlit waterhole on the edge of camp.



Double-banded Courser (photo by Geoff Lockwood)

NIGHT: Okaukuejo Camp, Etosha National Park

August 18, Day 7: Central and Eastern Etosha. Today we will head east through Etosha, calling at a number of new waterholes before reaching the central camp—Halali. Moving from west to east in Etosha, the rainfall increases

and the woodland becomes more extensive and varied; the animal and birdlife are also somewhat different. The central area around Halali is characterized by dense mopane woodland and offers a number of new bird species including rollers, shrikes, hornbills and owls.

NIGHT: Halali Camp, Etosha National Park

August 19, Day 8: Namutoni Area. After a walk around camp, we will continue heading east through Etosha towards Namutoni—spending time at a number of waterholes en route. In addition to the constant procession of mammals at the waterholes, the birdlife is especially diverse and conspicuous in the Namutoni region. Burchell's Sandgrouse drink at the waterholes mid-morning, large raptors like the Martial Eagle and Black-chested Snake-Eagle are sighted regularly, and Crested and Swainson's francolins skulk in the thickets. The grounds of the camp are great for small birds and a typical mixed-flock might include the Pied Barbet, Chestnut-vented Warbler, Burnt-neck Eremomela, Crimson-breasted Gonolek, Brubru, Mariqua Sunbird, and Southern Cordonbleu. Other birds of this region include Red-necked Falcon, Kori and Red-crested bustards, Meyer's Parrot, Common Scimitarbill, White-crowned Shrike, Rattling Cisticola, and Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver.

NIGHT: Namutoni Camp, Etosha National Park

August 20, Day 9: Namutoni Area. We will continue to explore the eastern side of Etosha, visiting some of the tall woodland growing on the deep red Kalahari sands and spending time at the various waterholes in this region. Predators are common and we will search for Leopard, Lion and possibly even Cheetah in this area. Birds—including near-endemics such as Burchell's Sandgrouse and Fawn-colored and Eastern Clapper larks—are also targets during our exploration of this fascinating part of Etosha. We will wrap up our time in Etosha with a guided night drive after dinner which gives us a chance of seeing smaller nocturnal mammals such as Small-spotted Genet and African Porcupine as well as birds such as Spotted Thick-knee, Spotted Eagle-Owl and Barn Owl. The larger predators are also active after dark and sightings of Lion or Leopard are also possible.

NIGHT: Namutoni Camp, Etosha National Park

August 21, Day 10: To Nxamaseri. This morning we will travel to Nxamaseri Island Lodge on the banks of the Okavango River in far northwestern Botswana. After a charter flight to a bush strip near Bagani in Namibia's Caprivi Strip, we will complete our trip to the lodge by road and boat—driving through the majestic baobab woodland and floodplains of the Mahango Nature Reserve en route. Both birding and game-viewing are spectacular in this reserve and excitement levels are usually extremely high by the time we reach Nxamaseri. Fed by rains in the Angola highlands, the Okavango River drains into a vast shallow basin in the Kalahari, never reaching the sea. Clumps of palms dot the islands of higher ground, tall trees line the riverbank, and dry brush is encountered just back from the water. Amidst this variety of habitats are found most of the African waterbirds and a number of rarely seen species such as Pel's Fishing-Owl, Rufous-bellied and Black herons, Slaty Egret, African Pygmy-Goose, Coppery-tailed Coucal, Bradfield's Hornbill, Gabon (Swamp) Boubou, and many smaller birds. **Note: this is a long travel day—with a charter flight, a game drive, a road transfer and a short boat trip before we reach Nxamaseri.**

NIGHT: Nxamaseri Island Lodge, Ncamasere

August 22-23, Days 11-12: Nxamaseri Island Lodge. We have two full days to enjoy the birder's paradise that is the "Panhandle" region of the Okavango Delta. The camp resounds with bird song from before dawn to well after dark. Banks along the river attract many hole-nesters, including colonies of White-fronted Bee-eaters; plus Giant, Pied, and Malachite kingfishers; Little Bee-eater; and Plain Martins. The fruiting trees in the stretches of riverine forest bring in flocks of starlings, Gray Go-away-birds and Meyer's Parrots. The calls of three species of barbet are often heard (including the colorful Black-collared), and passerines roam through the trees in mixed flocks.

Pride of place amongst Okavango birds must go to the huge Pel's Fishing-Owl, a magnificent bird that feeds on fish caught by night. We will search for this species around camp and also on our boat trips out on the river. These boat trips will enable us to see a fantastic array of waterbirds, with every bend of the river seeming to offer a new surprise. We may find a sandbar with nesting African Skimmers or a group of colorful Southern Carmine Bee-eaters scouting

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for a suitable place to start excavating their nests. Hippos and crocodiles plunge into the river at our approach and late in the afternoon we may catch a glimpse of the strange Sitatunga, a swamp-dwelling antelope.



Pel's Fishing-Owl (photo by Geoff Lockwood)

Nxamaseri is located close to the Tsodilo Hills World Heritage Site—home to over 4,000 individual rock paintings dating back, in some cases, over three thousand years. Our lodge offers an optional half-day visit to this intriguing site and, depending on the level of interest in the group, individual participants or possibly the whole group may opt for this excursion. **Note:** In cases where only part of the group is interested in making this excursion, the leader will remain with the majority.

NIGHTS: Nxamaseri Island Lodge, Ncamasere

August 24, Day 13: Nxamaseri to Xakanaxa Camp. After breakfast we'll travel into the heart of the Okavango Delta. From the air we will see the immense size of this wilderness, one of the largest bodies of pure water in the world. We land at Xakanaxa Camp, situated amidst a variety of habitats from inundated grassland to park-like groves of big *Acacia*, apple-leaf, and mopane trees. A small river flowing near the camp attracts both mammals and birds, including the rare Slaty Egret and the Saddle-billed Stork, Spur-winged Goose, Long-toed Lapwing, and the endangered Wattled Crane.

NIGHT: Xakanaxa Camp, Moremi Game Reserve

August 25, Day 14: Xakanaxa Camp. We have a full day to explore the environs of Xakanaxa. The numbers of game animals in this area vary a great deal, but usually present are such water-loving antelope as Red Lechwe, waterbuck and reedbuck. We will explore the mosaic of woodland, grassland and floodplain habitats from open game-drive vehicles, enjoying the great variety of herons, egrets, waterfowl, kingfishers, swallows and other avian inhabitants found here. Elephant sightings are typically excellent and cats are also well represented. Sightings of Lion, Leopard and even Cheetah are possible.



Leopard (photo by Geoff Lockwood)

NIGHT: Xakanaxa Camp, Moremi Game Reserve

August 26, Day 15: Xakanaxa to Livingstone. This morning, after a short game drive, we fly to Kasane to clear immigration and then fly to Livingstone in Zambia. After settling into our hotel, we will visit the world-famous Victoria Falls. These falls have rightly been considered one of the “Seven Natural Wonders of the World” and we will spend some time appreciating the immense spectacle of the Zambezi River plunging 300 feet into the gorge below. The continual spray from the falls has created a verdant rainforest and we will undoubtedly find some interesting birds here. These may include Trumpeter and Crowned hornbills; Schalow’s Turaco; Bearded Scrub-Robin; African Paradise-Flycatcher; Yellow-breasted Apalis; various sunbirds including Amethyst, Collared and Purple-banded; Black-backed Puffback; Tropical Boubou; and Red-winged Starling. Livingstone is also one of the meccas for purchasing traditional African art and crafts, and we will have time to browse through the markets, which offer a wide range of carvings (in both wood and stone), kitchen utensils and basket-ware.



Schalow's Turaco (photo by Geoff Lockwood)

NIGHT: Royal Livingstone, Livingstone

August 27, Day 16: Livingstone Area. We will have all day to explore this fascinating area and our activities will include a boat ride above the Falls, where we have the opportunity to visit some of the islands nestled in the Zambezi River. Here we may find Malachite, Pied, Giant and, if we are lucky, the scarce Half-collared kingfishers; White-headed (-crowned) Lapwing; the gorgeous Rock Pratincole; and, if we are very fortunate, Pel's Fishing-Owl or an African Finfoot.

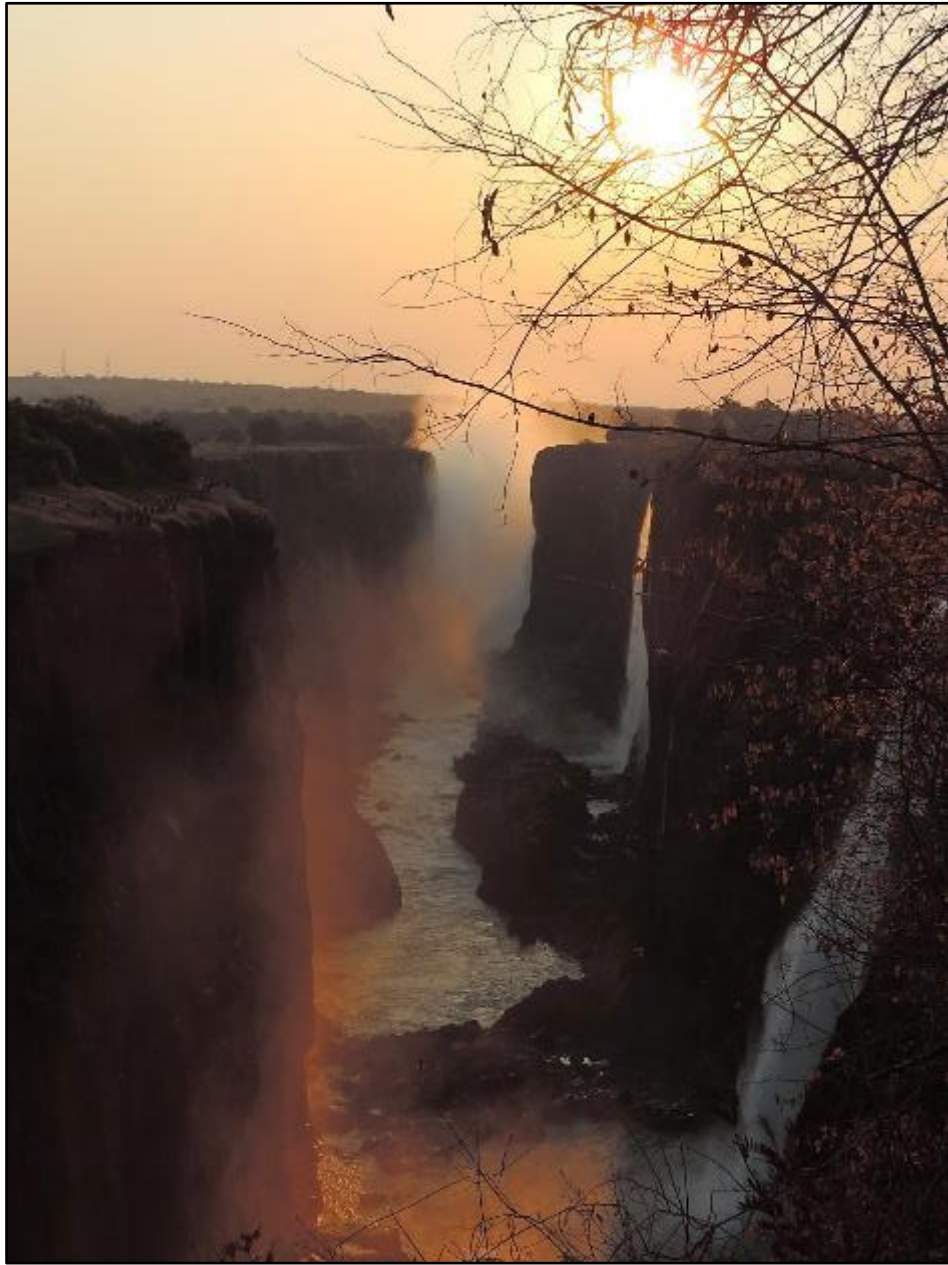
In the afternoon we will visit Mosi oya Tunya National Park, located on the banks of the Zambezi River above the Falls. The area is generally good for many of the small seedeaters, as well as raptors and many bush birds. On past tours it has given us stunning views of the usually secretive Collared Palm-Thrush. It also gives us a good chance of sighting White Rhino.



Square-lipped (or White) Rhinoceros (photo by Geoff Lockwood)

NIGHT: Royal Livingstone, Livingstone

August 28-29, Days 17-18: Livingstone to Johannesburg; Departure for Home. On our last morning, we will again visit the Falls to enjoy the spectacular rainbows created by the spray flung up by the torrents and to look for any of the local specials that we might have missed. After a leisurely breakfast and check-out, we will enjoy birding from the sundowner deck on the river in front of the hotel until our transfer to the airport for an afternoon flight (details to be announced) to Johannesburg which will connect to various overnight flights, which will arrive at their destinations on the morning of September 5 in time for homeward connections.



Sunset over Victoria Falls (photo by Geoff Lockwood)

NAMIBIA: WALVIS BAY PRE-TRIP

AUGUST 9–13, 2024

August 9-10, Days 1-2: Travel to Walvis Bay via Johannesburg. All participants will need to depart on overnight flights from various cities on August 9, which arrive in Johannesburg on August 10 in time to connect to a mid-morning commercial flight to Walvis Bay (flight details to be announced).

Upon arrival, we'll be met by our local agent and plan to bird the extensive Kuiseb Delta region in search of the endemic Dune Lark and other desert species before transferring to our hotel in Swakopmund. The bush along the Kuiseb Delta is home to species such as Dusky Sunbird, Cape Sparrow and White-backed Mousebird, as well as Spotted Eagle-Owls.

Participants are strongly encouraged to avoid the risk of misconnecting with the group by choosing to arrive into Johannesburg on or before August 9 and spending the night at an airport-area hotel. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with these arrangements.

NIGHT (August 10): Hansa Hotel, Swakopmund

August 11-12, Days 3-4: Swakopmund and Walvis Bay. We have two full days to bird the local area including Walvis Bay, the Kuiseb Delta, the two large salt works located on the coast, and the gravel plains north of Swakopmund. Our targets will include endemic and near endemics such as Cape, Crowned and Bank cormorants; African Oystercatcher; Hartlaub's Gull; South African Shelduck; and Damara Tern. Large tern roosts are often found in the area and we will search these for rarities such as Royal Tern amongst the more numerous Common, Arctic and Black terns. We can also expect numbers of Greater and Lesser flamingos and Great White Pelicans, as well as a host of shorebirds. Our trip coincides with the arrival of large numbers of waders from the northern hemisphere and Curlew Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone and Bar-tailed Godwit, amongst others, are all likely. The area is home to between 90 and 95% of the world population of the gorgeous Chestnut-banded Plovers and also regularly attracts vagrant shorebirds. Almost anything is possible, even familiar American species such as Baird's and White-rumped sandpipers. Away from the coast we will look for endemics such as Bokmakierie and Orange River White-eye—all species unlikely to be seen on the main tour.



Greater Flamingos at Walvis Bay (photo by Geoff Lockwood)

Away from the bays, estuaries and lagoons on the coast, we will be searching for the near-endemic Gray's Lark. This unusual passerine has adopted nocturnal displays, possibly to avoid the searing daytime heat in summer. Tractrac Chats and the nomadic Burchell's Courser are other possibilities in these apparently lifeless plains.

NIGHTS: Hansa Hotel, Swakopmund

August 13, Day 5: Swakop River; Transfer to Damaraland. After breakfast, time permitting, we will bird the mouth of the Swakop River. In the late morning or early afternoon, we will transfer to Damaraland along with any newly arriving tour participants and begin the Namibia, Botswana & Zambia tour.

TOUR LEADERS: The main tour will be led Geoff Lockwood and Kevin Zimmer along with local guides familiar with the wildlife and birds of their areas. The Walvis Bay Pre-trip will be led by Geoff Lockwood with a local guide.



Geoff Lockwood's interest and involvement with birds dates back to his early years at school and forms part of a wider interest in the biodiversity of the Southern African sub-region. After leaving school, he began a career as a bird artist, illustrator, and author. In 1981, he published *Garden Birds of Southern Africa* and later also contributed half the illustrations to the 5th and 6th editions of *Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa*. Geoff is currently based at the Delta Environmental Centre in Johannesburg where he acts as part-time manager and education officer, working to instill an environmental ethos in teachers and school groups that visit the Centre. For the past 30 years he has been involved with local birding organizations and has served on the Council of the Southern African Ornithological Society—now BirdLife South Africa, for most of that time. He travels widely in the region, presenting lectures, talks, and courses on bird identification, ecology, and behavior, and is also involved in the training of local bird

guides as part of a BLSA initiative to give communities a vested interest in the conservation of their local birds. With 870 species listed within southern Africa, Geoff is amongst the region's top birders. He has led tours to many destinations in Southern and Central Africa, as well as Kenya and Israel.



Kevin Zimmer has authored three books and numerous papers dealing with field identification and bird-finding in North America. His book, *Birding in the American West: A Handbook*, deals with finding and identifying birds in the western United States. Living in Alaska contributed to his affection for the Far North, where he has anchored VENT's tour program since 1986. For the past 30 years he has concentrated his attention on the Neotropics, particularly on Brazil, Costa Rica, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela. He has directed VENT's Brazil program since 1991. Kevin has a PhD in biology (research emphasis in Avian Evolutionary Ecology) from New Mexico State University, and is a Research Associate of the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, an elective member of the American Ornithologists' Union, a longtime member of the A.O.U. South American Classification Committee (SACC),

and a former two-term member of the American Birding Association (ABA) Check-list Committee. He is a regular contributor to Cornell's Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds. He has authored numerous technical papers on the taxonomy, distribution, and behavior of Neotropical birds, particularly those of the Amazon Basin. In 2003 he completed (with co-author Mort Isler) the major chapter on the *Thamnophilidae* (antbirds) for the prestigious *Handbook of Birds of the World* series. In 2006, he and Curtis Marantz coauthored a six-CD compilation of *Bird Voices of Alta Floresta and Southeastern Amazonian Brazil* (produced by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds) that represents the most comprehensive set of commercially available bird recordings for any part of the Amazon Basin. He and Andrew Whittaker are currently at work on a comprehensive field guide to the birds of Brazil, to be published by Princeton University Press. Kevin lives in Atascadero, California with his wife, Susan. Their daughter, Marina, is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT). She and her husband, Ryan, and their daughter, Brinn, are now living in Napa, California.

TOUR SIZE: Each section will be limited to 12 participants.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for Namibia, Botswana & Zambia is **\$22,895** per person in double occupancy from Walvis Bay, Namibia (tour ends in Livingstone, Zambia). The fee includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 17; all lodging as stated in the itinerary; internal charter flights; ground transportation; tipping; park entrance fees; and services of the tour leaders. The tour fee does NOT include roundtrip airfare between your home and Walvis Bay and return from Livingstone; visas; entrance and departure taxes; alcoholic beverages; www.ventbird.com

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 Namibia, Botswana & Zambia is **\$2,960**. 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.

The fee for the Namibia: Walvis Bay Pre-Trip is **\$3,545** per person in double occupancy from Walvis Bay, Namibia. The fee includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 to lunch on Day 5; all lodging as stated in the itinerary; ground transportation; tipping; park entrance fees; and services of the tour leaders. The tour fee does NOT include roundtrip airfare between your home and Walvis Bay; entrance and 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 Namibia: Walvis Bay Pre-Trip is **\$200**. 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 **\$1,000** per person per section.

For the main tour, a second deposit of **\$3,000** is due 210 days prior to departure (January 15, 2024). If you prefer to pay your deposits using a credit card, the deposits must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your initial deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at <https://ventbird.com>) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 150 days prior to each tour departure date (March 12, 2024 for the pre-trip; March 15, 2024 for the main tour).

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:

If cancellation occurs up to 150 days before departure date, the deposits are not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the tour fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made 150 days or less before departure date, no refund is available. **For participants' protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

If participant cancels:

151 days or more before departure date

150 days or less before departure date

Participant's refund will be:

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

No refund available

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.

BAGGAGE LIMITS: 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/>.

All tour participants are asked to limit their baggage to **forty-four pounds** IN TOTAL per person, packed in soft, crushable bags that will fit into the charter aircraft we will be using. Luggage pods on the aircraft are restricted in size and also have small hatch-openings. **Hard-shelled or framed baggage with wheels is therefore not suitable. If needed, a separate fold-down set of luggage wheels can be included, however.**

- A small day pack containing your binoculars, water, sunglasses, sunscreen etc. as well as a **small camera** (not a SLR camera with long telephoto lenses) can be carried in addition to the 44 lb. luggage limit.
- Anyone intending to bring along large quantities of photographic equipment will need to notify VENT well in advance and, if necessary, pay a weight surcharge for all charter flights. (See also the section on PHOTOGRAPHY.)

It is important to note that the above restrictions are meant for your safety and that of the rest of the group and that pilots have the right to refuse to load luggage which exceeds given weight allowances. Also note that a less-than-fully-booked tour does not mean that participants can assume that it is safe to exceed luggage weight limits.

CLIMATE: August and September mark the end of winter in Africa, and although the days are usually dry and sunny, there is a chance of very cold and windy conditions. Expect mostly sunny and mild weather with the extremes ranging from day-time highs of ninety degrees to early-morning lows of twenty-eight degrees. Frost is still a possibility on parts of this tour! Early mornings on the coastal pre-tour are often marked by cold, clammy fog but this usually burns off by mid-morning. We may experience dry, dusty conditions on part of the tour—particularly in Etosha, and people who are sensitive should bring a bandana or dust mask as a precaution.

CLOTHING: Lightweight field clothing will be sufficient in most cases. For part of the tour, we will be using an open-sided game viewing vehicle. Participants should bring warm clothing—hats, gloves and, in particular, a windbreaker for the possibly cold mornings (see CLIMATE above). Layers that can be put on (or shed) as needed are recommended. Bright colors **should be avoided for field wear**; beiges, grays, greens and browns are ideal for this tour. Sneakers and/or good walking shoes will suffice, as there is very little walking on this tour; hiking boots are not typically needed unless participants have ankle problems. No rain gear should be necessary (although damp, foggy mornings are possible on the coastal pre-tour). Dress is informal at all camps and lodges. Expect laundry service to be available in most locations.

TOILET STOPS: Please be aware that it is illegal to alight from our vehicle—other than in the camps or at one of the limited toilet stops in the Etosha National Park. This can result in some long stretches confined to the vehicle and participants need to plan accordingly.

CURRENCY: South African Rand (R) in Namibia, Pula in Botswana, and Kwacha in Zambia. USD cash is best converted to Rands in Johannesburg (for Namibia) but can be used in Swakopmund and Livingstone. **Note that Namibian \$ are not accepted outside of Namibia and given that Rands are legal tender (at a rate of 1:1) you should not convert US\$ to N\$.** USD cash can also be used in Botswana lodges, but rates are generally unfavorable. Visa and Master Card are widely accepted while American Express has limited use.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure with a sufficient number of blank pages is required for United States citizens for all four countries visited on this tour. A visa is NOT required for U.S. citizens traveling to South Africa or Botswana. A tourist visa is not currently required by US citizens for travel to Namibia, providing their stay is shorter than 90 days.

A visa IS required for United States citizens traveling to Zambia. As of this writing, these can be acquired upon arrival for a fee of \$50 (subject to change) which can be paid for in **cash** – preferably US\$ or by certain credit cards – (Visa, MasterCard, Maestro and American Express are currently accepted). For further information, you may contact the Zambian Embassy or Travel Document Systems (www.traveldocs.com on the web or 888-874-5100 by phone), a company which handles visa procurement.

Non-U.S. citizens should contact their nearest consulates or embassies for instructions.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good condition along with a belt or day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, camera, etc.). Your leaders will have spotting scopes, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. Other items to bring should include **a good pocket flashlight or headlamp (lighting in many of the camps is rather low and you will need a good flashlight/headlamp to complete your checklist each evening)**, hat, sunglasses (to combat glare and dust), sunscreen, moisturizing lotion and lip balm, a small quantity of insect repellent, a washcloth and soap, all of your camera needs including batteries, personal medications, an alarm clock, and a water bottle. 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.

INTERNET ACCESS: Expect Wi-Fi to be available at all hotels and lodges except Nxamaseri Island Lodge and Xakanaxa Camp (limited service).

PHOTOGRAPHY: While photographic opportunities on this trip are exceptional and every effort will be made to allow participants to take great photos or videos, this is not a personal photographic tour! Keen photographers need to recognize and acknowledge the interests of all other participants and understand that the leaders may intervene should photography interfere unduly with the enjoyment of the tour by other participants. As on all tours, a measure of give-and-take is needed to ensure that everyone enjoys their tour.

HEALTH: Medical facilities are good in the urban areas and adequate in rural. Sanitary conditions are generally good at all stops on this tour and foodstuffs including salads, fruits, etc. are safe to eat. Tap water is safe in urban areas, but if in doubt, stick with pre-packaged or boiled drinks. Overall standards of hygiene in the safari camps and

hotels are good. Although no vaccinations are required, it is recommended that your yellow fever, hepatitis, and tetanus protection be current. Malaria is present, including the chloroquine-resistant strain.

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

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

COVID-19: 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: Taxes: Namibia - none; Zambia - \$20 (currently included in the cost of the air ticket).
All taxes and conditions subject to change without notice.
Electricity: 220/240 volts. Note that South Africa, Namibia and Botswana use a plug socket with three **round** pins and participants will need an adapter (**Type M**) in the countries visited on this tour. Zambia uses Types C, D and G. The Royal Livingstone will provide adaptors if needed.
Language: English and other local dialects
Time: 7 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time

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:

Allan, David. *A Photographic Guide to Birds of Prey of Southern, Central and East Africa*. London: New Holland Publishers, 1996.

Kemp, Allan and Meg. *Sasol Birds of Prey of Africa and its Islands*. London: New Holland Publishers, 1998.

Maclean, Gordon Lindsay, John Voelcker Bird Book Fund. *Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa*. 6th ed. Cape Town, 1993. This is more of a handbook, with extended information on behavior, breeding, diet, etc.

Chittenden, Hugh, Greg Davies and Ingrid Weiersbye. *Roberts Bird Guide*. 2nd ed. Cape Town: John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, 2016

Newman, Kenneth. *Newman's Birds of Southern Africa*. Cape Town: Random House Struik Publishers, 2010.

Sinclair, Ian, Phil Hockey, Warwick Tarboton, and Peter Ryan. *Birds of Southern Africa*. 4th ed. Princeton Field Guides: Struik Publishers, 2011.

Smartphone App; Roberts Multimedia Birds of Southern Africa – a comprehensive field guide and handbook with photographs, field guide illustrations and sound recordings of all species recorded in the sub-region. A revised edition Roberts Birds 2 is available for iPhone.

Mammals:

Apps, P. *Smithers' Mammals of Southern Africa – a field guide*. Struik Publishers

Estes, Richard Despard. *The Behavior Guide to African Mammals*. University of California Press.

Kingdon, Jonathan. *The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals*. Academic Press/ Russel Friedman Books.

Stuart, C. and T. *Field Guide to the Mammals of Southern Africa*. Cape Town: Struik Publishers.

General Social, Historical and Geographical Background:

www.ventbird.com

Bannister, Anthony and Peter Johnson. *Africa's Harsh Paradise: Namibia*. Cape Town: Struik Publishers.

Bannister, Anthony and Peter Johnson. *Okavango: Sea of Land, Land of Water*. Cape Town: Struik Publishers.

Marshall, Elizabeth. *The Harmless People*. (Revised edition). Vintage Books: October, 1989.

Michener, James. *The Covenant*. (Reissue) Fawcett Books: 1987.

Owens, Mark and Delia. *Cry of the Kalahari*. Mariner Books.

Ross, Karen. *Jewel of the Kalahari – Okavango*. Southern Book Publishers/BBC Books.

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 leaders; 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 January 3, 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. 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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