

PANAMA'S DARIÉN LOWLANDS: CANOPY CAMP

JANUARY 12-20, 2019

©2018

This tour to the lowlands of eastern Panama fuses the rich diversity of tropical birds for which Panama is justly famous with the classic atmosphere of a luxurious African tented camp. We will be quartered in the recently opened (January 2014) Canopy Camp, courtesy of Raúl Arias de Para, whose vision for sustainable ecotourism and devotion to preserving Panama's birds and wild places introduced the birding world to the famed Canopy Tower in the Canal Zone and the Canopy Lodge in El Valle. Located in the lowlands of Darién, just a four-hour-drive (via the Pan-American highway) from Panama City, and tucked at the base of some low-lying hills whose forested slopes are part of a protected zone, this camp will provide a comfortable base for a great week of Neotropical birding. Our accommodation will be in spacious, walk-in, African-style tents, mounted on platforms, and replete with comfortable beds, fans, and private bathrooms with showers and flush toilets. Keeping with the tradition established by the other Canopy lodges, the camp will offer imaginatively prepared, tasty meals, and an abundance of cold drinks.

The camp clearing affords a fabulous view of the surrounding forest and is bordered by Heliconia thickets that buzz with the activity of Pale-bellied and Rufous-breasted hermits, and reverberate with the cascading songs of White-bellied Antbirds, while planted stands of Vervain swarm with a variety of hummingbirds, from Blue-chested and Sapphire-throated to the dazzling Blue-throated Goldentail. Dawn brings a flurry of activity and a cacophony of avian sound, dominated by the screeching calls of commuting parrots, the yelping of Chestnut-mandibled Toucans, and the incessant croaking of



Keel-billed Toucans, but sometimes also including the raucous calls of Red-throated Caracaras, the noisy chattering of White-headed Wrens, and the plaintive whistles of Barred Puffbirds. Our mornings and late afternoons will be spent exploring the camp trail system and a number of nearby sites, where, in addition to seeing a broad cross section of toucans, trogons, motmots, woodcreepers, antbirds, tanagers, and other tropical birds that typify the Canal Zone, we will also search for a number of special birds whose Panamanian ranges are (in most cases) largely restricted to the far eastern lowlands and foothills, among them: Capped and Cocoli herons; Bare-throated Tiger-Heron;

three species of macaws (Great Green, Blue-and-yellow and Chestnut-fronted); Spectacled Parrotlet; Gray-cheeked Nunlet; Rufous-tailed and Dusky-backed (rare) jacamars; Black-tailed Trogon; Red-rumped, Spot-breasted, and Golden-green woodpeckers; Red-billed Scythebill; Double-banded Graytail; Black Antshrike; Rufous-winged Antwren; Bare-crowned Antbird; Black-billed Flycatcher (rare); Sooty-headed Tyrannulet; Yellow-breasted Flycatcher; Choco Sirystes; One-colored Becard; Golden-headed Manakin; Black-capped Donacobius; White-eared Conebill; Orange-crowned Oriole; and Black Oropendola.

As of 2016-17, Canopy Camp personnel began interfacing with local guides, biologists, and landowners from the surrounding region (including several indigenous communities) and Darién National Park, regarding the location of active Harpy Eagle nests in the region. This outreach revealed multiple active nests, and resulted in our last three groups being treated to exceptional views of these iconic raptors at their nests (One VENT group was even treated to a chance encounter with a perched Harpy Eagle at the Canopy Camp!). Although sightings of Harpy Eagles can never be guaranteed, Harpy Eagle chicks have prolonged nestling and fledging periods (and continue to be fed by the adults in the vicinity of the nest for months after fledging), and adults tend to return to the same nests every other year, meaning that there is a decent chance that at least one known nest in the area may be active for several months out of each year. The Canopy family and their local contacts can be counted on to maintain a “finger on the pulse” of local Harpy and Crested eagle nesting activity. Accordingly, our itinerary will maintain the built-in flexibility to take advantage of conditions on the ground in prioritizing any opportunities to visit active Harpy (and/or Crested) Eagle nests.

This tour can be taken by itself or in combination with Panama: El Valle's Canopy Lodge (January 19-26, 2019), also led by Erik Bruhnke.

January 12, Day 1: Arrival in Panama City and Transfer to Riande Aeropuerto Hotel. Participants arriving in Panama City's Tocumen International Airport anytime this afternoon or evening, after clearing customs and gathering luggage, should take the courtesy shuttle to the nearby Riande Aeropuerto Hotel where a room will be reserved in your name.

NIGHT: Riande Aeropuerto Hotel, Tocumen

January 13, Day 2: Tocumen to the Bayano Valley, and on to Canopy Camp, Darién. An early start will take us to the lowlands of eastern Panama Province and the region surrounding Bayano Reservoir. Much of the area between here and Panama City has been deforested and converted to cattle pasture, but there is still extensive, selectively logged forest beyond the reservoir. The margins of the reservoir are good places to find Cooi Heron, Bare-throated and Rufous tiger-herons, Pied Water-Tyrant and several species of kingfishers. However, it is in the forest where we will concentrate our time. The forest here has an interesting composition, with pockets of drier, semi-deciduous forest dominated by towering Cuipo trees interdigitated with more typical humid evergreen forest. Several bird species more typical of Colombia and the Darién lowlands reach the western (northern) limit of their ranges in the Bayano region, and finding these will be our primary focus. However, the forest here is often extremely birdy, and affords abundant opportunities for seeing many species typical of the Canal Zone, none of which will be ignored. Among the many Bayano birds that we might hope for are Barred Puffbird, Red-rumped and Golden-green woodpeckers, Red-billed Scythebill, the range-restricted Black Antshrike, Rufous-winged Antwren, Streaked Xenops, One-colored Becard, White-eared Conebill and Orange-crowned Oriole. This has also proven to be a particularly good spot for some species of wider distribution, among them, Crane Hawk, Black-tailed Trogon, Bare-crowned Antbird, Cinnamon Becard, Blue Cotinga, Golden-collared Manakin, Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher and Plain-colored Tanager. We'll probably devote a few hours to birding this interesting region, before continuing on to the town of Tortí. We'll plan to have lunch in Tortí, at a restaurant where past groups have enjoyed close studies of Long-billed Starthroat, Black-throated Mango, and Scaly-breasted, Rufous-tailed,

Snowy-bellied and Sapphire-throated hummingbirds attending the hummingbird feeders. Depending on when we arrive in Tortí, we may have time for an hour or two of local birding, either at the nearby San Francisco Reserve, or along the Río Tortí, prior to lunch.

After lunch, we will continue our drive eastward into the Darién. Much of the countryside east of the Bayano region has been deforested, but this open country can be good for Savanna Hawk, Yellow-headed and Crested caracaras, Pearl Kite, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Red-breasted Blackbird and a number of other species. We'll arrive at the Canopy Camp in the late afternoon, with time to settle in to our accommodations before dark and perhaps with time to enjoy the late flurry of bird activity around the camp clearing.

The Canopy Camp is designed in the tradition of African-style luxury tented camps. The spacious, walk-in tents are mounted on platforms, replete with comfortable beds, fans, and adjoining (right outside the tent, on the same deck) private bathrooms with hot-water showers and flush toilets. The tents are well spaced through the camp clearing, maximizing privacy. Keeping with the tradition established by the other Canopy lodges (Canopy Tower, Canal Zone and Canopy Lodge, El Valle), the camp will offer imaginatively prepared, tasty meals, and an abundance of cold drinks. This will be a never before afforded opportunity to bird the lowlands of Darién in comfort!

NIGHT: Canopy Camp, Sanson, Darién

January 14-18, Days 3-7: Darién Lowlands Based out of the Canopy Camp. The Canopy Camp is tucked at the base of a jagged line of low-lying hills whose forested slopes are part of a protected zone. The camp clearing affords a fabulous view of the surrounding forest, and is bordered by *Heliconia* thickets that often buzz with the activity of Pale-bellied and Rufous-breasted hermits, and reverberate with the cascading songs of White-bellied Antbirds. Dawn brings a flurry of activity and a cacophony of avian sound, dominated by the screeching calls of commuting parrots, the yelping of Yellow-throated (Chestnut-mandibled/Black-mandibled) Toucans, and the incessant croaking of Keel-billed Toucans, but also often including the raucous calls of Red-throated Caracaras, the liquid gurgling of an active colony of Chestnut-headed Oropendolas, the noisy chattering of White-headed Wrens, the incessant calls of Piratic Flycatchers and the plaintive whistles of Barred Puffbirds. The entrance road to the camp and parts of the main camp clearing are lined with Vervain, whose flowers attract multitudes of hummingbirds, including Blue-chested, Sapphire-throated, Rufous-tailed, and Blue-throated Goldentail. Even the spectacular Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, a rarity anywhere in Central America, has been recorded here the past few years, after first being found by our inaugural tour to the camp. We'll have five full days available for exploring the camp trail system and a number of nearby sites, where, in addition to seeing a good cross section of toucans, trogons, motmots, woodcreepers, antbirds, tanagers, and other tropical birds that typify the Canal Zone, we will also search for a number of special birds whose Panamanian ranges are (in most cases) largely restricted to the far eastern lowlands and foothills, among them: Capped Heron; Spectacled Parrotlet; three species of macaws (Great Green, Blue-and-yellow and Chestnut-fronted); Gray-cheeked Nunlet; Rufous-tailed and Dusky-backed (rare) jacamars; Black-tailed Trogon; Red-rumped, Spot-breasted, and Golden-green woodpeckers; Red-billed Scythebill; Double-banded Graytail; Black Antshrike; Rufous-winged Antwren; Bare-crowned Antbird; Black-billed Flycatcher (rare); Choco Sirystes; One-colored Becard; Golden-headed Manakin; Bicolored Wren; Black-capped Donacobius; White-eared Conebill; Orange-crowned Oriole; and Black Oropendola.

Our exact day-to-day itinerary will be kept flexible, allowing us to take advantage of local weather and birding conditions, including the known presence of any active Harpy and/or Crested eagle nests. However, our time here will certainly include one or more mornings birding a wonderful stretch of forested road at El Salto, an excellent area for raptors, as well as for multiple species of trogons and woodpeckers, Whooping Motmot, Gray-cheeked Nunlet, Barred Puffbird, Double-banded Graytail, Black Antshrike, Bare-crowned Antbird, Yellow-breasted Flycatcher, Black-bellied and White-headed wrens, and Yellow-backed Orioles, among many others. Trails at El Salto and nearby Tierra Nueva, as well as those at the Canopy Camp, will allow us access into the heart of the forest, maximizing our chances of ferreting out the more secretive forest interior species. We'll also hope to spend one full day birding by boat along the Río Chucunaque and Río Tuquesa to an Emberá community called Nuevo Vigia, which could be particularly good for finding raptors, parrots and the rare Dusky-backed Jacamar. On most

Panama's Darién Lowlands: Canopy Camp, Page 4

other days, we'll return to the camp for lunch and siesta, with late afternoons typically devoted to birding forest-edge, open country and marshes. This is often the best time to see the spectacular Black Oropendola (We currently know the precise location of only one colony, and it is an area which requires 4x4 vehicles to access.), as birds commute from their feeding areas back to the nesting colonies for the night. On at least one night, we'll plan some night-birding activities, which could afford us views of some nocturnal mammals as well.

NIGHTS: Canopy Camp, Sanson, Darién

January 19, Day 8: Canopy Camp to Panama City. After a final morning of birding in the Darién lowlands, we will spend the afternoon retracing our route back to Panama City, perhaps with one more stop at Lake Bayano. Conversely, depending on what we've already seen (or missed), we may leave camp immediately after breakfast and drive directly to Tortí, where we would spend the remainder of the morning birding the nearby San Francisco Reserve. This private reserve has some lovely tall forest (offering such possibilities as Great Jacamar and White-fronted Nunbird), as well as brushy fields and second growth that could produce a number of new birds. After lunch at a restaurant in Tortí, we will begin making our way back to Panama City where we will enjoy a farewell dinner and spend the night.

Participants continuing on Panama: El Valle's Canopy Lodge will be transferred after the farewell dinner to the Country Inn & Suites Panama Canal where you will spend the night.

NIGHT: Riande Aeropuerto Hotel, Tocumen

January 20, Day 9: Departure for Home. Participants not continuing on Panama: El Valle's Canopy Lodge can use the hotel's complimentary shuttle service to Tocumen International Airport for morning or afternoon flights home.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 12 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Erik Bruhnke with the assistance of local guides



Erik Bruhnke has loved birds since he was a child looking at chickadees. In 2008 he graduated from Northland College in Wisconsin with a Natural Resources degree. Erik taught field ornithology at Northland College for three semesters. Between 2009 and 2014, he spent his summers conducting field research focused on breeding bird transects in Upper Michigan, point counts for a breeding bird atlas in Minnesota and Wisconsin's Northwoods, vegetation and breeding bird surveys throughout wind farms in North Dakota's prairie potholes, and cavity-nesting surveys in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon. A devoted raptor nerd, he is drawn to hawkwatches. He worked as an interpreter for six seasons at Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory in Duluth, Minnesota; counted migrating raptors at the Corpus Christi HawkWatch in Texas in 2015; and was the 2016 and 2017 hawk counter at the Cape May Hawkwatch in New Jersey. Erik's wildlife photography has won national awards, and he's written for the American Birding

Association's *Birder's Guide*, *BirdWatching* magazine, and *Bird Watcher's Digest*. When not leading birding tours, Erik often leads field trips and speaks at birding festivals. He also enjoys hiking, kayaking, cross-country skiing, and just being out in the snow. In his free time he loves to cook and bake.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for this tour is **\$3,995** per person in double occupancy from Panama City, Panama for occupying a standard tent at the Canopy Camp (see CANOPY CAMP ACCOMMODATIONS section below) and standard double room at the Riande Aeropuerto Hotel. This includes all meals from breakfast on Day 2 to dinner on Day 8, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, tipping, park entrance fees, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Panama City and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls,

laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The fee for this tour is **\$4,295 per** person in double occupancy from Panama City, Panama for occupying a Tent Suite at the Canopy Camp (see CANOPY CAMP ACCOMMODATIONS section below) and standard double room at the Riande Aeropuerto Hotel. This includes all meals from breakfast on Day 2 to dinner on Day 8, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, tipping, park entrance fees, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Panama City and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$1,165**. 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. Due to the limited number of tents at the Canopy Camp (see CANOPY CAMP ACCOMMODATIONS section below), singles may be asked to share on Days 2-7. If so, you'll be credited accordingly.

CANOPY CAMP ACCOMMODATIONS: The Canopy Camp has a total of eight tents including two Tent Suites and six standard tents. Both Tent Suites, one of which has a queen bed while the other has two twin beds, have more space than a standard tent. All tents will be pre-reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. You will be advised of tent availability and your specific assignment at the time of your registration. All tents have private bathrooms with flush toilets and warm water showers.

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

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

CANCELLATION POLICY: Cancellation penalties and refunds are based on the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$250** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.***

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$250*
Fewer than 120 days before departure date	No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person.

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

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

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

Critical benefits of **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance** include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation and rescue services** from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice; comprehensive travel insurance for **trip cancellation/interruption**, primary medical expense coverage, and much more. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available but must be purchased within 14 days of tour deposit.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as security evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or other security events, and a "Cancel for Any Reason" clause (must be purchased within 14 days of tour deposit). Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.

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

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. *Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be responsible for any air ticket penalties.*

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.

BAGGAGE: In case your checked luggage is delayed, it's recommended that you pack all documents, medications, a change of clothes, your binoculars, and toiletry items in a carry-on bag.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS: Participants should be prepared for early starts with full mornings of activity. Regardless of our morning activities, we will be returning to camp for lunch and a mid-afternoon break on most days based out of the Canopy Camp (exceptions would involve all-day excursions to Nuevo Vigia and/or targeted visits to Darién National Park or other areas to visit active Harpy Eagle or Crested Eagle nests). Late afternoon excursions of a few hours will be less physically rigorous, and will mostly involve roadside birding. Most walking on this tour will be along lightly traveled roads or trails of easy to moderate grade. We may spend some time on one or two trails that are somewhat hillier, such as along Nando's Trail at the Canopy Camp (which has some moderately steep sections). None of the regularly planned hiking will involve distances of much more than a mile, but we will likely be on our feet for much of the morning. Again, targeted excursions to active eagle (Harpy or Crested) nests may involve much longer and/or more challenging hikes, as well as the possibility of longer time spent on rivers in motorized dugout canoes. Your tour leader and local guide will provide you, in advance, with detailed information regarding the physical requirements of any such "special excursions," allowing you to make an informed decision regarding your options.

CLOTHING: As is the case for all our tropical tours, lightweight field clothing is the norm for Panama. This includes several pair of lightweight field pants, along with cool and comfortable long-sleeved shirts. A hat and sunscreen are recommended for protection from the sun.

Dark-colored or neutral clothing is suggested, as white or bright colors may frighten secretive birds. Lightweight and comfortable walking shoes are recommended, since some days we will spend a good bit of time on foot. Some participants may find sturdier hiking shoes preferable for trail walks. A small umbrella and/or rain gear are essential as well.

CLIMATE: The climate in the Darién lowlands and eastern Panama Province is usually warm, with mornings in the 70s to 80s. Conditions at midday can be humid and very warm, with temperatures reaching into the 90s. Rainstorms may occur at any time of year, but are more likely during the rainy season, which runs from May into early December, when a shower of some sort is expected almost daily. Generally, the weather in eastern Panama is warm and pleasant, with our activities corresponding to the cooler parts of the day and heightened bird activity.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Due to energy conservation efforts in the Darién, Canopy Camp is not currently offering laundry services to their guests.

CURRENCY: The U.S. Dollar is the official currency of Panama. VISA and American Express are most commonly used, but MasterCard and Diners Club are also accepted.

DOCUMENTS: For U.S. citizens, a passport valid for at least three months beyond your planned stay is suggested to enter Panama. Non-U.S. citizens should check with their local Panamanian Consulate or Embassy.

IMPORTANT: Please provide the VENT office with a copy of the photo page of your passport. This is required in order to pre-arrange group entry into the Darién.

INTERNET ACCESS: Wi-Fi is available in the common areas of the Canopy Camp but not in the individual tents. However, expect service to be sporadic due to its remote location. Wi-Fi is available at the Riande Aeropuerto Hotel.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good condition, along with a belt pack or day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, camera, etc., and particularly useful should we end up hiking a long distance to a Harpy or Crested eagle nest). As a precaution, it's a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leaders will have a spotting scope; but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

HEALTH: In general, we recommend that you consult your doctor before taking any immunizations. Health requirements change frequently and often vary from district to district within a country. No vaccinations are required to enter Panama.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta advise that there is some risk of malaria. The CDC currently recommends that travelers to Darién Province in Panama should take one of the following antimalarial drugs (listed alphabetically): atovaquone/proguanil, doxycycline, mefloquine, or primaquine (in special circumstances).

As standard travel precautions, your tetanus, polio, hepatitis types A & B, and yellow fever vaccinations should be current.

Water served at meals is drinkable at the Canopy Camp and the Riande Aeropuerto Hotel, and all of the food (including uncooked salads) is safe. The Canopy Camp also has filtered water containers in each of the bathrooms, and water coolers in the dining/lounge areas, from which your personal water bottles can be refilled. They do not recommend drinking from the tap. Please do check with your doctor for your own personal needs and prescription drugs (which may or may not be available on tour).

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

The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (800) CDC-INFO (232-4636). You can check the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

Zika Virus – This tour visits an area or areas where Zika virus is known to occur or could occur; however, we believe the risk to VENT travelers is extremely low. The Zika virus is a mosquito-borne infection transmitted by mosquitos of the genus *Aedes*, and is related to other tropical diseases: Dengue, Yellow Fever, and West Nile virus. This type of mosquito bites during the day and typically is found in areas of dense human habitation where sanitation and drainage of standing water is poor. Zika virus presents the greatest threat to women of childbearing age. For others who become infected, the effects are usually nonexistent to mild, although some people exhibit symptoms such as mild fever, rashes, joint and muscle pain, and red eyes. If infected, the best treatment is plenty of rest, nourishment, and other supportive care. There is no vaccine to prevent or cure the disease; however, Zika virus is not contagious and, therefore, cannot be transmitted through air, food, or water.

Your safety is our highest priority, and we want to emphasize that the best way to avoid Zika virus (and other mosquito-borne diseases), is to take appropriate precautions in avoiding mosquito bites:

- Stay informed about the Zika virus
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants, socks and shoes, and a hat*
- Use effective insect repellents (those containing DEET) and reapply regularly

***We strongly recommend the use of Insect Shield® clothing.** Insect Shield is a process by which clothing is treated with an EPA-approved formula of the insect repellent permethrin. Such clothing is highly repellent to insects and provides durable and long-lasting protection, even after dozens of washings. Outdoor wear with Insect Shield protection includes name brands such as Ex Officio and Tilley, and can be purchased at outdoor recreation stores such as REI and from a variety of online retailers. In lieu of Insect Shield clothing, you should consider treating your clothes with permethrin, which has the same effect, and that can be purchased at outdoor recreation stores and from a variety of online retailers.

For the latest information and news about Zika virus, please visit the website of the CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/>

INSECT PROTECTION: Because chiggers and ticks can be a problem, we recommend carrying insect repellent and liberally applying it to your ankles and pant cuffs. You may also want to spray your field clothing with Permethrin several times to help repel the ticks and chiggers. In some parts of the forest mosquitoes are sometimes a problem, so wearing long-sleeved shirts and carrying a small repellent with you is advised.

A Note About Chiggers: This tour visits areas where chiggers are known to occur. Chiggers are tiny parasitic mites found in most warm weather areas of the southern United States and the world's tropics. They are especially numerous in grassy areas, where, in the immature stage, they attach themselves to other animals or humans who make contact with the grass as they pass by. Chiggers do not suck blood and the majority of the world's species do not carry disease. They do feed on bodily fluids, however, through a process in which a digestive enzyme is produced by the chigger which essentially liquefies the skin around the area where the chigger is attached. The chigger is not usually attached to the skin for more than a few hours before it either falls off or is knocked off. Our bodies respond by producing a hardened area as a defense against the chigger's digestive enzyme. Though the chigger may be long gone, it is the presence of the hardened area, and the body's natural process of reabsorbing it that typically causes intense itching, often lasting for a week or more. Chiggers like to attach themselves to areas of thin skin, like around the ankles, beltline, undergarment lines, knees, and elbows.

Chiggers can be avoided by following these procedures:

- Avoid walking, or standing in particular, in areas dominated by grass. These areas are where one is most likely to encounter chiggers.
- Tuck your pants into your socks to avoid direct skin-to-grass contact. Chiggers can find their way through clothing, but this is a standard and effective prevention technique commonly employed by many.
- Apply a cream-style insect repellent, such as “Cutter” to your body from the waist down BEFORE putting on your clothing.
- Spray your pants and socks with a spray repellent such as “Cutter” or “OFF!” Repellants with high concentrations of DEET (70-100%) are most effective. You do not need to apply these to your skin, only to clothing. (Be careful as DEET will damage plastics and lens coatings). Repel Permanone is an odorless aerosol insecticide that offers perhaps the best defense against chiggers. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online. It should only be applied to clothes and allowed to dry before you dress. Never apply Permanone directly to the skin. Permethrin is known to be a highly toxic chemical to insects. It is the active ingredient in Permanone, but is present in a small amount (0.5%).
- Powdered sulfur applied to waist, bottoms of pants, sock and boots is also effective at repelling chiggers. However, be warned that clothes will retain the sulfur odor for several washings. Sulfur for dusting your socks and pants is typically available at the Canopy Camp.
- Shower at the end of each day in the field. Use a washcloth to vigorously rub your legs, feet, and ankles.

By following these methods, you should be able to avoid all chigger bites, as well as tick bites. If, however, you are bitten by chiggers anyway, you can reduce or eliminate the symptoms by applying benzocaine or hydrocortisone creams, calamine lotion, After Bite, or any number of anti-itch products.

MISC:

Departure Tax - US \$40 (included in the price of your air ticket)
Electricity - 120 volts; plugs are the flat 2-pin American type.
Language - The official language is Spanish, but English is spoken.
Time - 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.

Field Guides

Birds:

Ridgely, Robert S. and John Gwynne. *A Guide to the Birds of Panama*. (Second Edition). Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

George R. Angehr and Robert Dean. *The Birds of Panama: A Field Guide*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010.

Mammals:

Emmons, Louise H. *Neotropical Rainforest Mammals: A Field Guide*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Butterflies:

Glassberg, Jeffrey. *A Swift Guide to the Butterflies of Mexico and Central America*. Sunstreak Books Inc. 2007.

Background Reading

Natural History:

Chapman, Frank. *My Tropical Air Castle*. New York: Appleton and Company, 1929. Fun reading by an early ornithologist in Panama. Out of print; try www.abebooks.com.

Panama's Darién Lowlands: Canopy Camp, Page 10

Chapman, Frank. *Life in an Air Castle*. New York: Appleton-Century Co, 1938. Out of print; try www.abebooks.com.

Forsyth, Adrian and Ken Miyata. *Tropical Nature*. New York: Charles Scribner, 1987. Excellent introduction to many fascinating aspects of the tropical rainforest.

Hilty, Steven. 1994. *Birds of Tropical America*. Shelbourne, VT: Chapters Publishing, 1994. Subtitle: "A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity."

Kricher, John C. *A Neotropical Companion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. An excellent introduction to the rainforest.

Human History:

McCullough, David. *A Path Between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999. An excellent history of the construction of the Panama Canal.

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: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. When this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on April 26, 2018 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.

DP:20190112
5/1/18EL/RS
P/KZ/02/21/17