

PHILIPPINES HIGHLIGHTS

MARCH 23-APRIL 10, 2024

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The Negros Scops-Owl,
one of many beautiful Philippine endemic night birds © Dion Hobcroft

The geographic location and geological history of this amazing country has conspired to create a suite of fascinating endemic species—birds, mammals, reptiles and plants. Wedged between China, Japan, Malaysia and Indonesia and consisting of over 7,000 islands, successive invasions from different biogeographic zones and a complex geography in the Philippines have led to an adaptive radiation of a myriad of species. Many species in the Philippines have been subject to taxonomic review in recent years with a huge amount of splitting taking place. Of the almost 600 bird species in the islands, an extraordinary 290 or more species are endemic or very close to it. Putting it simply, with names such as Scale-feathered Malkoha, Chocolate Boobook, Visayan Hornbill and Palawan Peacock-Pheasant, the birds of the Philippines are without doubt some of the most exciting in the world!



Birding near Manila gives us an excellent introduction to the birds of Luzon. We will explore five major sites—Mount Makiling, Candaba Marshes, La Mesa Ecopark, Infanta and Subic Bay—which are home to some 60 endemics. Philippine Duck, Spotted Buttonquail, Philippine Hawk-Eagle, Philippine Serpent-Eagle, Philippine Falconet, Plain Bush-hen, Philippine Swamphen, Luzon Bleeding-Heart, White-eared Brown-dove, Black-chinned Fruit-Dove, Philippine Green-Pigeon, Guaiabero, Philippine Hanging-Parrot, Philippine Hawk-Cuckoo, Scale-feathered Malkoha, Red-crested Malkoha, Rufous Coucal, Philippine Scops-Owl, Luzon Hawk-Owl, Chocolate Boobook, Luzon Hornbill, Rufous Hornbill, Philippine Trogon, Spotted Kingfisher, Indigo-banded Kingfisher, Brown-breasted Kingfisher, Northern Sooty Woodpecker, Luzon Flameback, Philippine Woodpecker, Whiskered Pitta, Philippine Fairy-bluebird, Balicassiao, Blackish Cuckoo-shrike, White-lored Oriole, Elegant Tit, White-fronted Tit, Sulphur-billed Nuthatch, Stripe-headed Rhabdornis, Grand Rhabdornis, White-browed Shama, Ashy Ground-Thrush, Gray-backed and Trilling tailorbirds, Lemon-throated Leaf-Warbler, Yellow-bellied Whistler, Coletto, Flaming and Handsome sunbirds, and Buzzing and Striped flowerpeckers can all be found here.

We will travel to the beautiful island of Palawan, which forms a bridge between the main Philippine islands and Borneo. Palawan is home to some 20 or more endemics, depending on your taxonomy. St. Paul's National Park is beautifully located between high limestone cliffs and white sandy beaches and is covered by pristine forest. It is the home of the Underground River, a World Heritage site. We

will take a picturesque boat ride into the park, which is rich in birds including Tabon Scrubfowl; the stunning Palawan Peacock-Pheasant (now very difficult following the demise of the old male at the Underground River); Blue-naped Parrot; Blue-headed Racquet-tail; Palawan Hornbill; Great Slaty Woodpecker; Spot-throated Flameback; Red-headed Flameback; Hooded and Blue-breasted pitta; Yellow-throated Leafbird; Ashy-fronted, Sulphur-bellied and Palawan bulbul; Palawan Tit; Ashy-headed Babbler; Falcated Ground-Babbler; White-vented Shama; Palawan Blue-Flycatcher; Blue Paradise-Flycatcher; Lovely Sunbird; and Palawan Flowerpecker. In the evening, we will search for the Palawan Scops-Owl and the Palawan Frogmouth.

We will also visit two Visayan islands: Bohol and Negros, each offering unique bird species in accessible forests with comfortable hotels. Bohol offers quite a lot of species although many are at low density; possibilities include Samar Hornbill, Black-faced Coucal, both Northern Silvery and Rufous-lored kingfisher, the beautiful Philippine Trogon, sought after Azure-breasted Pitta, and rare Visayan Wattled Broadbill. Another beautiful island that offers excellent birding is Negros, home to the delightful Twin Lakes National Park, which protects what precious little remains of once extensive forests. Exploring these forests will give us the chance for another suite of special endemics. Negros Scops-Owl, Visayan Hornbill, White-winged Cuckoo-shrike, Visayan Bulbul, Visayan Drongo, Visayan Fantail, Flame-templed Babbler, Black-belted Flowerpecker, Maroon-naped and Magnificent sunbird are possible amidst a mix of more widespread species like Sulphur-billed Nuthatch, Elegant Tit, Mangrove Blue Flycatcher and White-vented Whistler.

This is a wonderful tour of a remarkable country with an amazing array of endemic birds. The pace is relatively relaxed; although there are a couple of long drives and obligatory early starts, we will enjoy very pleasant accommodation close to well-protected forests and delicious meals. Best of all, the birding is simply wonderful!

Please note that the order of the itinerary may be slightly rearranged to accommodate for revised internal flight schedules, to avoid conflicting with other groups, or due to other unforeseen factors.

This tour can be taken by itself or in combination with Thailand Highlights (March 3-23, 2024), also led by Dion Hobcroft.



A male Palawan Peacock-Pheasant © Dion Hobcroft

March 23-24, Days 1-2: Departure from Home; Arrival in Manila. Most flights connecting from North America will arrive at Manila's *Ninoy Aquino International Airport* (airport code MNL) one or two days following your departure due to flight time and crossing the International Date Line. You will be met upon arrival by a representative of our ground agent and escorted to our hotel. We recommend flying in a day early due to potential misconnects and weather-related flight delays. Upon request, the VENT office will be happy to assist with any additional lodging arrangements. **The group will assemble at 7:00 p.m. on the evening of March 24.**

NIGHT (March 23): In transit, overnight flight
NIGHT (March 24): Midas Hotel & Casino, Manila

March 25, Day 3: Drive to Canarem Lake; Afternoon Subic Bay. We'll depart early this morning for Canarem Lake, where we will spend three to four hours. This area is particularly good for the rare endemic Philippine Duck and Philippine Swamphe. There is also a large variety of more widespread Asian wetland and woodland birds like Little Grebe; Wandering Whistling-Duck; Purple Heron; Little, Great, Cattle and Intermediate egrets; Cinnamon, Yellow and Black bitterns; Common Moorhen; White-browed Crake; Barred Rail; White-breasted Waterhen; Eastern Marsh-Harrier; Black-winged Stilt; possibly Pheasant-tailed Jacana; Kentish and Little Ringed plovers; Common and Wood sandpiper; Long-toed Stint; Oriental Pratincole; Whiskered Tern; Red Collared-Dove; Zebra Dove; Asian Koel; Lesser Coucal; Ameline Swiftlet; Common Kingfisher; Collared Kingfisher; Blue-tailed Bee-eater; Golden-bellied Gerygone; Striated Grassbird; Clamorous Reed-Warbler; Pied Bushchat; and possibly wintering Middendorf's Grasshopper-Warbler or White-shouldered Starling. There are still often a few wintering ducks from north Asia with Garganey being quite possible, with smaller numbers of Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Shoveler and Northern Pintail. Occasionally there are some rarer visitors.

Around 11:00 a.m., we'll proceed to Subic Bay. Subic Bay is an American naval base that was abandoned after Mount Pinatubo erupted in 1991 and covered the base with volcanic ash. We will spend the afternoon birding in the well-protected forests adjacent to the old Subic Naval Magazine. Here we can expect to see a variety of endemics or near endemics such as White-eared Brown-dove, Philippine Green-Pigeon, Gualabero, Philippine Hanging-Parrot, Blue-naped Parrot, Green Racquet-tail, Red-crested Malkoha, Rufous Coucal, Philippine Coucal, Luzon Hornbill, Rufous-crowned Bee-eater, Brown-breasted Kingfisher, Luzon Flameback, Northern Sooty Woodpecker, Philippine Woodpecker, Blackish Cuckoo-shrike, Philippine Bulbul, Philippine Pied Fantail, Coletto, White-browed Shama, Trilling Tailorbird and with luck the scarce White-lored Oriole. More widespread species that occur at Subic include Red Junglefowl, Green Imperial-Pigeon, Dollarbird, Whiskered Treeswift,

Coppersmith Barbet, White-bellied Woodpecker, White-breasted Woodswallow, Ashy Minivet, Bar-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Yellow-vented Bulbul, Large-billed Crow, Barn and Pacific swallows, Arctic Warbler, Gray-streaked Flycatcher and Blue Rock-Thrush. At night we can search for Great Eared-Nightjar, Chocolate Boobook, Luzon Hawk-Owl and Philippine Scops-Owl. There is an enormous roost of two species of giant flying-foxes that sometimes attract the attention of White-bellied Sea-Eagles. Other possible raptors include the scarce Philippine Hawk-Eagle, widespread Brahminy Kite, migrant Chinese Goshawk and Gray-faced Buzzard, and the diminutive endemic Philippine Falconet.

NIGHT: Kamana Sanctuary, Subic

March 26, Day 4: Birding at Subic Bay. We will spend the day birding in Subic's forests along the trail to Hill 394 and the Nabasan Beach road searching for specialty birds. We will be planning a break in the middle of the day when bird activity largely ceases. Where possible, we will always schedule a siesta during the heat of the day on this tour.

NIGHT: Kamana Sanctuary, Subic

March 27, Day 5: Morning Birding in Subic; Afternoon Return to Manila. After a final morning's birding in Subic, we will head back towards Manila. If possible, we may detour via the Quezon City campus of the University of the Philippines where we have had some success on recent trips finding both Philippine Scops-Owl and Philippine Nightjar.

NIGHT: Midas Hotel & Casino, Manila

March 28, Day 6: Flight to Palawan; Birding at St. Paul's National Park. This morning we will catch a flight to Puerto Princesa on the island of Palawan. Before setting off to St. Paul's National Park, we will go to some coastal mangrove areas for a good chance to see the Copper-throated Sunbird, Common Iora and perhaps a variety of shorebirds with a chance for the rare Chinese Egret. We may also opt to visit the Crocodile Farm that has become the go-to site for a chance to see the ultra-shy Palawan Peacock-Pheasant. After lunch we will proceed to Sabang and St Paul's National Park. The drive in for the last 20 miles is good for birds and we will take our time, arriving at Sabang in the late afternoon. We have a good chance to see the critically endangered Philippine Cockatoo in this area. Other species, not endemic, that are possible include Crested Serpent-Eagle, Changeable Hawk-Eagle, Rufous-bellied Eagle, Green Imperial-Pigeon, Chestnut-breasted Malkoha, Plaintive Cuckoo, Brown-backed Needletail, Great Slaty Woodpecker, Hooded Pitta, Fiery Minivet and Dark-throated Oriole. In the evening, if people wish, we will search for the Palawan Scops-Owl and the Palawan Frogmouth.

NIGHT: Daluyon Beach Resort, Sabang

March 29, Day 7: St. Paul's National Park/ Return to Puerto Princesa. Today we have a full morning in St Paul's National Park and the surrounding area around Sabang. The park is beautifully located between high limestone cliffs and white sandy beaches and is covered by pristine forest. It is the home of the Underground River and to save time, we will take a boat directly there (15 minutes). Please note it is a wet landing (so sandals are ideal) and the boat can be a bit noisy (ear plugs can be handy). The overall area is rich in birds and there is a good chance of seeing some of the following birds: Tabon Scrubfowl; Blue-naped Parrot; Blue-headed Racquet-tail; Red-headed and Spot-throated flamebacks; Stork-billed and Ruddy kingfisher; Palawan Hornbill; Blue-breasted Pitta; Yellow-throated Leafbird; Ashy-fronted, Sulphur-bellied and Palawan bulbuls; Palawan Tit; Ashy-headed Babbler; Falcated Ground Babbler (difficult); White-vented Shama; Palawan Blue-Flycatcher; Blue Paradise-Flycatcher; Hill Myna; Lovely Sunbird; and Palawan Flowerpecker. After it warms up we will return to Puerto Princesa where we hope to connect with a flock of Philippine Cockatoos in a well-protected location.

NIGHT: Princesa Garden Resort, Puerto Princesa

March 30, Day 8: Napsan Road: We have scheduled the morning to bird along the extensively forested Napsan Road to try and see any of the remaining endemics we are searching for. After lunch and a siesta we will recommence birding in the afternoon visit some nearby rice fields and forest patches where we will search for Rufous Night-Heron, Swinhoe's Snipe and Watercock. On dusk if people are keen we will search for Palawan Scops-Owl, Large-tailed Nightjar and Palawan Frogmouth.

NIGHT: Princessa Garden Resort, Puerto Princessa

March 31, Day 9: Morning at Irawan; Afternoon Flight to Manila. This morning we will visit Irawan and other nearby forests. Our target birds here include the skulking Palawan Babbler and the elusive Palawan Flycatcher. Other species we have encountered here include Square-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo, Greater Coucal, Rufous-backed Dwarf-Kingfisher, Blue-eared Kingfisher, Hair-crested Drongo, Black-naped Monarch, Slender-billed Crow, Black-headed Bulbul, Rufous-tailed Tailorbird and the Asian Glossy Starling. We'll enjoy a tasty lunch before catching our late afternoon flight back to Manila, where we will settle into the now familiar Midas Hotel.

NIGHT: Midas Hotel & Casino, Manila

April 1, Day 10: Mount Makiling via La Mesa. We will make the necessary early departure to visit the La Mesa Ecopark. This site has proven reliable in recent years to see the elusive Ashy Thrush. It is also quite good for the often-shy Gray-backed Tailorbird, the occasional wintering Brown-headed Thrush, Philippine Magpie-Robin, Mangrove Blue Flycatcher, Lowland White-eye and if we are in luck, perhaps a Blue-breasted Pitta or Indigo-banded Kingfisher. After this we will head to Mount Makiling.

In the afternoon we will bird on the lower slopes of the mountain. This will include a visit to the Botanic Gardens where there are often some flowering and fruiting trees. Here we are looking for Red-keeled and Pygmy flowerpeckers, Indigo-banded Kingfisher, Scale-feathered Malkoha and Philippine Falconet. We can also visit the Dairy Husbandry section of the University of the Philippines campus for hopefully the endemic Spotted Buttonquail. Other birds we hope to see include Buff-banded Rail, Barred Button-quail, Philippine Serpent-Eagle, White-eared Brown-dove, Black-chinned Fruit-Dove, Philippine Cuckoo-Dove, Guaiabero, Philippine Hawk-Cuckoo, Rusty-breasted Cuckoo, Luzon Hornbill, Red-crested Malkoha, Asian Palm Swift, House Swift, Pygmy Swiftlet, Philippine Woodpecker, Striated Swallow, Yellow-wattled Bulbul, Balicassiao, Elegant Tit, Sulphur-billed Nuthatch, Stripe-headed Rhabdornis, White-browed Shama, Blue-headed Fantail, Yellow-bellied Whistler, Coletto, Flaming and Handsome sunbirds, and Buzzing and Striped flowerpeckers. We can search at night for Luzon Hawk-Owl, Philippine Scops-Owl and Philippine Nightjar.

NIGHT: SEARCA Hotel, Los Banos

April 2, Day 11: Mount Makiling. We have a full day of birding on Mount Makiling. In the morning we will be birding the higher slopes at about 1,500 feet above sea-level. We will take a jeepney from the bottom up to our start-off point and hike along forest trails until the forest becomes inactive as the day warms up. There are quite a few high-quality birds on this trail but they can be shy. With patience we hope to find Philippine Trogon, Spotted Kingfisher and



A beautiful male Spotted Kingfisher at Mount Makiling
© Dion Hobcroft

with really good luck, the enigmatic Luzon Bleeding-heart. In the afternoon we will go wherever we think will most likely provide the best chance of new birds.

NIGHT: SEARCA Hotel, Los Banos

April 3, Day 12: Morning at Mount Makiling; Drive to Infanta. A final morning at Mount Makiling will give us a chance to search for any of the forest birds we have not been able to see. We will then drive to Infanta and if time permits make some stops to look for some locally scarce species like Savannah Nightjar and Philippine Collared-Dove.

NIGHT: LA View Hotel, Infanta

April 4, Day 13: Infanta to Manila. Located in the Southern Sierra Madre mountains, Infanta gives access to some decent patches of montane rainforest and overlooks of well forested valleys. Like Mount Makiling, it can be slow birding here but a long list of rarely seen endemics make it a popular place for local birders, and overseas birders are following hot on their heels. Here we will be searching for Rufous Hornbill, Cream-bellied Fruit-Dove, Flame-breasted Fruit-Dove, Whiskered Pitta (rare), Citrine Canary-Flycatcher, Blue-headed Fantail, Sulphur-billed Nuthatch, Bicol Ground-warbler (rare), Philippine Fairy-bluebird, Grand Rhabdornis (rare), Olive-backed Flowerpecker and Flaming Sunbird. With patience, we hope to encounter some of these shy and rarer species.

NIGHT: Midas Hotel & Casino, Manila

April 5, Day 14: Fly to Bohol; Rajah Sikatuna National Park. We will take a morning flight to Bohol and then transfer to our comfortable hotel where we have a chance to see both the Northern Silvery Kingfisher and Pink-necked Green-Pigeon. We will spend the afternoon exploring Rajah Sikatuna National Park. The park offers chances to see a good cross-section of Philippine endemics and we hope to see Black-faced Coucal, Philippine Drongo-Cuckoo, Samar Hornbill, Rufous-ored Kingfisher, Philippine Trogon, Buff-spotted Flameback, Azure-breasted Pitta, Visayan Wattled Broadbill (rare), Visayan Blue Fantail, Philippine Fairy-bluebird, Yellow-breasted Tailorbird, Rufous-fronted Tailorbird (both tailorbirds are remarkably shy), Philippine Leaf-Warbler, Brown Tit-Babbler, Rufous-tailed Jungle-Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Whistler and Bohol Sunbird. Night birds include Everett's Scops-Owl, Luzon Hawk-Owl and Philippine Frogmouth. Please note that some trails in the forest interior can be rocky and slippery if it has been raining. We can offer forest edge birding if people do not feel comfortable birding in the forest interior. The great majority of sites we visit here are straight-forward for walking but there is one exception and it does offer the chance for some special birds.

NIGHT: Loboc River Resort, Loboc

April 6, Day 15: Bohol. We will have a whole day to track down all of the interesting birds in Bohol. We will schedule a visit to the Corella Tarsier Centre. Here we are pretty much guaranteed to see the amazing Philippine Tarsier at their day-roost in some fenced-off protected forest.

NIGHT: Loboc River Resort, Loboc

April 7, Day 16: Ferry to Negros; Twin Lakes National Park. In the morning we will catch a fast ferry to Dumaguete in eastern Negros. We will have an air-conditioned first-class seating arrangement and seas are typically flat so it is comfortable and efficient. Upon arrival we will check into the hotel and then proceed to the Twin Lakes National Park. While being paddled around the lovely volcanic lakes we will have a chance to see several special birds of this island including the beautiful but scarce Visayan Hornbill. Other specific endemics at this site include Maroon-naped Sunbird, White-winged Cuckoo-shrike, Visayan Tailorbird, Visayan Bulbul, Visayan Fantail and Black-belted Flowerpecker. More widespread species include Sulphur-billed Nuthatch, Elegant Tit, Lemon-throated Leaf-Warbler, White-vented Whistler and Magnificent Sunbird. It is also possible to locate with some luck the Yellow-breasted Fruit-Dove, Amethyst Brown-Pigeon, Spotted Kingfisher, Blue-crowned Racquet-tail, Philippine Honey-buzzard and the now rare Pink-bellied Imperial-Pigeon. At night, if

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people wish, we will try and track down the very attractive Negros Scops-Owl. The national park with its lakes and forest is particularly photogenic.

NIGHT: Hotel Essencia, Dumaguete

April 8, Day 17: Twin Lakes-Baslay Highlands. We will return in the morning to Twin Lakes. After hopefully cleaning up as much as possible here on our target list we will spend the afternoon in the hills in the Baslay Highlands that offers a good chance for the scarce endemic Flame-templed Babbler. This tricky bird can sometimes respond quickly or be annoyingly difficult. It is typically associated with mixed species flocks. A good view will reveal the orange temple tufts that give this enigmatic bird its name. The forest here offers the chance to connect with many species we may have missed on this lovely island.

NIGHT: Hotel Essencia, Dumaguete

April 9, Day 18: Morning Negros; Afternoon Fly to Manila. A final morning of birding will be spent searching for whatever we think gives us the best chance to add to our trip list. After lunch we will retrace our steps and fly to Manila.

NIGHT: Midas Hotel & Casino, Manila

April 10, Day 19: Departure for Home. Transfers to the airport will be provided for departures any time today.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 8 participants. However, VENT reserves the right to increase the tour limit by one in order to accommodate a couple when only one space is available.

TOUR LEADER: Dion Hobcroft



TOUR LEADER: Dion Hobcroft has been working for VENT since 2001. He has led many tours (more than 180) to Australia, New Guinea, New Zealand, Bhutan, Indonesia, India, China, Southwest Pacific, Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, Malawi, Myanmar, Japan, Russia, Alaska, Tanzania, Uganda, Madagascar, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and the Antarctic. In 2007 and 2013–2019 and 2022 alone, Dion showed more than 2,000 species of birds to VENT clients every calendar year. His informative, relaxed, and educational nature, combined with sharp eyes and ears, has established Dion as a favorite of many tour participants. His fieldwork for over 40 years on birds and other terrestrial vertebrates has allowed him to amass an extraordinary knowledge of the biodiversity in the Asia-Pacific region. Born in Tasmania and based in Sydney, Dion has traveled widely throughout Australasia, listing over 1,200 species, placing him in the top echelons of the region's birders. He is very tuned-in to the songs of bird

species in the Asia-Pacific region and specializes in rare and elusive species. He is delighted to show these skulking rarities to his travel companions. Dion has published several papers on field ornithology, served on national and state rare bird committees, managed *Birdline NSW*, run introduction to ornithology courses for Sydney University, and, before he traveled so continuously, was a popular speaker with various natural history societies. Dion has worked for many research and government agencies ranging from the Antarctic Division, Department of Environment NSW, Agriculture Protection WA, Taronga Zoo, Australian Museum, and the Queensland Department of Primary Industry. Dion lives in Sydney with his wife, Lise, and two children, Grace (age 22) and Daniel (age 18).

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for this tour is **\$8,495** in double occupancy from Manila. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 19. The tour includes lodging as stated in the itinerary; all ground, air, and water transportation during the tours; and guide services provided by the tour leader. These tour fees do not include airfare from your home to Manila and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, telephone calls, laundry or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tours do not have sufficient registration, a small party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$1,400**.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, the deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at <https://ventbird.com>) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 150 days (October 26, 2023) prior to the tour departure date.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:

Cancellation by Participant:

Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 180 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$500** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 179 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the tour fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre- and post-tour extensions. **For participants' protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

If participant cancels:

180 days or more before departure date

179 to 151 days before departure date

150 days or less before departure date

Participant's refund will be:

Participant's deposit minus \$500*

No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance of the tour fee will be refunded

No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

Cancellation by VENT:

If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

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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 their **Ripcord** plan. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most comprehensive travel protection programs available.

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

For a price quote, or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: <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 14 days of making your tour deposit. 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 14 days in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. The primary medical expense benefit is available to U.S. residents only. For this reason, non-U.S. residents will pay an adjusted premium when

purchasing a comprehensive policy, which includes all of the other benefits available to U.S. residents. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Coronavirus (COVID-19):

Concerns about COVID-19 may present uncertainty for those holding travel insurance policies or who are considering future travel and purchasing such insurance. Redpoint features a **Coronavirus FAQ page** on its website that addresses questions and concerns regarding its travel insurance and the impact of COVID-19. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of topics such as policy coverage and limitations, policy modifications, cancellation, refunds, and more.

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

https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/

Additionally, some countries maintain COVID-19 entry requirements, including mandates to purchase travel insurance covering medical expenses due to COVID-19 illness and in case of quarantine. Ripcord's comprehensive travel insurance plans are designed to satisfy the various country-specific travel insurance entry requirements. Those who purchase a Ripcord policy will receive a "letter of confirmation" that affirms that the policy satisfies such requirements.

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: When traveling within the Philippines, officially one piece of checked luggage weighing no more than 44 pounds is allowed free of charge. In addition, you are allowed one piece of carry-on luggage and whatever you carry over your arm or in your hands (i.e. coat, book, purse, umbrella etc.).

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

CLIMATE: The Philippines is hot and humid year-round. The weather pattern across the archipelago is complex, but can be roughly divided into the dry season (September to May) and the wet season (June to September). There is little seasonal variation in most places with average highs and lows of around 31°C (87°F) and 24°C (76°F) respectively. Between December and May, slightly cooler and drier conditions prevail.

CLOTHING: Bring light-weight and predominantly cotton field clothing. **Bright colors are best avoided (remember – browns, tans and greens are less likely to startle birds and mammals).** Please do not wear military style camouflage clothing. Bring a warm sweater; a hat with a good brim to keep the sun off; a

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waterproof poncho, jacket or the like; a small collapsible umbrella is **essential**; and comfortable boots with rugged soles—even flat trails can become slippery when wet. You should also have relatively thick socks to cushion your feet during long walks.

Laundry service will be available at most of the hotels where we stay in the Philippines.

SPECIAL NOTE: Leeches can at times be a nuisance, most notably at Mount Makiling if there has been recent rain. While spraying your socks and trousers with bug-juice is some help, a pair of leech-socks is much more effective. A website that sells anti-leech socks is www.mosquitohammock.com. They are based in Philadelphia.

CURRENCY: The currency in the Philippines is the Peso (PhP), divided into 100 Centavos. Participants are advised to carry sufficient funds in low denomination US dollars cash, which can be very useful in an emergency. Automatic teller machines are widely available.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure is required for United States and Canadian citizens to enter the Philippines. Canadian and U.S. citizens are not required to have a visa for stays under 30 days. Citizens of other countries should check with your local consulate/embassy for instructions. International passengers must follow the arrival procedures of their PH port of entry mandated by PAL and the Philippine Government. As of this writing, unvaccinated, partially vaccinated, and passengers whose vaccination status cannot be verified shall be required to complete a facility-based quarantine at the first port of entry into the Philippines, regardless the onward domestic destination. Ensure to check your first PH arrival airport prior to booking the facility.

Although travel to the Philippines is now permitted, U.S. citizens should know and comply with arrival and departure requirements as promulgated by the Philippine government, which generally include the following as a minimum: Being fully vaccinated, except for minor children below age 12 traveling with fully vaccinated parents who can present acceptable proof of vaccination. Unvaccinated foreign nationals will not be allowed admission into the Philippines. If you are fully vaccinated with at least one booster shot, you are no longer required to provide a negative RT-PCR test, provided your present proof of vaccination along with your valid passport and return tickets; see IATF Resolution 168 for more information.

The Philippine government requires all arriving passengers to complete a BOQ e-Health Declaration Card (e-HDC) This includes children. You can register up to three days in advance of your departure for the Philippines through the BOQ's One Health Pass webpage. Remember to save a copy of the transaction number and QR code, which will be required by Philippine immigration authorities.

As these requirements are continuously changing, please visit the Philippine Embassy for the most current information: <https://www.philippine-embassy.org.sg/consular/visa/guidelines-for-travel-to-the-philippines-non-ofws-and-foreign-nationals/>

EQUIPMENT: Please bring along your binoculars. Your tour leader will be carrying a spotting scope if circumstances provide that we might need it. You should bring all the camera equipment that you will need, as there will be photographic opportunities.

A small day pack (either waterproofed or with a strong plastic bag inside) is useful for carrying excess clothing, camera equipment, toiletries, food, and water. However, we will have regular access to our vehicle, which will be attended by a driver. Water bottles are important if you like to carry a regular supply of water.

Other useful items include:

1. Handy wipes and paper tissues are especially useful. All participants should carry sufficient for their personal needs for the entire tour.
2. Spare glasses or contact lenses.
3. A large handkerchief for use in bathrooms, as paper towels are often not provided.

4. Umbrella - the collapsible type is easy to carry and useful both against rain and sun.

MISC:

Electricity – the Philippines uses 220 volts, 60 Hz, AC. European and Japanese style plugs are used.

Language – Tagalog and English are the official national languages.

Time – the Philippines is 15 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time.

Internet – Most of the hotels we will visit will have internet access.

Snacks- it is advisable to bring granola-type bars, dried fruit or other snacks. Convenience stores are not common, but they stock many snacks and other products that you will be familiar with (and some not so familiar).

Flashlight or headlamp – for night walking or blackouts

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

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

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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).

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 of the Philippines** by Desmond Allen Lynx and Birdlife International Field Guides, Lynx Edicions, Barcelona 2020-This is by far the best bird book to have on this tour!

*** A Guide to the Birds of the Philippines** by Robert Kennedy, Pedro C. Gonzales, Edward Dickinson, Hector Miranda and T Fisher. 2000. Oxford University Press – this is the second best bird field guide for the area although unfortunately now quite out of date regarding the recent splitting of many bird species.

***A Naturalists Guide to the Birds of the Philippines** by Maia Tanedo, Robert Hutchinson, Adrian and Trinket Constantino. 2015. John Beaufoy publishing (www.johnbeaufoy.com) Excellent photographs of many (but not all) bird species in the Philippines. Concise and informative sections on aspects of Philippine ornithology and a handy checklist in the back section. A very useful publication.

For a more exhaustive bibliography, see selections in the Apa and Lonely Planet Guides.

MAP: Philippines - 1:1,500,000, Nelles series

* Recommended to bring on tour.

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

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

other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

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

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

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

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on [REDACTED], 2021, 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.