

**SPAIN & PORTUGAL
ABOARD THE *SEA CLOUD*:
BIRDS, NATURE & CULTURE
APRIL 15–25, 2024**

**SOUTHERN PORTUGAL PRE-TRIP
APRIL 9–17, 2024**

**VALENCIA EXTENSION
APRIL 25–29, 2024**

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The Sea Cloud © Sea Cloud Cruises

Vibrant cities, pastoral landscapes, and alluring coastlines characterize two of Europe's most romantic and evocative countries: Portugal and Spain.

For this voyage we have chartered the peerless Sea Cloud, a four-masted barque widely regarded as the world's most beautiful sailing vessel, for a trip that combines the lustrous history and architectural wonders of the Portuguese capital, Lisbon, and the Andalusía region of Spain, with emphasis on the region's natural history highlights, particularly birds and botany.



An exciting itinerary begins in charming Lisbon, from which we'll cruise a stretch of the Atlantic Ocean before tracing a route along the south coast of the Iberian Peninsula through the Strait of Gibraltar into the Mediterranean Sea en route to Valencia on the Spanish Riviera. We'll call at Huelva and Motril, gateway ports to the majestic cities of Seville and Granada. Here, we'll travel to some of the most visually appealing and essential landmarks in Spain, including the Plaza d'España, Real Alcázar, Seville Cathedral, the Royal Chapel of Granada, and, above all, the monumental Alhambra. Rounding out the cultural offerings will be opportunities to visit charming coastal villages, partake in a wine-tasting excursion, and enjoy an authentic Flamenco show in the heart of the country where that style of music and dance originated. Meanwhile, those more interested in birding and natural history may join excursions to Doñana National Park and the foothills of the Sierra Nevada range. These locations and more, coupled with time at sea, promise a marvelous array of waterbirds and landbirds.

April is a splendid month to travel in Iberia, with spring flowers in bloom, mild temperatures, and birds on the move. Among the species we'll seek are a range of regional specialties and passage migrants including Red-crested Pochard, Greater Flamingo, Pallid Swift, Great Skua, Audouin's Gull, Balearic Shearwater, Purple Heron, Booted Eagle, European Bee-Eater, Lesser Kestrel, Iberian Gray Shrike, Iberian Magpie, Thekla Lark, Black Wheatear, and others.

Paramount in the program is the opportunity to travel aboard the Sea Cloud. Ornate in her all-wood construction, resplendent under sail, and owner of a vivid history, this majestic ship sets a standard by which all other ships are measured.

With historical and natural history interpretation throughout the trip, there simply is no better way to experience the charm of Portugal and Spain. Joining VENT leaders Barry Lyon and David Ascanio for this special departure are Peter Zika, a superb field biologist and botanist at the herbarium of the University of Washington, and

Larry Wolff and his wife, Perri Klass, Larry is the Silver Professor of European History at New York University and Director of the NYU Center for European and Mediterranean Studies; Perri is a professor of Journalism and Pediatrics at NYU.



Sea Cloud's beautiful dining room © Sea Cloud Cruises

Those wanting to experience more of Iberia are encouraged to join our optional pre- and post-cruise extensions. Our Southern Portugal Pre-trip travels from the coast around Lisbon to the interior of the Alentejo region, home to Great and Little bustards, Spanish and Bonelli's eagles, the historic town of Mértola, and landscapes of pleasing beauty. Our Valencia Extension includes a day-long city tour of this lovely city and three full days of birding in the coast, steppe, and mountains. Many birds are likely including additional chances for White-headed Duck, Marbled Teal, Great Bustard, and Spanish Eagle. NOTE: The itinerary for the extension is available as a separate document.

April 15–16, Days 1–2: Departure to Lisbon, Portugal; arrival and evening welcome. Flights from the United States bound for Lisbon depart on Day 1 (April 15) and arrive on the morning of Day 2 (April 16). Upon arrival at Lisbon Airport (airport code LIS) you will be met outside of baggage claim by a representative of our ground agent and transferred to the **Four Seasons Hotel Ritz** where a room has been reserved in your name. After check-in you will have the remainder of the day to yourself. We will gather as a group in the hotel on Day 2 (April 16) at 6:00 p.m. for a trip introduction and welcome, followed by dinner.

The **Four Seasons Hotel Ritz** is one of Lisbon's finest hotels, offering accommodations, amenities, and services that provides a perfect complement to our stay aboard the *Sea Cloud*. Only 15–20 minutes from the airport, the hotel is located in the heart of the city close to many attractions as well as being only a few minutes from the Tagus River near where it meets the Atlantic Ocean. Inside, the hotel is a veritable art museum, filled with sculptures, paintings, and tapestries representing a wonderful collection of local artwork. In fact, the artwork on display here comprises one of the most important privately-owned collections in the country. Outside, a spacious terrace affords fine views of the city's rolling hills and brightly tiled building exteriors. Kind Edward VII Park is an easy walk from the hotel. Aside from its visual appeal, the park is home to the Estufa Fria, a rather remarkable greenhouse that is a pride of Lisbon.

NIGHTS: Aboard aircraft in transit to Lisbon (April 15); Four Seasons Hotel Ritz, Lisbon (April 16)

April 17, Day 3: Highlights of Lisbon; embark *Sea Cloud*. As we do not board the *Sea Cloud* until late in the afternoon, we'll spend most of the day in Lisbon before transferring to the port. We will be joined by local guides for a highlights style walking and driving tour of the marvelous Portuguese capital.

Highlights:

- **Participate on a guided city tour of historic Lisbon**
- **Enjoy a sumptuous lunch**
- **Embark *Sea Cloud* and cruise out of the port of Lisbon in the late afternoon**

An overview of Lisbon:

Situated on the Atlantic Ocean, Lisbon is the westernmost capital of Europe. With a population of over half a million, it is Portugal's largest city and a city of "alpha-level" global importance for its significance in finance, commerce, media, entertainment, arts, education, and tourism. The city takes its name from "Olissipo," which has its origins in the Phoenician words "Allis Ubbo," meaning "enchanted port." The municipality of Lisbon is divided into civil parishes, of which there are 53; however, most people recognize the districts of the city in terms of *bairros* (historic neighborhoods), each characterized by distinct landmarks and architectural styles. The famed *Alfama* district is one of the best known *bairros*. Lisbon sits on the Tagus River near its meeting with the Atlantic. As such it is one of the busiest ports in Europe. Lisbon is profuse with artistic, architectural, and historical riches and has become one of the Europe's more popular destinations.



Alfama district, Lisbon © Shutterstock

City tour of Lisbon:

Our plan for the day is a city tour of Lisbon. We will be joined by licensed guides who will lead us on an interpretive walking and driving tour that visits a number of important sites that reflect over 800 years of varying cultural influences.

Our exact itinerary is to be determined, but our morning will likely include:

- **Parque Eduardo VII and Avenida da Liberdade:** Parque Eduardo VII (King Edward VII Park) is an ornamental park offering panoramic views of the city and Tagus River. From the park, the tree-lined Avenida da Liberdade leads to the Baixa district (downtown district) and features a towering statue dedicated to the Marquis de Pombal (the person responsible for the rebuilding of Lisbon after the 1755 earthquake).

- Baixa District (Pombaline Lower Town): This historic district encompasses Lisbon's downtown area and forms the heart of the city. Beautiful plazas, grand avenues, and fine restaurants are characteristic. Highlights include Rossio Square, Rua da Augusta—Lisbon's grandest avenue—and Terreiro do Paco, the eighteenth-century grand square that includes one of Lisbon's most iconic sites: the Rua Augusta Arch.
- Alfama District: This, the oldest district of Lisbon, stretches from a high point of the city down to the Tagus River. Highlights include the Cathedral of Lisbon (Sé Cathedral), built in the twelfth century on the site of a mosque following the expulsion of the Moors; and a renovated historical quarter featuring winding streets, homes with small shops downstairs, restaurants, and tastefully remodeled buildings.

Around midday we'll re-board the coaches and make our way to Belém. At the far west end of Lisbon, Belém is the location of the old harbor from which ships departed for voyages across the Atlantic in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries during the Age of Discovery. Upon arrival we'll stop to view the iconic Torre de Belém (Tower of Belém), followed by a sumptuous lunch on the waterfront near the famous Monument to the Discoveries. After lunch, we will visit the monument and then finish our tour with a visit to the Jerónimos Monastery, a masterpiece of gothic architecture and the burial place of Vasco da Gama.



Jeronimos Monastery, Lisbon © Shutterstock

As one would expect, bird diversity is predictably low within the urbanized city center; nevertheless, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Yellow-legged Gull, Eurasian Magpie, Common House-Martin, and White Wagtail may provide the trip's initial avian highlights.

Around 3:30 we'll transfer to the port for embarkation of the *Sea Cloud*.

After a welcome beverage and time to settle into our cabins, we'll want to be on deck as *Sea Cloud* departs the port of Lisbon. As we exit the harbor, we'll turn to the south, passing beyond the outer reaches of the port and into the open waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

NIGHT: Aboard *Sea Cloud*

April 18, Day 4: Cruising the Atlantic Ocean (Lisbon to Huelva). Covering the considerable distance between Lisbon and Huelva (our first port of call) requires a full-day transit at sea. The ensuing 24-hour period will be spent completing this voyage of 275 nautical miles which takes us due south from Lisbon before turning east as we round the end of the Iberian Peninsula.

Highlights:

- **A relaxing full first day at sea**
- **Presentations by the *Sea Cloud* and VENT staffs**
- **Seabirding from the viewing decks**
- **Captain's Welcome Dinner**

Our time at sea offers a leisurely day in which we'll have options for activities and engagement. Some may prefer to relax in the comfortable confines of their cabins or in the passenger lounge while others may repair to the spanker deck to enjoy the sun and water. Or, perhaps reading a book and sipping a cool drink in the shade of the Lido deck will suit one's fancy. There will also be opportunities to attend presentations from Larry Wolf, Peter Zika, and the *Sea Cloud* staff on various aspects of sailing, history, geography, or botany to prepare us for the days ahead.

Sea Cloud's viewing decks afford superb views of the surrounding sea. With good visibility and room to maneuver, the birders will be well positioned to pick out anything that comes our way.

The middle of April is a prime time for bird migration and thus an excellent time to be at sea. Many birds are on the move, relocating from wintering grounds to breeding sites while other birds that overwintered in the area have not yet departed for more northern reaches. Consequently, the opportunity to be on the open ocean carries potential for exciting seabirding. Among the species for which we'll be on watch are Great Skua; Parasitic Jaeger; Yellow-legged, Lesser Black-backed, and Audouin's gulls; Black and Common terns; Cory's and Balearic shearwaters; and Northern Gannet. Less common but possible are Pomarine Jaeger, Manx and Sooty shearwaters, and Atlantic Puffin. Long-finned Pilot Whale, Common Bottle-nosed Dolphin, and Short-beaked Common Dolphin are sometimes sighted as well.



Balearic Shearwater © Shutterstock

NIGHT: Aboard *Sea Cloud*

April 19, Day 5: Excursion options to Seville and El Andévalo–Marismas del Odiel Natural Place. After cruising through the night, *Sea Cloud* will enter the port of Huelva at 7:00 a.m. The ship will remain in port from 7:00 a.m. on April 19 to 6:00 p.m. on April 20, thus allowing for two days of activities here in the southwest corner of Spain. On both days we will operate two excursion options to accommodate the diversity of interests among the group. Today, participants may choose from a day of sightseeing, history, and culture in Seville or birdwatching in the vicinity of Huelva.

Highlights:

- **Choose from two excursion options: a day in Seville or birdwatching at Andévalo and Marismas del Odiel Natural Place**

Option #1: A Day in Seville**Depart 8:00 a.m.; Return 5:00 p.m.**

This morning we will make the 60–75-minute drive from the port of Huelva to Seville where we'll spend the day sightseeing, with visits to several of the city's major historical sites.

An overview of Seville:

Spain, officially the Kingdom of Spain, is administered as a collection of distinct political and administrative regions known as "autonomous communities." There are seventeen autonomous communities, of which the southernmost is called Andalusia, the most populous of all and the second largest by area. Its capital is Seville.

Situated a little more than an hour inland from Huelva, Seville is an ancient city whose roots trace back to a pre-Roman Iberian people that inhabited the area in the first millennium B.C. Following centuries of Roman rule, the Iberian Peninsula was eventually conquered in the eighth century A.D. by Moorish armies from north Africa. Moorish control of Seville lasted until the conquest of Andalusia by Iberian Christians in the thirteenth century during a lengthy struggle known as the "Reconquista." Under Ferdinand and Isabella, Columbus's voyages opened the Age of Discovery, a period marked by a massive flow of wealth into Spain from her New World colonies. In this time Seville entered its Golden Age. Because of the strategic positioning of its port at the mouth of the Guadalquivir River on the Atlantic Ocean, Seville established a commercial dominance that, by the seventeenth century, had transformed it into Spain's largest and wealthiest city. In the eighteenth century, the effects of plague and competition with other port cities led to a prolonged decline. For much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Seville was known for its agricultural production, and indeed it has traditionally been one of Spain's most important bread baskets. More recently Seville has shown rapid growth in industry and infrastructure, making it again one of Spain's most dynamic cities.

Today, Seville is a beautiful and popular destination, a city rich in cultural, artistic, and architectural splendors reflecting Arabic, Gothic and Renaissance influences. The Cathedral of Seville and Royal Alcázar stand out among a host of attractions that includes The Plaza d'España, other cathedrals, plazas, museums, and gardens. Away from the city, between Seville and Huelva, lies Doñana National Park, a place of supreme biological importance and certainly one of Spain's single best birding areas.

Tour highlights:**Plaza d'España**

Our day in Seville may well begin with a visit to the Plaza d'España (Plaza of Spain), a sprawling architectural achievement constructed for the Ibero-American Exhibition of 1929. This exhibition was a world's fair event intended to strengthen relations among countries with direct ties to Spain's colonial past. Represented were many nations from the Western Hemisphere, including the United States. The Plaza d'España is built into the edge of Maria Luisa Park—Seville's principal green space—and was the brainchild of architect Aníbal González. Constructed in a semi-circle layout, and meant to represent the four ancient kingdoms of Spain, the plaza and its buildings reflect



Plaza d'España, Seville © Barry Lyon

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the Spanish architectural style of the early twentieth century, a composition of Baroque Revival, Renaissance Revival, and Moorish Revival styles. Key features include soaring buildings, brick walkways, fountains, tiled alcoves, and even a moat with bridges. Today, the plaza mainly consists of government buildings; however, it is a favorite destination for tourists and locals alike, who are drawn to the undeniable beauty of the place.

Cathedral of Seville

The Cathedral of Seville is a Roman-Catholic construction that dates to 1401 when Reconquista Christians tore down a mosque following the expulsion of the Moors and in its place promised a cathedral of immense size. The project ultimately took one-hundred years to complete with the result being a creation so large as to exceed in size the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople (Istanbul). At a whopping 253,000 square feet, the Cathedral of Seville is the owner of impressive titles such as world's largest cathedral, world's largest Gothic church, and Europe's third largest church. The cathedral features exquisite Gothic architectural design that includes spires, pinnacles, pointed arches, and ribbed vaults. Highlights include an art pavilion, the High Altar, Treasury, Tomb of Christopher Columbus, and the Giralda Tower.

Real Alcázar

Adjacent to the Cathedral of Seville stands the Real Alcázar, the spectacular tenth century palace built for the governors of the local Moorish state. In the fourteenth century, the palace was revamped and modified by Muslim workmen under the Christian king Pedro I who, architecturally, wanted the best of both worlds. Spectacularly decorated halls and courtyards and beautifully designed gardens have distinctive Islamic-style flourishes as well as obviously Christian elements.



Real Alcázar, Seville © Shutterstock

Among the top sights are:

- Admiral's Hall: The very site where Queen Isabella received Columbus's account of his first voyage
- Audience Chamber: The red and pink room featuring the altarpiece painting of St. Mary of the Navigators and a model of Columbus's ship *Santa Maria*
- Courtyard of the Maidens: Featuring the Mudejar architectural style (Mudejar = synthesis of Muslim and Christian architectural styles) including a long reflecting pool lined by sunken gardens and surrounded by thin columns, lobed arches, coffered ceilings, and colorful ceramic tiles

- Hall of the Ambassadors: The throne room of Pedro includes stucco walls and an elaborately decorated half-dome ceiling
- Hall of tapestries: Filled with Spanish copies of sixteenth century Belgian tapestries
- Gardens: Christian and Moorish styles converge in the use of geometric designs, water features, and pavilions

Option #2: Birdwatching at El Andévalo and Marismas del Odiel Natural Place

Depart 8:00 a.m.; Return 5:30 p.m.

We will disembark the ship around 8:00 this morning in advance of a day of birding in and around the city of Huelva. With woodland, steppe, extensive marshlands, and other habitats all in close proximity, we will not have to go far today to enjoy excellent birding. Traveling with local experts, we will visit a number of sites and different habitats, starting with a short trip inland to the region of El Andévalo before finishing amid the Marismas del Odiel (Marshes of Odiel) Natural Place on the coast. We will take packed lunches from the ship and be out all day before returning to *Sea Cloud* in the late afternoon.

A mere forty-five minutes inland from Huelva is the region of El Andévalo, a traditional and rural part of Spain close to the Portugal border. This area is of varied topography, characterized by undulating terrain, steppe hills, and rocky outcrops. It is a lightly populated and beautiful region home to a variety of birds that are no longer easy to find in southern Spain including a suite of vultures, birds of prey, and insectivores. Among the many special birds possible here are Great and Little bustards (the former having declined dramatically here), Great Spotted Cuckoo, Black Stork, Cinereous Vulture (its stronghold in Andalusia), Eurasian Griffon, Eurasian Hoopoe, Iberian Gray Shrike, Iberian Magpie, Wood and Thekla larks, Blue Rock-Thrush, Black-eared Wheatear, and Eurasian Linnet. A variety of eagles may be seen here as well, with possibilities for Short-toed Snake-Eagle and Booted Eagle.

After a picnic lunch in the field we will return to Huelva where we will spend the afternoon birding Las Marismas del Odiel (the marshes of Odiel) Natural Place.

The great marshlands of the Huelva region are the product of an unusual estuary-like system formed by the confluence of the Odiel and Tinto rivers, just back from the open sea. Both rivers are large and carry high sediment loads that in turn sustain a marvelous complex of marshes, lagoons, beaches, and coastal forests. The nature reserve of Marismas del Odiel is the second largest wetland in Huelva province and one of the most important wetland reserves in western Europe, home to many breeding, migrating, and overwintering birds. We will visit several important areas within the marsh ecosystem seeking a variety of shorebirds, gulls, terns, wading birds, and more. Among the many possibilities are Greater Flamingo, Kentish Plover, Common Ringed Plover, Whimbrel, Eurasian Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Common Redshank, Collared Pratincole, Yellow-legged Gull, Caspian and Sandwich terns, Purple Heron, Eurasian Spoonbill, Eurasian Marsh-Harrier, Montagu's Harrier, European Bee-eater, Red-rumped Swallow, and Spanish Sparrow, in addition to more uncommon gulls such as Slender-billed and Audouin's gulls.



Iberian Magpie © Fáisca

NIGHT: Aboard *Sea Cloud*

April 20, Day 6: Excursion options to “Columbus’s Trail” (La Rabída)–Condado de Huelva and Doñana National Park. Today, you may choose from a day of sightseeing, history, wine tasting, and Flamenco in the greater Huelva area or a day of birdwatching in famous Doñana National Park. Those on the cultural excursion will enjoy Spanish food with wine tasting while the birdwatchers will again bring packed lunches from the ship.

Highlights:

- **Choose from two excursion options: a sightseeing tour of “Columbus’s Trail” in La Rabída area followed by a trip into the rural interior for wine and food tasting and a live Flamenco show; or join a day of birdwatching in famous Doñana National Park.**

**Option #1: “Columbus’s Trail” (La Rabída area) and Condado de Huelva
Depart 9:30 a.m.; return 5:00 p.m.**

This daylong excursion around Huelva and into the nearby interior offers a pleasing blend of historical, sightseeing, and cultural highlights. Our day will begin with a trip to the community of La Rabída, only minutes south of Huelva, where we’ll visit several historical sites and attractions associated with Christopher Columbus and the Age of Discovery before venturing inland to the Condado de Huelva. Literally “County of Huelva,” Condado de Huelva is not only one of the great wine growing regions of Spain, but also the official Spanish Capital of Gastronomy. Here, we will visit one of the region’s famous wineries for lunch with wine tasting, perhaps with a tour of a wine cellar. For a grand finale we’ll enjoy a live Flamenco show before returning to the ship in the afternoon.



Wharf of the Caravels (Niña, Pinta & Santa Maria), La Rabida © Shutterstock

Disembarking the *Sea Cloud* around 9–9:30 this morning, we’ll make the fifteen-minute drive to the Muelle de las Carabelas, or Wharf of the Caravels, where perfect replicas of Columbus’s three vessels of discovery—Niña, Pinta, and Santa Maria—are moored. The trio of ships were constructed by the Spanish state from 1990–1992 in advance of the five-hundred-year anniversary of Columbus’s first voyage in 1492. We’ll have a chance to board each of the ships for a firsthand view of their holds and cabins. Also here is the Barrio Medieval, a reproduction of a fifteenth century port neighborhood, and an interpretive center containing artifacts, copies, and exhibits from the early Age of Discovery.

Nearby is La Rabída near the mouth of the Río Tinto and the Friary of La Rabída, also known as the Convento de Santa Maria de la Rabída. The Friary of La Rabída was founded by the Franciscan order and dates to the thirteenth century. Although significant as an early site of the Franciscan tradition, and for its Gothic and Moorish architectural qualities, the friary is most famous as the place where Christopher Columbus spent two years (1490–1492) immediately before embarking on his first trans-Atlantic voyage. Columbus’s lengthy stay here was due to

the fact that King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella had initially rejected his request for funding of an expedition to the Indies.

From La Rabída we'll head to the interior for a taste of gastronomy and dance.

The Huelva area is famous for its wines and vinegars, which are registered under the designation of origin "Condado de Huelva." The sandy soil of the region, combined with a Mediterranean climate with an Atlantic influence, yields a high-quality grape. In 1502, the first shipment of wines for the West Indies was registered leaving Seville, which is why the wines from this area are known as the Vinos del Descubrimiento, or the Discovery Wines.

Around midday we will visit an ancestral winery in the municipality of Bollullos Par del Condado where we'll enjoy a sensual experience of food and wine tasting set in concert to a Flamenco performance. Flamenco originated in Andalusia and we'll have an opportunity to learn more about this distinct and beautiful art-form. We'll likely finish the day with a guided tour of a wine cellar followed by return to the ship.



Wine country or "Candado de Huelva," Huelva © Shutterstock

Option #2: Doñana National Park
Depart 6:30 a.m.; return 5:00 p.m.

This morning we will make the 60-minute drive northeast from the port of Huelva to Doñana National Park where we'll spend the day. Traveling with local guides, we'll concentrate our visit on the premier northern side of the park—the most diverse and avian rich side of the park—sampling an array of habitats and associated birdlife. Doñana offers outstanding birding; therefore, we anticipate our highest species total for any one day of the trip. We will take packed lunches from the ship and be out all day before returning to *Sea Cloud* in the late afternoon. Reached in an hour from Huelva, incredible Doñana National Park is widely recognized as one of Spain's best birding areas. Declared a national park in 1969 to protect the varied habitats of the Guadalquivir River ecosystem, Doñana received further protection in 1989 when the Spanish government established Doñana Natural Park as a surrounding buffer zone. Today, the two parks are managed as one under the authority of the regional government of Huelva.

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Doñana's location on the coast near the Strait of Gibraltar, in tandem with its large areas of protected land, make it a place of critical importance to birds year-round. Here, the impressive collection of marshes, shallow streams, and sand dunes provide habitat for some of the rarest breeding birds in southern Europe while more northerly breeding species use the park as a vital stopover site in the migration period. With more than 300 species of birds recorded in the area, Doñana is recognized as a Ramsar Convention Wetland of International Importance, an Audubon Important Bird Area (IBA), and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Beyond birds, Doñana protects important botanical communities featuring hundreds of species of Mediterranean plants, flowers, grasses, and trees, in addition to a suite of mammals including the rare Iberian Lynx.

The mosaic of habitats presents in Doñana and the surrounding areas provide excellent chances to record a high number of species. Greater Flamingo, Black-winged Stilt, Collared Pratincole, Whiskered Tern, Squacco Heron, Glossy Ibis, and Eurasian Spoonbill can be abundant while Red-crested Pochard, White-headed Duck, Red-knobbed Coot, Audouin's Gull, Little Bittern, Western Olivaceous Warbler, Western Subalpine Warbler, and the uncommon Red Kite are all present.



European Bee-eaters © Javier Pozo

We will explore a patchwork of wetlands and dry fields where we'll search for an assortment of other birds, with chances for Graylag Goose, Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, Pallid Swift, White Stork, Purple Heron, Short-toed Snake-Eagle, Montagu's Harrier, European Bee-eater, Greater and Lesser Short-toed larks, Crested Lark, and Western Yellow Wagtail (the Spanish race *iberiae*), among many other species possible.

NIGHT: Aboard *Sea Cloud*

April 21, Day 7: Cruising the Mediterranean Sea (Huelva to Motril via Gibraltar). Following two activity-filled days, we'll enjoy a relaxing day at sea today cruising toward Motril, our next port of call. Motril lies 215 nautical miles to the east—a considerable distance—and our route will take us along the length of the southern Iberian coast. A highlight will be a transit of the famous Strait of Gibraltar, at which time we'll enter the Mediterranean Sea.

Highlights:

- A relaxing day at sea
- Cruising through the Strait of Gibraltar
- Presentations by the *Sea Cloud* and VENT staffs
- Seabirding from the viewing decks

Once again, our time at sea affords a leisurely day in which we'll have options for activities and engagement, or simply catching up on some plain old rest and relaxation. There will be opportunities to attend presentations from Larry, Peter, and the *Sea Cloud* staff on various aspects of sailing, history, geography, or botany.

After cruising through the night, we will awake today likely still to the west of the Strait of Gibraltar. Depending on timing, our transit of the strait should occur in the daylight hours.

One of the more famous straits in the world, the Strait of Gibraltar is the narrow sea passage between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Less than nine miles in width, the strait is formed where the European and African continents almost touch. On the northern side of the strait are Spain and Gibraltar (a British overseas territory), while on the southern side are Morocco and Ceuta (the latter a Spanish autonomous city on the north coast of Africa). The strait is named for the famous Rock of Gibraltar, the limestone monolith that towers over the sea near the tip of the Iberian Peninsula. We should be able to see the Rock off to the north.



Strait of Gibraltar © Shutterstock

For the birders, today will again present opportunities for seawatching. West of the strait, this area of water is still characteristic of the open ocean, with a higher nutrient-load and more interchange in the water column than on the other side. Consequently, the birdlife is more diverse on this side of the strait and we will watch for a host of pelagic and near-shore species, a representation of which includes Cory's and Balearic shearwaters, Northern Gannet, Great Cormorant, European Shag, Great Skua, Parasitic Jaeger, and Yellow-legged, Lesser Black-backed, and Slender-billed Gulls. If the previous winter was good for *alcids*, we may even have a chance to encounter a few lingering Atlantic Puffins.

Additionally, the Strait of Gibraltar is a famous flyway for birds migrating north to Europe from Africa. The narrowness of the strait means that birds can pass over the sea here with less difficulty. For this reason, it is not uncommon to see landbirds over the open water. Fortunate is the observer who is here on a good day for migration when almost anything is possible including an array of doves, hawks, terns, swallows, and more. Among the tantalizing possibilities are European Turtle-Dove, Black and Whiskered terns, Short-toed Snake-Eagle, Common House-Martin, Red-rumped and Barn swallows, and Western Yellow Wagtail.

Upon clearing the strait, we will be in the Mediterranean Sea, where we will remain for the duration of the trip. The waters of the Med. are warmer and saltier than the Atlantic Ocean, a product of its near land-locked state. The birdlife, while still productive, experiences a drop-off in diversity. Regardless, we should still enjoy sightings of shearwaters and gulls. Balearic Shearwater is never seen with ease, but a few should be present, while our first "Scopoli's" Cory's Shearwaters should appear as well. Compared to the Cory's Shearwaters of the Atlantic Ocean, the birds of the Mediterranean display minor plumage differences and are regarded by many as a separate species.

NIGHT: Aboard *Sea Cloud*

April 22, Day 8: A day in Granada. After cruising through the night, *Sea Cloud* will enter the port of Motril around 7:00 a.m. Together, we'll disembark the ship around 8:00 a.m. for a day of sightseeing and history in the lovely city of Granada. The featured activity is a visit to the famed Alhambra, one of the top attractions in Spain. Our tour of Granada continues with a uniquely Spanish tapas lunch, served "cocktail style" featuring an array of hot and cold food items, followed by a walk through a section of the old Moorish quarter of the city, the Albaicín, before finishing at the Royal Chapel, interment site of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. We will return to the ship by 5:30 p.m.

Highlights:

- **Touring Granada and the famous Alhambra**

An overview of Granada:

Granada is the capital city of Granada province in the autonomous region of Andalusia. It is an ancient city whose origins date back to a Pre-Roman Iberian people who occupied the area in the early first millennium B.C. The history of Granada is defined in large part by its Muslim past when the region was under Moorish control from the early eighth century to the late fifteenth century. The Reconquista, or “reconquest,” that gradually led to the defeat of the Moors by Iberian Christians all over Spain finally reached Granada in 1492 when the Nasrid Dynasty under Muhammad XII surrendered to King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella I. The sixteenth century and later periods were marked by the dominance of the Catholic church when Jews and Muslims faced expulsions and forced conversions. Granada today is firmly Catholic with a population around 238,000.

Despite dark periods in the city’s history, Granada remains one of Spain’s most attractive and popular destinations. The Alhambra is the city’s signature draw as its size and beauty represent the pinnacle of Andalusian Islamic culture. Besides the Alhambra, Granada is home to a major university; a wealth of gardens, churches, and monuments; and perhaps Spain’s best-preserved Islamic historical legacy.

Alhambra

To say Granada is to say Alhambra, the magnificent fortified complex built of red stone. The Alhambra served as a palace, a fortress, and home of the Nasrid sultans during the Nasrid Dynasty (1238–1492), the last Islamic sultanate in the Iberian Peninsula.



La Alhambra, Granada © Shutterstock

The Nasrid Sultans chose Sabika Hill on the plain of Granada as the site for their court from which to keep watch over the capital of their kingdom and the surrounding area. The smaller older buildings (mainly watchtowers) that predated the Nasrids, were gradually morphed into a huge walled site intended for use as a palace and court. Thus became the Alhambra, and its grandeur only increased with the gradual addition of more palaces, fortifications, treasures, and gardens. Within these changes, different stages of development, grandeur and decadence can

clearly be seen through the various works of art and buildings erected over the years. The Alhambra was not a single static construction, but rather the result of an evolution, successive reforms and extensions.

Our guides will lead us inside the Alhambra and to the Nasrid Palaces, the official residence of the sultan and the harem, where intricately carved stucco walls, knotted ceilings, elaborate honeycomb vaulting, and beautiful courtyards await. We'll continue to the Generalife Palace and gardens, built as the summer paradise for the sultans of Granada. Its beautiful terraces, grottoes, flowerbeds, and fabulous fountains create an air of luxury once enjoyed by the Moorish inhabitants. From here there is a splendid view of the Sierra Nevada, the Darro Valley, the old quarter of Albaicín, and the Palace of the Alhambra.

Albaicín

Dating to at least the early eleventh century, the Albaicín is the medieval Moorish quarter of Granada that reached its zenith during the time of the Nasrid Dynasty. The Albaicín is one of the oldest centers of Muslim culture in Granada and, in addition to the Alhambra, contains a treasury of monuments from different periods including walls, towers, churches, minarets, and centuries old houses and palaces. We will walk through the "low" area of the quarter before arriving at the Royal Chapel.

Royal Chapel

The Royal Chapel, constructed on the former terrace of the Great Mosque of Granada, is the burial site of the Catholic Monarchs King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella I of Castile. The chapel is a work of considerable architectural interest as it combines Gothic and Renaissance styles as demonstrated in the workmanship of the tombs and the Chapel of Santa Cruz. The main points of interest are the tombs, main retablo (structure rising behind the main altar), vault, and the art gallery of the Sacristy-Museum. The Royal Chapel was declared a Historic Artistic Monument in 1884.

We'll return to the ship by 5:30 p.m.

NIGHT: Aboard *Sea Cloud*

April 23, Day 9: Half-day excursion options to Frigiliana-Nerja and foothills of the Sierra Nevada range; afternoon at sea. Following our time in Granada, we'll have an additional half of a day to explore this corner of Spain before reembarcating *Sea Cloud* in advance of an afternoon at sea. Participants may choose from two morning-long excursion options: a scenic driving and walking tour to the ancient villages of Frigiliana and Nerja, or a birdwatching trip in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. Both groups will be back on board the ship by 12:30 p.m.

Highlights:

- **Choose from two excursion options: a sightseeing tour along the coast to the villages of Frigiliana and Nerja; or join a morning of birdwatching in Sierra Nevada National Park**

Option #1: Frigiliana and Nerja

Depart 8:15 a.m.; return 12:30 p.m.

Departing from the port, we'll follow the beautiful coastline westward about forty-five minutes to the picturesque villages of Frigiliana and Nerja. This section of the coast is sometimes known as the "Tropical Coast," for its panoramic views and pleasing climate.

Frigiliana is a lovely white-walled village with narrow, well-kept streets. We'll enjoy a walking tour through the narrow streets of the old Arab quarter and also visit the ancient Church of San Antonio de Padua (outside visit only if it's closed). We may also stop at the ancient Sugar Cane Honey Factory dating back to the sixteenth century. This is the only factory of its kind still operating in Europe. Here, we'll have a chance to buy local products in the nearby shops.

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Nerja, once a sleepy fishing village, is today a popular tourist destination whose fame is due to the long stretches of powdery beaches and sparkling clear water that characterize this section of the coast. We'll visit Nerja's attractive old town quarter, with its narrow, winding streets and whitewashed houses. Impressive sites include Capistrano Playa and the ancient Roman aqueduct of Nerja.

Option #2: Birdwatching in the foothills and agricultural lands below the Sierra Nevada mountain range Depart 7:00 a.m.; return 12:30 p.m.

We will leave the ship a little earlier this morning to make the most of our limited time available. We should have time to visit two areas in the vicinity of the Sierra Nevada mountain range south and east of Granada, before returning to the ship. We will visit a site in the lowlands and one in the foothills. The Sierra Nevada range rises to over 11,000 feet and dominates the area around Granada and this corner of Spain.

We will be accompanied by a local guide who will advise on birding conditions prior to our arrival, thus specific birding sites will be determined at a later date. Regardless, being in this part of Spain during the migration period means that a host of excellent birding awaits. In the agricultural region a short distance southwest of Granada we could encounter a batch of exciting birds including European Turtle-Dove, Little Bustard, Eurasian Thick-knee, Common Buzzard, Little Owl, European Roller, Eurasian and Lesser kestrels, and Calandra Lark.

In our remaining time we will head a short distance northeast of Granada into the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains. Our destination is Canales Reservoir, a scenic artificial lake surrounded by rocky hillsides and pockets of trees and brush. From atop the dam we'll scour the skies and nearby hillsides for a variety of birds. The prize here is Black Wheatear, an endemic bird of the Iberian Peninsula, but other possibilities include Eurasian Jackdaw, Red-billed Chough, Eurasian Crag-Martin, Red-rumped Swallow, Sardinian Warbler and Blue Rock-Thrush.



Booted Eagle © Brian Gibbons

Everyone will be back on-board *Sea Cloud* by 12:30 p.m. in time for departure and lunch. Little, Common, and Sandwich terns are occasionally seen flying around the harbor.

At this point we will begin the voyage to Valencia, a distance of 315 nautical miles. The transit is lengthy and will require most of a day and a half to complete. Our route will take us east from Motril around the end of the Iberian Peninsula before tracing a northeast routing along the Spanish Riviera.

This afternoon will present opportunities to relax on board the ship, watch for birds from the viewing deck, and take in a presentation by Larry or Peter.

NIGHT: Aboard *Sea Cloud*

April 24, Day 10: Cruising the Mediterranean (Motril to Valencia). The cruise to Valencia will continue with a full day at sea.

Highlights:

- A relaxing final day at sea
- Presentations by the *Sea Cloud* and VENT staffs
- Seabirding from the viewing decks
- Captain's Farewell Dinner

As with our previous days at sea, we can spend the day as we wish, whether it be relaxing beneath *Sea Cloud's* towering masts, watching for birds from the ship's viewing decks, or taking in final presentations from Larry and Peter.

A shearwater of the eastern Mediterranean, the Yelkouan Shearwater, occurs here in small numbers among the more numerous Balearic and "Scopoli's" shearwaters. This species is a smaller relative of the Balearic Shearwater. In addition to its smaller size, it is separated from the former species in sporting a more boldly patterned black and white plumage and a faster flight style.



"Scopoli's" Cory's Shearwater © David Barton

At some point in the afternoon, we'll begin the disembarkation process in advance with the settling of shipboard accounts. Tonight, we'll bid farewell to the *Sea Cloud* and its crew with a Captain's Farewell dinner.

NIGHT: Aboard *Sea Cloud*

April 25, Day 11: Arrival in Valencia; disembarkation; departure for home. This morning marks the conclusion of our trip. All participants departing Valencia today will be transferred to Valencia Airport (airport code VLC) with plenty of time to check in for departing flights. Depending on our actual disembarkation time, we may have time for a short driving sightseeing tour of the city before arriving at the airport. **Departing flights should not be scheduled prior to 12:00 noon.**

Those continuing on with the Valencia extension will meet up with our local guide outside the port terminal. Information about this process will be provided in the itinerary for that program and in the departure materials prior to the start of the cruise.

SOUTHERN PORTUGAL PRE-TRIP

APRIL 9-17, 2024

Lying on the western edge of Europe's Iberian Peninsula, Portugal is a beautiful and popular travel destination rich in art, architecture, food, and landscapes. Bordered on two sides by water, Portugal sits at a geographic crossroads that both people and birds have found irresistible since time immemorial.

This land-based pre-trip to our Spain & Portugal cruise aboard the Sea Cloud visits some of the most important birding areas and landscapes of southern Portugal while providing exposure to some of the country's vivid history, shaped over thousands of years by the rising and falling tides of some of the world's greatest civilizations. Marvelous birding is assured, with good chances for a number of Europe's most special and highly sought birds, as are visits to famous historical sites.

We'll spend two days at the famous Tagus Estuary outside Lisbon, Portugal's premier location for waterfowl and shorebirds; we'll travel to the Alentejo region of the Portuguese interior where we'll seek a range of bustards, hawks, larks, and other open country birds amid rolling plains adorned with spring wildflowers and interspersed with Holm and Cork oaks and Olive trees; and we'll explore the granite hills and forests of the Guadiana Valley Natural Park where Spanish and Bonelli's eagles occur.

Our trip is timed for the height of spring migration and the onset of the breeding season. We anticipate encounters with a wonderful variety of birds, including Red-legged Partridge, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Great and Little bustards, Black Stork, Cinereous Vulture, Short-toed Snake-Eagle, Booted Eagle, many waterfowl and shorebirds, European Roller, Iberian Green Woodpecker, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Iberian Magpie, Iberian Chiffchaff, and many species of larks and wagtails.

Intermingled with our natural history pursuits will be a sampling of Portuguese history, a history populated with Phoenicians, Romans, Visigoths, Moors, Christian "Reconquistas," and the larger-than-life figures that appeared during the golden Age of Discovery. We'll be joined by licensed guides who will lead us on walking tours of historic Évora—A UNESCO World Heritage Site featuring a Roman temple and a medieval cathedral—and Mértola, where we'll visit a castle, the Islamic Quarter, and the museums of Islamic Art and Sacred Art. Complementing our days in the field will be opportunities to sample Portugal's culinary delights including its famous wines.



April 9–10, Days 1–2: Departure from USA for Portugal; arrival in Lisbon; transfer to hotel; evening welcome. Flights from the United States to Europe depart on Day 1 (April 9) generally in the late afternoon or early evening, and arrive Lisbon (Lisbon Airport, airport code LIS) on the morning of Day 2 (April 10) between 6:00–10:00 a.m. Upon arrival, you will be met by our local ground operator who will provide transfers to our hotel. Lisbon is a major metropolitan city but our accommodations for the next several nights, *Hotel Quinta da Praia das Fontes*, sits about 20–25 minutes outside the city-center in the picturesque town of Alcochete, and is right in the heart of the Tagus Estuary Nature Preserve, a major birding site where we will spend the next two days.

After settling in to our rooms, we'll spend most of the day relaxing and getting rested from the long international flight. We'll have lunch around midday in a local restaurant offering quality Portuguese fare, and then take off for most of the afternoon. Late in the day, we'll gather for a short and easy excursion to the nearby Tagus Estuary for our first look at Portuguese birds. We will return to the hotel with time to freshen up before reconvening for a trip welcome and orientation followed by dinner.

Note: This itinerary includes a very relaxed first day in Portugal whereby participants can recharge from the overnight flight and be better able to enjoy the activities to come. Anyone wanting more down time, or more time in Portugal than is included in the program, is encouraged to arrive a day or more earlier.

NIGHTS: Aboard aircraft in transit to Lisbon (April 9)
Hotel Quinta da Praia das Fontes, Alcochete (April 10)

April 11–12, Days 3–4: Tagus Estuary. Our immersion in Portuguese birding commences with two full days at the nearby Tagus Estuary Nature Preserve, one of the country's best known and most productive birding locations.

The complex of habitats encompassed within the Tagus Estuary constitutes not only one of Portugal's most important nature preserves, but one of the most vitally important wetland areas in Europe. Established in 1976 to protect the estuary of the Tagus River, the preserve covers 34,500 acres of habitat ranging from mudflats to saltmarsh, reedbeds, salt pans, arable land, rice fields and Cork Oak woodlands. With a close outlet to the Atlantic Ocean, the estuary survives under the influence of water brought in by the tide, as well as by freshwater creeks which crisscross the area.

The Tagus Estuary presents marvelous birding opportunities year-round. In the winter the preserve hosts tens of thousands of shorebirds and waterfowl, while the spring is a fantastic time to view migrating shorebirds, a host of herons, egrets and spoonbills, birds of prey, and breeding landbirds. Among the areas we'll visit are the Barroca d'Alva rice fields, salt pans of the Atalaya and Samouco, inter-tidal mudflats and salt marshes of Hortas, and other areas.



Purple Heron © Fáisca

The birding should be positively marvelous and we anticipate accruing a high diversity of birds. A representation of the many species possible here includes Greater Flamingo, Water Rail, Black-tailed Godwit, Dunlin, Green Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank, Common Greenshank, Common redshank, White Stork, Glossy Ibis, Booted Eagle, Black-winged and Black kites, Woodchat Shrike, Zitting Cisticola, Great Reed Warbler, Western Bonelli's Warbler, Short-toed Treecreeper, Spotless Starling, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, Western Yellow and White wagtails, and European Serin.

The greater preserve area is large enough that we can't possibly cover it all in one day, which is why we will spend a second day here. We'll want to take advantage of the cool morning hours to be out in the field early, visiting a host of other interesting sites including the open fields, salt marshes, and mudflats of the Ponta da Erva

area, and a colonial heron and spoonbill colony in the Tagus River. Among the many birds possible in these dynamic ecosystems are Common Shelduck, Black-winged Stilt, Curlew Sandpiper, Little Stint, Kentish Plover, Common Ringed Plover, Collared Pratincole, Gray and Purple herons, Great and Little egrets, Squacco Heron, Eurasian Spoonbill, Yellow-legged Gull, and Little and Whiskered terns.



Greater Flamingos and shorebirds, Hortas, Tagus Estuary © Faísca

At some point we'll visit the Pancas area where rocky terrain and mixed oak-scrub woodland may reveal a fine assortment of birds. Among the many possibilities are Common Cuckoo, Common and Pallid swifts, Whimbrel (Eurasian subspecies), Bar-tailed Godwit, Eurasian Hoopoe, Common Kingfisher, Iberian Gra and Woodchat shrikes, Eurasian Jay, Iberian Magpie, Greater Short-toed and Crested larks, Iberian Chiffchaff, Sardinian Warbler, Spotless Starling, Common Nightingale, Rock Petronia, and Cirl Bunting.

NIGHTS: Hotel Quinta da Praia das Fontes, Alcochete

April 13, Day 5: Travel to Alentejo region; historical tour of Évora; the rolling plains of Castro Verde. One of the many attractions of traveling in Portugal is that distances are not great. The entire country covers approximately 35,600 square miles, which places it on a par with the U.S. state of Maine. With our travel limited to the southern half of the country, a compact route means less time in transit.

Departing the Lisbon area this morning, the next stage of the tour begins as we transfer into the *Alentejo*, a pastoral and scenically pleasing region spanning the south-central part of the country. The origin of the name literally translates to “across the Tagus,” as it is the namesake river that divides this broad region from the rest of the country. Stretching from the Atlantic Ocean south of Lisbon east to the border with Spain, the *Alentejo* is a land of high topographic variability. It is perhaps best known for its expansive landscapes, namely the rolling plains of Castro Verde, typified by gently contoured hills and vast stretches of “pseudo-steppe” covered in a mix of grasslands, farmlands, and groves of Olive trees and Holm and Cork oaks. Elsewhere, especially in the vicinity of

the border, the Guadiana Valley is more rugged, granite bearing country where the landscape of scrub covered hills is etched by ravines, gullies, and rocky rivers. The *Alentejo* is also a major food-growing area and is sometimes referred to as the “breadbasket of Portugal.” The municipality of Évora is a prominent center of human activity in the *Alentejo* and boasts world-class historical and archaeological sites.

Our destination this morning is Évora, situated across the Tagus River a mere one-hour drive from the hotel. We will spend the first part of the day in the company of a local guide enjoying a tour of the city’s best-known landmarks.

Branded as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Évora is the proud owner of a rich heritage that spans every period in Portuguese history. An important megalithic monument is located west of the city, such as the Almendres Cromlech, dating back 8,000 years, while the Roman Temple of Évora and the Cathedral of Évora are evidence of the presence of progressively advanced civilizations.

Our tour of Évora will start from Praça do Giraldo in the heart of the city, from which we’ll wander through the narrow cobble-stone streets to the aforementioned cathedral, the largest medieval cathedral in Portugal, dating from the 12th century A.D. We’ll then visit the Roman Temple, the most prominent structure in town, before heading on to the beautiful Portas de Moura (gates of Moura), the church of São Francisco and the remarkable Capela dos Ossos (Bone Chapel).



Roman Ruins, Évora © Birds and Nature Tours

After lunch in the city we’ll head southeast to the pretty town of Mértola, overlooking the scenic Guadiana River. On the way to Mértola and before we check-in at the *Hotel Museu*, our home

for the next three nights, we shall cross the rolling plains of Castro Verde, providing the first opportunity to see open country birds such as Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Great and Little bustards, Montagu’s Harrier, European Roller, and Lesser Kestrel.

NIGHT: Hotel Museu, Mértola

April 14–15, Days 6–7: Guadiana Valley Nature Park and the rolling plains of Castro Verde. We will spend two full days exploring the verdant Portuguese countryside from the Guadiana Valley to the rolling plains of Castro Verde. Taken as a whole, this region is arguably the single greatest birding area in Portugal, where sandgrouse, bustards, raptors, storks, and a broad array of seasonal and resident birds signify the halcyon days of spring. On the first day we will visit the Guadiana Valley Nature Park before redirecting our explorations to the Castro Verde region where we will spend the following day.

Situated in close proximity to the Spanish border, the Guadiana Valley is a scenic and bird-productive natural reserve typified by rolling hills punctuated by bluffs, rocky outcrops and occasional rivers. This country is not as gentle as the landscapes to the west, but it is this slightly rugged terrain that supports a range of very special birds. Raptors are common and conspicuous here while the brush-covered hills and ravines host a range of Mediterranean and Iberian specialty birds. Some of the birds possible, even likely here are Red-legged Partridge, Black Stork, Iberian Gray Shrike, Eurasian Jackdaw, Thekla Lark, Crag-Martin, Cetti’s Warbler, Western Subalpine and Dartford warblers, Black Redstart, Blue Rock Thrush, Gray Wagtail, and Rock Bunting.

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When not scouring the surrounding vegetation, we'll keep an eye to the sky as we are likely to spot European Honey-buzzard, Cinereous Vulture, Eurasian Griffon, Short-toed Snake-Eagle, Golden and Bonelli's eagles (the latter species always a treat to see as it has declined broadly across much of its European range), and Black Kite.

To the west of Mértola, the Castro Verde region is one of open "pseudo-steppe" peppered with small towns and villages. Much of the countryside is a mix of native grasslands, pasturelands, and farms spread over approximately 220 square miles. So important is this area that it is classified as a Special Protection Area for birds. It is not hyperbole to refer to the birdlife here as amazing. Great and Little bustards thrive in the rolling countryside; White Storks nest atop power poles; Iberian Magpie is a common roadside bird; Lesser Kestrels are abundant at colonial nest sites; and the skies are patrolled by Cinereous Vultures and Eurasian Griffons. The Spanish Eagle is also found here and we'll likely have opportunities to study this resplendent bird of prey. Until the last decade, the Spanish Eagle was a bird in dramatic decline and had all but disappeared from Portugal. Thanks to intensive conservation efforts, the bird's slide has been halted and is now seen in Portugal again in increasing numbers.



Great Bustards, Plains of Castro Verde © Faísca

Green Woodpecker, Iberian Gray Shrike, Calandra and Wood larks, Red-rumped Swallow, Western Orphea and Western Subalpine warblers, European Stonechat, Western Black-eared Wheatear, Spanish Sparrow, and Tawny Pipit.

NIGHT: Hotel Museu, Mértola

April 16, Day 8: Historical tour of Mértola; return to Lisbon. We'll leave the *Alentejo* today for the return trip to Lisbon. Before departing, however, we will partake in a morning-long sightseeing and historical tour of Mértola.

The ancient city of Mértola has been inhabited from time immemorial. Situated at the head of navigability of the Guadiana River, Mértola was for many centuries a site of vital strategic importance, offering control of Mediterranean trade routes and access into the interior. Iberians, Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, and Moors all had their time here.

Our walking tour will take us first to the Mother Church (the former Mosque), then to the acropolis and Islamic quarters. From there we'll ascend to the castle, then on to the old blacksmith's forge before concluding with visits (time permitting) to the Islamic Art Museum, the Sacred Art Museum, and the Roman House.

Depending on timing, and birds still to seek, we may include a final visit to Guadiana Valley Nature Park or other nearby areas before continuing on to Lisbon.

The pre-trip ends upon arrival at the hotel in Lisbon, no later than 3:30 p.m. We will have the remainder of the afternoon to break prior to meeting the other cruise passengers early this evening.

NIGHT: Four Seasons Hotel Ritz, Lisbon

We'll also anticipate an array of regional specialty birds among the more widespread species. Some of these are conspicuous and easily seen while others will require considerably more effort to find. A sampling of some of the higher profile birds we'll seek includes Red-crested Pochard, Great Crested Grebe, European Turtle-Dove, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Eurasian Thick-knee, Little Ringed Plover, Montagu's Harrier, Red Kite, Eurasian Eagle-Owl, Eurasian Hoopoe, European Bee-eater, European Roller, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Iberian

April 17, Day 9: Departure for Home. For those not continuing to the *Sea Cloud* cruise can schedule departing flights anytime today.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least three 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.

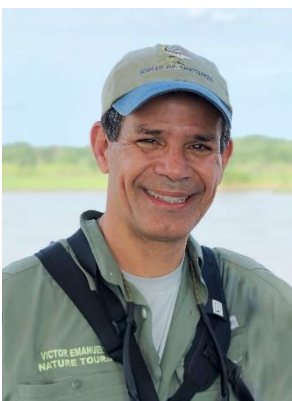
MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT: This tour visits remote locations where immediate access to primary medical care may **NOT** be available. **For this reason, travel insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation is required for participation on this tour.** This coverage is included in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

TOUR SIZE: We have chartered the *Sea Cloud* exclusively for VENT travelers and will be limited to 54 tour participants. The Southern Portugal Pre-trip will be limited to 14 tour participants.

TOUR LEADERS: **Barry Lyon, David Ascanio, Peter Zika, Larry Wolf, and Perri Klass** will lead the cruise. **João Jara** and a local guide will lead the Southern Portugal pre-trip.



Barry Lyon’s passion for the outdoors and birding has its roots in his childhood in southern California. During his teenage years, he attended several VENT/ABA youth birding camps, which ultimately led to his future involvement with Victor Emanuel Nature Tours. He holds a B.A. from the University of Arizona at Tucson where he studied history and political science, with an emphasis on environment and development politics. Barry joined the VENT team as a tour leader in 1995 and embarked on a travel-based career that has taken him to an array of worldwide destinations. He has lived in Austin, Texas since 2004 when he joined our office staff as an assistant to company president Victor Emanuel. In 2014 he was named Chief Operating Officer (COO), reflecting his increased experience and responsibilities. These days, his work is geared primarily toward the company’s business side and management, although he continues to lead a few tours annually. Barry’s background and his knowledge of natural history have provided him with a strong interest in conservation. He is a former board member and past president of Travis Audubon Society, which emphasizes conservation through birding and outdoor education for children. Barry resides in South Austin with his wife, Brooke Smith.



David Ascanio, a Venezuelan birder and naturalist, has spent 36 years guiding birding tours throughout his native country, Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Costa Rica, the Orinoco and Amazon river basins, Trinidad & Tobago, Suriname, the Guianas, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, the Lesser Antilles, Cuba, Chile, and Panama. He is especially interested in bird vocalizations and has a private library containing voices of more than 70% of all the birds of Venezuela. David combines superb birding skills with an astonishing command of bird vocalizations. He has published a book for children about bird songs and coauthored the descriptions of two new species, the Rio Orinoco Spinetail and the Delta Amacuro Softtail. David has also published numerous papers about the birds of the llanos (plains), Orinoco River Island species, and the pan-tepui endemic species on which he has become an authority. He is the senior author of the *Field Guide to the Birds of Venezuela* (2017). David is an excellent communicator, has a great sense of humor, and is tireless in helping others find birds and wildlife. These traits have made him one of the most popular naturalists and guides in the Neotropics.



Peter Zika is a field biologist from Seattle, investigating and describing new species of plants from western North America. Working at the herbarium of the University of Washington, he is writing several chapters for new books on the plants of California, the Pacific Northwest, and the flora of North America, as well as conducting biological inventories of National Parks and Nature Conservancy preserves, studying interactions between noxious weeds and native wildlife, and researching the diet of fruit-eating birds. His interests in ecology have led him across the Tropics and into Polar Regions for the last 25 years. In addition to teaching wetland plant identification, he serves as a ship's naturalist on all oceans and continents. Peter has published more than 100 scientific notes, articles, and books, as well as occasional photographs, cards, and reviews in the popular press.



Larry Wolff is the Silver Professor of European History at New York University and Director of the Center for European and Mediterranean Studies at NYU. He received his B.A. from Harvard and his Ph.D. from Stanford. With particular interests in Eastern Europe and Mediterranean Europe, his books, which have been widely translated into foreign languages, include *Inventing Eastern Europe* (1994), *Venice and the Slavs: The Discovery of Dalmatia in the Age of Enlightenment* (2001), and *Paolina's Innocence: Child Abuse in Casanova's Venice* (2012). His newest book is *The Singing Turk: Ottoman Power and Operatic Emotions on the European Stage from the Siege of Vienna to the Age of Napoleon* (2016). Larry is a member of the American Academy of Arts and

Sciences and has traveled as a lecturer with cruises in the Adriatic and around the Mediterranean. He lived for many years in Boston and now lives in New York City with his wife, Perri Klass, the well-known doctor and writer.



Perri Klass, MD, is Professor of Journalism and Pediatrics at New York University, where she is Director of the Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute. She attended Harvard Medical School and completed her residency in pediatrics at Children's Hospital, Boston. Dr. Klass has written extensively about medicine, children, literacy, and knitting. Her nonfiction includes *Every Mother is a Daughter: the Neverending Quest for Success, Inner Peace, and a Really Clean Kitchen*, which she coauthored with her mother, and *Quirky Kids: Understanding and Helping Your Child Who Doesn't Fit In*, which she coauthored with Eileen Costello, M.D. Her most recent books are *Treatment Kind and Fair: Letters to a Young Doctor*, and *The Mercy Rule*, a novel. She writes the regular column, "The Checkup," for *The New York Times*. Dr. Klass is the National Medical Director of Reach Out and Read, a

program through which pediatricians promote parents reading aloud to young children, providing guidance and books to more than 4.5 million children and their families every year.



João Jara was born in Lisbon and studied biology at the Faculdade de Ciências de Lisboa, where he developed his professional career in the pharmaceutical industry as senior manager and director of various multinational companies. With some 35 years of field experience, João has an intimate knowledge of the birds and birding in Portugal. He has traveled extensively in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas with birding as the main objective. João was a member of the board of SPEA (Birdlife in Portugal) and was a voting member of the Portuguese Rarities Committee from 2005 until 2011 and chairman of the committee from 2007 until 2011. Author and co-author of articles about birds,

João has led many tours (in Portugal, Spain, and other destinations), as well as bird identification courses. In 2008, he launched the first Portuguese company totally dedicated to the organization of birdwatching tours, Birds & Nature Tours Portugal; João manages the company and also guides many of its tours. Besides birds, he has an active special interest in amphibians, reptiles, and fish.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Cabin prices quoted are per person based on double occupancy and include port taxes. Cabins will be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. A limited number of single cabins are available as quoted below. Once those are taken, single accommodation will be 1.6 times the double rate.

Category A: (Owner's Suites)	Cabins #1-2	\$20,470
Category B: (Deluxe Original Cabins)	Cabins #3-10	\$18,370
Category 1:	Cabins #30-31	\$15,220
Category 2:	Cabins #32-37	\$14,695
Category 3:	Cabins #18-25	\$13,120
Category 4:	Cabins #28-29	\$12,595
Category 5: (Singles)	Cabins #14-17,	\$16,375

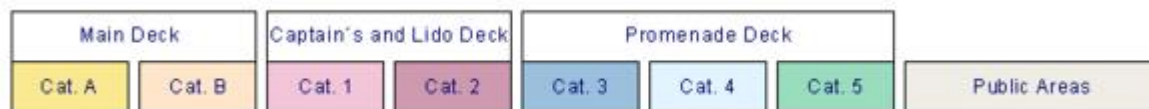
Included in the cruise program:

- Land-based accommodations as stated in the itinerary; 1 night in Lisbon (Day 2)
- 8 nights (Days 3-10) aboard the *Sea Cloud*
- All shore excursions and tours as described in the itinerary
- Non-ship meals from dinner in Lisbon (Day 2) through lunch the next day (Day 3)
- All ship-board meals, including non-alcoholic beverages, from dinner on Day 3 through breakfast on Day 11; select beer and wine at lunch and dinner
- All land transportation including transfers in Lisbon between airport to group hotel upon arrival, from the dock to the airport upon disembarkation, and transfers for all shore excursions during the cruise
- Services of VENT leaders and local guides
- Entrance fees to archaeological sites and museums
- Gratuities to the local guides, drivers, ship staff and crew
- Baggage handling

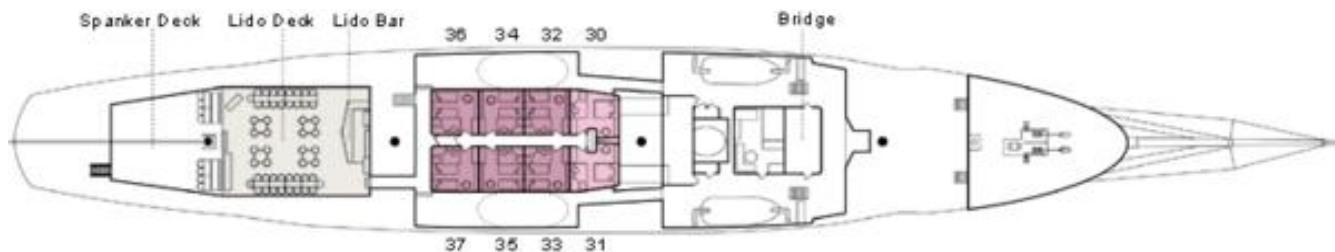
Not included in the cruise program:

- All air travel
- Passport fees
- Hotel accommodations prior to Day 2 and after Day 10
- Meals prior to dinner on Day 2 and after breakfast on Day 11
- Lunch in Seville on Day 5 (on your own)
- Alcoholic beverages except for select beers and wines available during lunch and dinner
- Laundry, postage, telephone calls, internet usage, or other items of a personal nature
- Travel insurance
- Fuel or exchange rate surcharges
- Excess baggage charges
- Passport or Visa charges
- Airport departure taxes (if applicable)
- Gratuities to VENT leaders (optional)

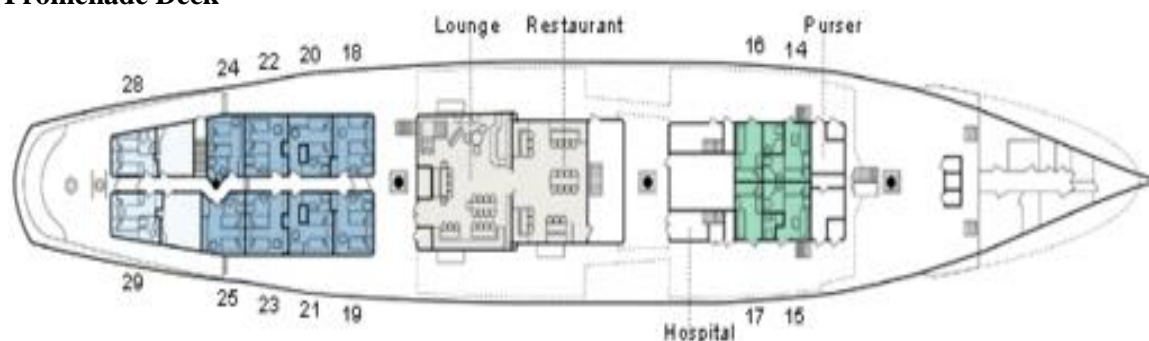
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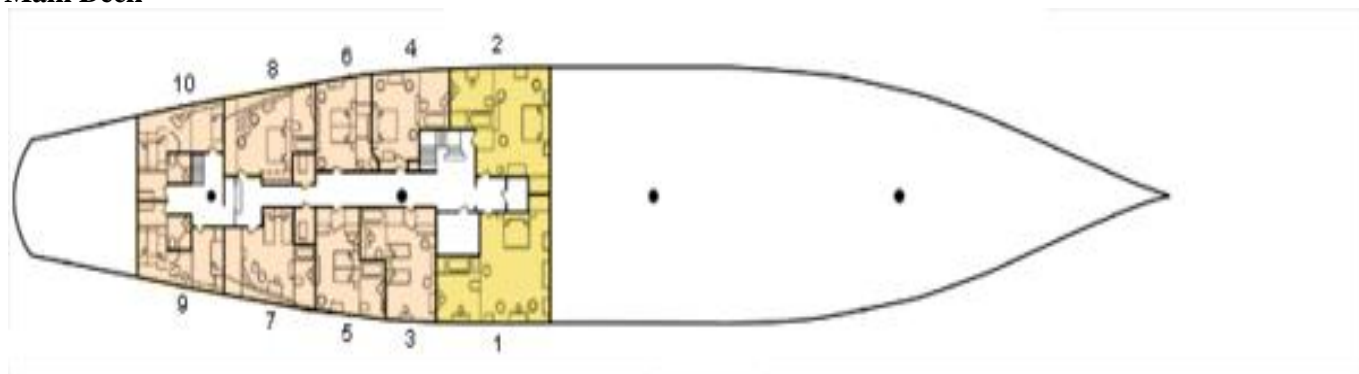
Captain's and Lido Deck



Promenade Deck



Main Deck



SOUTHERN PORTUGAL PRE-TRIP INFORMATION

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for Southern Portugal Pre-trip is **\$5245** per person in double occupancy. The single supplement is **\$655**. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the group does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement may be applied.

Included in your pre-trip fee:

- Hotel accommodations for six nights: days 2-4 in Alcochete; days 5-7 in Mertola
- All meals from dinner on day 2 to lunch on day 8
- Land transfers including airport to hotel on day 1 and land transportation during the tour
- Guide services provided by leaders and drivers (including gratuities for the drivers)
- Entrance fees

Not included in your pre-trip fee:

- International roundtrip airfare from your home to Lisbon and return
- Transfers or accommodations other than those stated in the itinerary
- Meals before dinner on day 2 or after lunch on day 8
- Insurance for baggage loss, accident, evacuation, or trip cancellation
- International or domestic departure taxes
- Items of a personal nature including phone calls, laundry, postage, emails, and alcoholic beverages.
- Gratuities to leaders (optional)

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. A deposit of **\$2,000** is required to reserve a space on the Spain & Portugal Cruise aboard the *Sea Cloud*. A second deposit of **\$3,000** is due 210 days prior to departure (September 18, 2023). The balance of the fee is due 150 days prior to departure (November 17, 2023). The deposit for the Southern Portugal 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 **www.ventbird.com**) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

This cruise is designed for persons in reasonably good health. By forwarding the expedition deposit, you certify that you do not have a physical condition or disability which would create a hazard to you or other passengers. VENT reserves the right to decline to accept or retain you or other passengers should your health, actions, or general deportment impede the operations of the expedition or the rights, welfare, or enjoyment of other passengers.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:

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.

CRUISE CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS: Cancellation by Participant

Of the initial deposit, **\$1000** is non-refundable if cancellation occurs up to 210 days prior to the departure date. For cancellations that occur between 209 and 151 days, both deposits are non-refundable; cancellations within 150 days of the departure date are 100% non-refundable whether previously paid or not. Any refunds will be

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reduced by applicable airline cancellation penalties. No refunds will be made in the event of “no shows” or cancellations made on the day of sailing.

If you cancel:

210 days or more before departure date
Between 209 and 151 days before departure
Fewer than 150 days before departure date

Your refund will be:

Your deposit minus \$1000
No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance will be refunded
No refund available

SOUTHERN PORTUGAL PRE-TRIP 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.

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.

Due to the nature of the expedition, weather conditions or government regulations may require changes to be made to the itinerary and/or the cancellation of certain shore excursions. Every attempt will be made to adhere to the itinerary described within the limits of safety and time. In the event of changes, passengers have no right to any refund or other compensation. Expedition fees are based on group participation. Should you choose not to take part in any activity or make use of services provided, no refund will be made.

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.

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.

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.

CRUISE CONDITIONS:

The program – Your trip to Portugal and Spain will be a relaxing and evenly paced, but full, travel experience in which visits to famous archaeological sites, guided tours, and cruising the Mediterranean Sea are offered in tandem with birding and natural history activities. This trip offers an abundance of cultural, historical, and anthropological experiences in addition to being a birding trip, and participants should strongly consider this point before registering.

Because we intend for this program to appeal to anyone, we emphasize that the birding portions of the trip are optional. Participants whose main interest is the history and culture do not need to be birders to enjoy this trip or to participate in the birding portions of the itinerary. Similarly, birdwatching activities will be available as alternatives to the sightseeing options on several days during the cruise.

Our time off the ship includes walking tours in cities and towns and visits to major historical sites and birding areas. Depending on one's abilities, physical demands will be easy to moderate. Our activities in Lisbon, Seville, and Granada may involve a lot of walking and standing. These cities are ancient and characterized in many places by uneven streets and sidewalks, cobblestone streets and paths, and staircases. All walking will be done at a moderate pace. **Please take these points into account prior to registering to make sure that this tour is appropriate for you.**

This program includes three full days at sea. Interspersed between the sea days are four days of land excursions. For days with land excursions, our routine will usually involve breakfast on board between 6:30-8:00 a.m., followed by disembarkation of the ship for transfers to the historical, cultural, and birding sites. Our land excursions will occur in three main cities and nearby areas: Lisbon, Seville/Huelva, and Granada/Motril.

Our time in Lisbon, on the trip's first full day, will include most of a day of touring and sightseeing on foot and by bus prior to embarking the *Sea Cloud* in the late afternoon.

We will have two days in the Seville and Huelva areas for historical and cultural excursions, birding options, or a combination of the two. Those participating on the excursion to Seville on day 5 will have lunch in the city. Those who opt for the birding excursions to Doñana National Park and nearby areas will carry pack lunches from the ship. Both groups will be away from the ship all day.

In the Granada area will have a day and a half for historical and cultural excursions, a birding option, or a combination of the two. Similar to the plans for our time in Seville, the one full day we'll have for the Granada area will entail a full day in the city, including lunch, without returning to the ship until late afternoon. **NOTE:**

The feature activity in Granada is a visit to the world-famous Alhambra. At the time of this writing (June 2023), we are not able to confirm the precise timing for our visit to the site, a matter that is attributable to the complicated reservation system administered by the government. Final plans will not be available until approximately four months prior to departure. Participants should be aware that all activity options will ultimately be determined by our visit time to the Alhambra.

Dinner will be at 7:00-7:30 p.m. on most nights.

The ship – Considered a masterpiece of shipbuilding, the four-masted *Sea Cloud* is widely regarded as the world's most beautiful sailing vessel. Her towering masts, full rigging, and polished wooden decks are testament to her unparalleled beauty. *Sea Cloud* offers 32 cabins that host a maximum of 64 passengers. All cabins are immaculately appointed, elegantly designed, and contain private facilities, telephones, and a small safe. The below deck cabins, #1 through #10, date from the ship's original construction; each feature individual design and decoration, ornate furniture, walk-in closets, expanded bathroom areas, and large windows. Public areas include a formal restaurant, expansive spanker (viewing) deck, lido deck (with canopy), and lido bar. Other amenities include a gift boutique and a passenger communications system comprised of direct-dial satellite telephone, GSM cellular phone service, fax, email, and internet access.

Technical Information:

- **Built:** 1931
- **Length:** 360 feet; **Beam:** 50 feet; **Draft:** 17 feet
- **Gross Tonnage:** 2,532
- **Engines:** 2 SKL Diesel engines
- **Total Sail Area:** 32,000 sq. ft.
- **Number of Sails:** 30
- **Speed:** 10 knots
- **Crew:** 60
- **Flag:** Malta

Dining – Sea Cloud's restaurant offers a relaxed atmosphere amid handsome surroundings. Carefully crafted and finely styled, the dining room's decoration includes natural wood adornment, a fire place, wall paper, and chandelier lighting. The sizeable double dining room comfortably seats all passengers in single seating for all meals, with tables unassigned. The chefs can prepare food according to special dietary needs, provided we receive sufficient notice. **Please advise the VENT office of any special needs at the time of registration.** Breakfast consists of a full buffet and an option to order from the menu; several meal options are available every day for lunch and dinner, including a vegetarian plate. All meals are served with complimentary coffee, tea, bottled water, juice, soft drinks, and select beers and wines.

While at sea – While cruising at sea, you'll have options to join your leaders on the viewing decks for sea watching or remain inside and relax in the passenger lounge or your cabin. On no days will we be far from shore, and therefore we expect smooth seas. Wind is an unpredictable variable and participants should expect a variety of conditions ranging from still and clam to breezy and windy. If we are cruising into a headwind, we should be prepared for rougher seas. The occurrence of a cold front can herald periods of cool temperatures and rain.

While on land – Walking conditions on land are generally not difficult, yet it is important to pay close attention to footing and terrain. On shore excursions and walking tours in Lisbon, Seville, and Granada, we'll visit many important historical and cultural sites. Walking and standing, sometimes for long periods, will be required at all of the places we visit. Additionally, these cities are very old, the streets and sidewalks of which may be uneven, thus presenting obstacles for those who have trouble walking or who have balance issues. Birding outings in all places will involve light walking over easy to moderate terrain.

Extra time in Portugal and Spain – In Portugal, Lisbon is a large and wonderfully historic city rich in historical and architectural attractions, in addition to serving as the gateway to other parts of the country. Our program includes a “highlights” tour of Lisbon that will last much of the day (Day 3) prior to embarkation of the *Sea Cloud*. Because there is so much more to see and experience in the Portuguese capital outside the stated program, those with an interest in experiencing more of the city or other parts of Portugal should consider the following options: 1) Arrive early and see more on their own, or 2) Join the **Southern Portugal Pre-trip**.

The bulk of the program operates in Spain and includes visits to many historical sites and a couple of the best birding areas around Seville and Granada, respectively. Although the program concludes in Valencia, our itinerary does not include time there. Participants with an interest in experiencing Valencia, or other parts of Spain, should consider spending additional time on their own after the cruise or join the **Valencia Extension**.

SOUTHERN PORTUGAL PRE-TRIP CONDITIONS: Your trip to southern Portugal will be a birding and natural history-based experience infused with a couple of guided tours to famous archaeological sites and historic landmarks. While our program includes plenty of time in prime birding areas, it gives nod to Portugal’s rich history and anthropology, and participants should strongly consider this point before registering. Most days will be dedicated primarily to birding and natural history pursuits while two days will contain a mix of birding and sightseeing. For our sightseeing endeavors, we will be joined by licensed local guides who will provide expert interpretation.

Physical demands will be easy to moderate, but please bear in mind that some of our historical tours and stops may involve a moderate amount of walking and standing. We emphasize that no one will be subjected to physical demands that exceed their capabilities. All walking will be done at a slow pace.

As is often the case when traveling in Europe, meals are taken later in the day in Portugal than in the United States. Breakfast is not always available before 7:30 a.m. while dinner is not generally available before 7:00 p.m.

Travel will be aboard nine-seat vehicles.

COMMUNICATIONS / INTERNET SERVICE:

Phone/Fax: The vessel is equipped with both a Satcom B satellite system and a GSM cellular system, either of which can access outgoing calls from your stateroom. Incoming calls and faxes are received via the satellite system due to the inherent range limitations of the GSM system.

Phone #: +871 – 3 256 084 10
Fax #: +871 – 3 256 084 11

GSM cellular costs approximately 3 Euros per minute and is available in European waters and near French islands in the Caribbean. Satellite communication costs approximately 5 Euros per minute and is available in all cruising areas.

Internet/Email: The ship provides a laptop computer station available for passenger use. The vessel can be reached via on-board email address at Seacloud@seacloud.com. Please advise your friends and family to send “text only” messages (no photos or HTML) when sending email to the ship’s address. Also, cabin number and name should be used as reference. Please note that messages sent to the vessel are generally limited to 50 KB for each message and could possibly be rejected automatically by the system if the message exceeds this file size. For outgoing email, messages up to a file size of 50 KB are free of charge. The cost of sending messages that exceed 50 KB will be charged to your shipboard account. For incoming email, messages up to a file size of 50 KB are free of charge. The cost of receiving messages that exceed 50KB, are applicable and will be charged to your shipboard account. Internet access is available at an extra charge.

CLIMATE & WEATHER:**Cruise:**

April is one of the better months to travel in Portugal and Spain. The long hot days that characterize the summer months are still a long way off and the likelihood of a late cold front diminishes by the day. Our time will be spent either at sea in close proximity to the coast, where daytime temperatures average in the upper 60s/low 70s (°F), or on land excursions about an hour inland where daytime temperatures average a couple of degrees warmer. Night and morning temperatures may fall to the low-50s. While pleasant conditions are anticipated, we should also be prepared for the possibility of an early heat wave or a spring cold front. With the former, temperatures can reach the high 80s and feel hot. In the case of a cold front, particularly a strong one, the weather can turn poor with wind, cold rain, and temperatures in the 40s.

Pre-trip:

All of our time will be spent in the southern half of the country where our tour route will range from Lisbon to the interior on the Spanish border and back. Daytime temperatures average from the high 60s—mid 70s (F°) but could rise into the 80s. Sea-breezes have a cooling effect along the coast and these areas will be a few degrees cooler than interior regions. Night and morning temperatures may dip to the low-50s. Precipitation in the form of rain, related to a late cold front, is possible, as is an early season heat wave. Overall, participants should be prepared for mild days and cool to cold nights and early mornings.

BAGGAGE: The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, essential toiletries, medications, a change of clothing, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag. 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/>

CLOTHING: As this trip combines birding with interpretive walking tours and leisure cruising, you will want to pack a mix of clothing that prepares you for all activities. The following items are recommended:

- **Pants and Shorts:** A couple pairs of pants and shorts each are recommended. Many people prefer lightweight pants made of cotton or other material, but denim, though not as comfortable, is certainly acceptable. Shorts will be desirable for warmer times of day and when cruising.
- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI carry field clothing that many birders find appealing. Pants and shirts made of lightweight, yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular and more reasonably priced than in the past.
- **Shirts:** Several t-shirts, (long and short-sleeved), in addition to other comfortable styles suitable for warm weather.
- **Hat:** For protection from the sun is essential.
- **Evening Wear:** The atmosphere aboard *Sea Cloud* is casual, but women and men should strongly consider packing some Smart Casual attire for evenings and dressier occasions, such as the Captain's Welcome and Farewell cocktail receptions. For women this includes casual dresses or skirt/slacks ensembles. For men this includes khakis/slacks and open-collared shirts. Men may choose to wear a sports jacket and tie for dressier evenings. The degree of dress is also in accordance with your personal preference.
- **Sweaters and Coats:** Mild weather is expected on this trip, but **a warm jacket or coat is strongly recommended in the event of a cold front or strong wind.**
- **Other cold weather gear:** Temperatures could drop into the low 50s, even 40s, as a result of a cold front. For this reason, we recommend bringing gloves and a knit hat, particularly for the morning hours.

FOOTWEAR: A lightweight hiking boot or trail shoe is recommended for birding excursions during the cruise and pre-trip. Athletic shoes are acceptable but will not keep your feet dry and can become soiled from muddy conditions. For other situations, like walking tours in cities and time on board the ship, you may prefer sandals and/or athletic shoes. Dress shoes will be appropriate for some evenings.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is provided by the ship staff for an extra charge. Please check with the staff upon embarkation for procedures and turnaround time.

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

- **Backpack** – Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment during all land excursions
- **Umbrella** – You should consider bringing a small collapsible umbrella in case we are outside in light rain.
- **Notebooks and pens**
- **Travel alarm clock**
- **Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection**
- **Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions**
- **Personal toiletries**
- **Cameras, lenses, film, memory cards, and extra batteries**
- **Plug adapters** – See ELECTRICITY below
- **Collapsible walking stick** – A highly recommended item for those who have trouble walking
- **Tissue packs**

BINOCULARS & SPOTTING SCOPES:

Binoculars – We strongly recommend good binoculars of at least 7x35, 8x42, 10x40, or 10x42 magnification. We recommend that you do NOT bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. Trying to find a bird in your binoculars using minis is like trying to read a book through a keyhole. You will be very frustrated, and even if you do manage to get the bird in your binoculars before it flies, you will have a poor view. You will find that 7x35 or 8x42 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Spotting Scopes – Your tour leaders will have scopes available for group use throughout the cruise and pre-trip. Note that if you have a personal scope and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:

PASSPORTS - A valid passport is required. Please check the expiration date on your passport. **If it is not valid for at least six months after your trip return date, you will need to get it renewed.** You will also want to make sure that you have at least two blank pages in your passport for stamps.

If you need a passport, you should get it well in advance of your trip departure date. For additional fees, a passport can be issued on an expedited basis. In the United States this can be done at the nearest passport office, most post offices, or the county clerk's office. You may also visit [**www.state.gov/travel/**](http://www.state.gov/travel/) for information on how to get or renew a passport.

As a safety measure, photocopy the first two pages of your passport. Keep the photocopies in a safe place, so if your passport is lost you will have proof of identification. Your passport should be signed and easily available at all times. You will need it for check-in at the airport on your first day of departure, so **do not pack it in your checked luggage.**

On board ship, it is customary for the purser to hold all passports for clearance with port authorities. Your passport will be collected upon embarkation and returned prior to disembarkation.

VISAS - Citizens of the United States and Canada do not need to obtain a tourist visa to enter Portugal or Spain. Rules and regulations pertaining to non-U.S. and Canadian citizens may vary; please check with the Portuguese and Spanish consulates or embassies.

CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS: Your trip to Portugal and Spain includes most necessary expenses. While U.S. dollars might be accepted in large cities and shops, it is always convenient to have a supply of local currency for such items as taxi rides, gifts, off-ship refreshments, laundry tips, meals on your own, optional gratuities for the ship's staff and crew, and any personal items. Off the ship, many businesses, if not most, accept major credit cards.

The official currency of Portugal and Spain is the Euro (EUR). You can check the latest currency conversion rate by visiting "XE-The World's Favorite Currency Site" at: <http://www.xe.com/>.

Upon embarkation, a shipboard account will be opened for your convenience. The Euro is the official currency on board. Credit cards, including Visa, MasterCard, and American Express, are accepted for expenses on board that may be paid/settled at the end of the cruise. Traveler's checks are accepted/exchanged at their official exchange rate. Note that it may not always be possible to make change for travelers' checks or cash in large denominations; the purser would appreciate the use of Euros, if paying by cash, in smaller denominations for settlement of your shipboard account.

There is no facility on board for exchanging U.S. dollars into Euros. It is best to acquire this currency either before leaving the U.S. or at the airport or a bank in Lisbon. Small denominations of cash are always best as it is easier for individuals and businesses to provide change. Should you extend your trip beyond the length of the cruise program, you should strongly consider obtaining Euros. ATM machines can be found in large cities and in some towns; you shouldn't have problems using major cards in hotels, restaurants, and shops. Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

ELECTRICITY: Power on board the *Sea Cloud* is 220V, with the recessed outlets of the round, two-pronged European type. If you plan to use American standard 110V equipment with the flat-pronged plugs, you might need to bring an all-purpose transformer to convert the current for 110V use (unless you are certain that your equipment can handle 220V), in addition to a European-type adapter plug. Power in Portugal is 230V. Electrical outlets conform to Types C & F (Europlug and Schuko plug, respectively), both with a two-round-pin formation. Likewise, a plug-adapter will be necessary

LANGUAGE: Portuguese and Spanish are the official languages of Portugal and Spain, respectively, although English is widely spoken as well. English is the primary language spoken on board *Sea Cloud* and throughout our tour.

TIME: Portugal and Spain are on West European Summer Time (WEST) and are 5 hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time (EDT).

MEDICAL SERVICES: A qualified physician is in attendance on *Sea Cloud* but must be made aware of any potential medical problems that might arise because of any medical condition, disability, or illness of any passenger on board. **Please return your medical information form in a timely manner.** The doctor is available 24 hours a day in case of emergency. The ship's pharmacy has a limited supply of general medicines and seasickness medications. In case of emergency, the ship is equipped with excellent radio and marine and satellite telephone facilities and is never more than a few miles from shore so that aid in an emergency can be called.

Passengers' who are not fit for a cruise, including those with physical disabilities that affect mobility and balance, heart or immune deficiencies, or other conditions associated with poor health, are advised not to join the cruise. A serious health emergency may result in an air evacuation, which will come at considerable expense to you. **Insurance coverage for emergency medical evacuation is required for participation in this program. Please refer to MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT above.**

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>.

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).

Motion Sickness – This cruise includes two nights in the Atlantic Ocean before cruising into the Mediterranean Sea for the duration of the voyage. Although we hope for mild sea conditions, participants should be prepared for the possibility of rougher seas given the transitional time of year the trip will operate, particularly on our lengthier crossings, such as the transit from Lisbon to Huelva and from Motril to Valencia. The *Sea Cloud* may carry a limited supply of anti-motion sickness medication for general availability to passengers, but we recommend that you consult your physician on an appropriate medication.

Sun Exposure – The sun’s ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes). Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. A severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors and be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

SUGGESTED READING: A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

The following reading list starts with identification guides to a variety of natural history subjects before addressing the broader category of History and Culture. A few novels are listed here as well. **Titles preceded by an asterisk are “starred” selections by Dr. Wolff.**

FIELD GUIDES:

Birds

Mullarney, Killian and Lars Svensson and Dan Zetterstrom. ***Birds of Europe***. Princeton Field Guides. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, 2010 (second edition). **This is the most important natural history book for this trip.** It is probably the best all-around field guide to the birds of Europe.

Mammals

MacDonald, David and Priscilla Barrett. ***Mammals of Europe***. Princeton Field Guides. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, 2002.

Shirihai, Hadoram and Brett Jarrett. ***Whales, Dolphins and Other Marine Mammals of the World***. Princeton Field Guides. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, 2006.

Reptiles and Amphibians:

Speybroek, Jeroen, Wouter Beukema, Bobby Bok, Jan Van Der Voor, and Ilian Velikov. ***Field Guide to the Amphibians & Reptiles of Britain & Europe***. Bloomsbury Wildlife Guides. Bloomsbury Publishing New York, NY, 2016. An outstanding newer guide.

Butterflies

Tolman, Tom and Richard Lewington. ***Butterflies of Europe***. Princeton Field Guides. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, 2002.

Botany – The following titles all ably cover the wildflowers species we could expect to see on this voyage. Moelsworth book is an older title, but still relevant, while the Blamey guide is comprehensive and certainly covers the scope of this cruise. The Schoenfelder book is a brand-new resource and thus most likely to reflect updated taxonomy.

Allen, Betty Moelsworth. ***Wildflowers of Southern Spain***. Mirador Books. 1993

Blamey, Marjorie and Christopher Grey-Wilson. ***Wild Flowers of the Mediterranean: A Complete Guide to the Islands and Coastal Regions***. A & C Black Publishers, 2004.

Schoenfelder, Peter and Ingrid. ***Wild Flowers of the Mediterranean***. John Beaufoy Publishing, 2017.

History, Philosophy & Culture - Both of the following titles in the “Concise” series are highly regarded and offer comprehensive overviews of the rich histories of these countries without subjecting the reader to massive amounts of information. Very “readable.”

Birmingham, David. ***A Concise History of Portugal (Cambridge Concise Histories)***. Cambridge University Press; third edition, 2018.

Phillips Jr., William D. ***A Concise History of Spain (Cambridge Concise Histories)***. Cambridge University Press; second edition, 2016.

TOPIC SPECIFIC:

*Crowley, Roger. ***The Conquerors: How Portugal Forged the First Global Empire***. Random House: New York, NY, 2015.

*Hochschild, Adam. ***Spain in our Hearts: America in the Spanish Civil War 1936–1939***. Mariner Books; New York, NY, 2007 (reprint edition).

*Menocal, Maria Rosa. ***The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain***. Back Bay Books: New York, NY, 2003 (reprint edition).

*Molesky, Mark. ***This Gulf of Fire: The Great Lisbon Earthquake, or Apocalypse in the Age of Science and Reason***. Vintage Books: New York, NY, 2016 (reprint edition).

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Novels:

- *Hemingway, Ernest. *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Scribner Classics: New York, NY, 1995 (originally published 1940).
- *Mercier, Pascal. *Night Train to Lisbon*. Grove Press: New York, NY, 2008 (reprint edition).
- *Saramago, José. *The Stone Raft*. Mariner Books: New York, NY, 1996.
- *Webster, Jason. *A Death in Valencia: A Mystery*. Vintage Books: New York, NY, 2013.
- *Wilson, Robert C. *A Small Death in Lisbon*. Berkley Books: New York, NY, 2002.

Films:

- **Carmen* (1984), directed by Francesco Rosi. A film version of the legendary Bizet opera.
- **Night Train to Lisbon* (2013), directed by Billie August. A film version of the novel. Stars Jeremy Irons and Christopher Lee.

Travel:

Michener, James A. *Iberia*. A Dial Press Trade Paperback. Penguin Random House Canada, 2015 (reprint; originally published 1969).

This is a book about Spain—its history, its people, its culture and its landscapes. In this work of non-fiction, master storyteller James A. Michener (Hawaii, The Source, Poland, etc.) delivers a heartfelt accounting of one of his favorite places. Part travelogue, part memoir, Michener takes the reader on a tour of Spain from one end of the country to another. One critique of the book is that it is dated in places, having been published more than fifty years ago.

TIPPING: All tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, local guides, and ship's crew) is included. If you feel one or all of your VENT leaders, or any local guide has provided exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

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 June 14, 2023 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant's Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands

of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

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

SEASP:20240415 / SEASPE:20240409

Rev: 06/08/23 – BL

PNP: 06/14/23 – GL

P: 06/29/2023 – GL