

SOUTHERN PORTUGAL IN SPRING

APRIL 15–27, 2023

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Great Bustards on the Plains of Castro Verde © Faísca

Lying on the western edge of Europe's Iberian Peninsula, Portugal is a beautiful and popular travel destination rich in art, architecture, food, wine, 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.

Our tour to the country's southern half visits the most important birding areas and landscapes of southern Portugal while providing a bit of 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.

We'll spend two days at the famous Tagus Estuary outside Lisbon, one of Portugal's premier locations 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; we'll explore the

granite hills and forests of the Guadiana Valley Natural Park where Spanish and Bonelli's eagles occur; and we'll journey to the coastal Algarve, a scenic region of bluffs, hills, salt pans, and beaches boasting protected wetland areas, nature parks, and reserves, and situated on a major migratory flyway, where Mediterranean specialty species are found.

Spring is a beautiful time for birding in Portugal and 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, Greater Flamingo, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Great and Little bustards, Pallid and White-rumped swifts, many shorebirds and waterfowl, Slender-billed and Audouin's gulls, White Stork, Eurasian Spoonbill, Cinereous Vulture, Short-toed Snake-Eagle, Booted Eagle, European Roller, Iberian Green Woodpecker, Iberian Gray Shrike, Iberian Magpie, Dartford Warbler, Eurasian Hoopoe, Black-eared Wheater, and a marvelous array of larks, wagtails, chats, warblers, tits, and buntings.



White Storks © Faísca

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. At times we'll be joined by licensed guides who will lead us on walking tours of the historic districts of Lisbon, Évora, and Mértola, where we'll wander winding streets through historic plazas and squares en route to an array of castles, cathedrals, museums, Roman ruins, and modern promenades and cafes.

Our days in the field will also present numerous opportunities to sample Portugal's many culinary delights including its famous wines. With its multi-faceted approach this program meets the needs of the serious birder while providing exposure to a culturally rich European country.



April 15–16: Days 1–2: Departure from home; arrival in Lisbon; late afternoon at Tagus Estuary. Flights from the United States on April 15 generally depart in the late afternoon or early evening, and arrive Lisbon, Portugal (Lisbon Portela Airport, airport code LIS) on the morning of April 16 between 6:00–9:00 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 and is close to two major birding sites, the Tagus Estuary and Sado Estuary preserves. *

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 mid-day 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.

*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 early.

NIGHTS: Aboard aircraft in transit to Lisbon (April 15)
Hotel Quinta da Praia das Fontes, Alcochete (April 16)

April 17, Day 3: Tagus Estuary Nature Preserve. Today, our immersion in Portuguese birding commences with a full day 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.



Greater Flamingos and shorebirds, Tagus Estuary © Faísca

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.

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, White Stork, Water Rail, Glossy Ibis, Black-winged and Black kites, Booted Eagle, Dunlin, Common and Spotted redshanks, Common Greenshank, Black-tailed Godwit, Green Sandpiper, Woodchat Shrike, Western Yellow and White wagtails, Great Reed and Western Bonelli's warblers, Zitting Cisticola, Short-toed Treecreeper, Spotless Starling, Eurasian Tree Sparrow and European Serin.

We will return to the hotel late this afternoon after what surely will have been a most memorable time in the field.

NIGHT: Hotel Quinta da Praia das Fontes, Alcochete

April 18, Day 4: City tour of Lisbon. Today we'll turn our sights to Lisbon, Portugal's lovely capital and a city profuse with architectural and historical riches. 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.

Lisbon is Portugal's largest city, with over half a million people, and 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*.



Alfama District, Lisbon © Shutterstock

Our exact itinerary is to be determined, but the morning tour will include some of the city's most famous sites including:

- Parque Eduardo VII and Avenida da Liberdade: Parque Eduardo VII 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 of 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.

In the late morning we'll 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. After lunch we'll stop to view the iconic Torre de Belém (Tower of Belém), followed by a visit to the Monument to the Discoveries. The tour will conclude with a visit to the Jerónimos Monastery, a masterpiece of gothic architecture and the burial place of Vasco da Gama. Upon conclusion of our tour, we will return to our hotel. Time permitting, we may make a late stop or two at the Tagus Estuary.

NIGHT: Hotel Quinta da Praia das Fontes, Alcochete

April 19, Day 5: Tagus Estuary Nature

Preserve. The Tagus Estuary 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, Eurasian Spoonbill, Purple and Gray herons, Squacco Heron, Little and Great egrets, Pied, Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, Kentish Plover, Common Ringed-Plover, Curlew Sandpiper, Little Stint, Collared Pratincole, Yellow-legged Gull, and Whiskered and Little terns.



Purple Heron © 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 Whimbrel (Eurasian subspecies), Bar-tailed Godwit, Common Cuckoo, Common Kingfisher, Common and Pallid swifts, Common Nightingale, Spotless Starling, Eurasian Jay, Iberian Magpie, Eurasian Hoopoe, Crested and Greater Short-toed Lark, Woodchat and Southern Gray (Iberian) shrikes, Common Chiffchaff (Iberian), Sardinian Warbler, Rock Petronia, and Cirl Bunting.

NIGHTS: Hotel Quinta da Praia das Fontes, Alcochete

April 20, Day 6: 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 rural and highly scenic 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. Our tour 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 Cathedral of Évora, 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).

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 Bustard, Black Stork, Montagu’s Harrier, Lesser Kestrel, European Roller, and Calandra Lark.



European Roller, a wonderful bird of the Castro Verde region © Faisca

NIGHT: Hotel Museu, Mértola

April 21–22, Days 7–8: 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 storks, sandgrouse, bustards, raptors, 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 Black Stork; Red-legged Partridge; White-rumped Swift; Eurasian Crag-Martin; Eurasian Jackdaw; Cetti's, Dartford and Subalpine warblers; Blue Rock Thrush; Southern Gray Shrike; Black Redstart; Gray Wagtail; Thekla Lark; and Rock Bunting. When not scouring the surrounding vegetation, we'll keep an eye to the sky as we are likely to spot Cinereous and Eurasian Griffon vultures, European Honey-buzzard, Black Kite, Short-toed Snake-Eagle, and Golden and Bonelli's eagles—the latter species always a treat to see as it has declined broadly across much of its European range.

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. White Storks nest atop power poles; Iberian Magpie is a common roadside bird; Lesser Kestrels are abundant at colonial nest sites; Great and Little bustards thrive in the rolling countryside; and the skies are patrolled by Eurasian Griffon and Cinereous vultures. The Spanish Eagle is also found here and we'll likely have good 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.



Iberian Magpie © Faísca

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, Montagu's Harrier, Red Kite, Eurasian Eagle-Owl, Great Crested Grebe, Eurasian Thick-knee, Little Ringed Plover, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, European Turtle-Dove, European Bee-eater, European Roller, Eurasian Green Woodpecker (Iberian race), Black-eared Wheatear, Red-rumped Swallow, Western Orphean and Subalpine warblers, Southern Gray Shrike, Eurasian Hoopoe, Eurasian Golden Oriole, European Stonechat, Tawny Pipit, Calandra and Wood larks, and Spanish Sparrow.

NIGHT: Hotel Museu, Mértola

April 23, Day 9: Historical tour of Mértola; Guadiana Valley. This morning we shall take a 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.

During the afternoon we will visit other sites withing the Guadiana Valley Nature Park (areas to the south of Mértola).



Lesser Kestrel pair, Mértola © Faisca

NIGHT: Hotel Museu, Mértola

April 24, Day 10: Travel to *Algarve* region: birding the Tavira area. We'll leave the *Alentejo* today for the *Algarve*, the next major administrative region to the south. Our destination is Tavira, on the southeastern coast, where we'll spend the next two nights.

The *Algarve* is one of the most economically prosperous regions of Portugal, due in large part to a beautiful coastline that draws millions of people a year. Beyond tourism, the *Algarve* is a major source of food production, especially for seafood and agricultural products. Away from the more touristy facilities, the *Algarve* contains extensive natural areas and considerable scenic beauty. Tavira is home to a complex of canals, saline flats, and salt pans, all of which often teem with birds.

We'll arrive in Tavira sometime in the morning and proceed directly to the hotel for check-in. We'll spend the afternoon exploring the multitude of habitats and ecosystems in the nearby area. Wetland birding will be an obvious theme, and a variety of shorebirds, gulls, and terns are possible. Mediterranean, Audouin's, and Slender-billed gulls are likely while Yellow-legged, Lesser Black-backed, and Black-headed gulls can be numerous. Gull-billed, Caspian, and Little terns are also present. Pallid Swift, a specialty bird of southern Europe, is the most numerous swift in the region.

NIGHT: Hotel Vila Galé Albacora, Tavira

April 25, Day 11: Ria Formosa Natural Park. The coastal settlement of Tavira dates to the 1st century B.C. following the Roman conquest. Its proximity to the sea was the primary reason for its development, where fishing and fish-salting stoked a rapidly growing economy. Much later, in Moorish times, Tavira grew into one of the biggest towns in the *Algarve*. During the Christian “Reconquista,” starting in the 13th century, Tavira reached new heights, becoming the primary port that provided support for Portuguese garrisons overseas.

Based in Tavira, we will spend the next two-and-a-half days visiting a variety of locations in this, the southernmost region of Portugal. Our travels will take us east to the border with Spain and south and west to the Atlantic coasts, allowing for an immersive experience in the birds and landscapes characteristic of the area.

A short distance to the west of Tavira lies the Ria Formosa Natural Park. This is another of Portugal’s top birding areas and a wonderful place to spend a full day.

Ria Formosa is a coastal nature preserve close to the city of Faro. The park covers over 30 miles of coastline from Tavira in the east to Ancão, and includes within the park boundaries the majority of the estuary of the Ria Formosa. The park consists of a narrow strip of land separated from the sea by vast sand dunes, behind which lies a labyrinth of lagoons and small sand islands, inter-tidal mudflats, salt marshes, salt pans, reed beds, and canals, while a short distance away lies tracts of pine forest.



Red-crested Pochard © Rafael Galvez

The birding, while always good, can be incredible depending on weather and tidal conditions. A major reason why birders are attracted here is the opportunity to see breeding specialty birds in shared company with passage migrants. Among the many possibilities are Red-crested and Common pochards, Greater Flamingo, Red-necked Nightjar, Eurasian Moorhen, Eurasian Coot, Western Swamphen, Black-winged Stilt, Pied Avocet and multitudes of other shorebirds, Audouin’s and Slender-billed gulls, Gull-billed Tern, White Stork, Northern Gannet, European Shag, Little Bittern, Eurasian Spoonbill, Little Owl, Common Kingfisher, and Crested and Greater Short-toed larks.

NIGHT: Hotel Vila Galé Albacora, Tavira

April 26, Day 12: Castro Marim Nature Preserve. Return to Lisbon with birding at the Salgados Lagoon.

The coastal settlement of Tavira dates to the 1st century B.C. following the Roman conquest. Its proximity to the sea was the primary reason for its development, where fishing and fish-salting stoked a rapidly growing economy. Much later, in Moorish times, Tavira grew into one of the biggest towns in the *Algarve*. During the Christian “Reconquista,” starting in the 13th century, Tavira reached new heights, becoming the primary port that provided support for Portuguese garrisons overseas.

Early in the morning we will head east of Tavira toward the Spanish border, where we’ll enjoy several hours of birding in the Castro Marim area. As with other cities and towns in the southern *Algarve*, Castro Marim dates from the Roman period when the site, with its proximity to the Mediterranean Sea and the Guadiana River, was recognized for its economic and defensive importance. Castro Marim boasts another of Europe’s best wetland sites, Castro Marim Nature Preserve, where flamingos; spoonbills; storks; Little Bustards; Audouin’s and Slender-billed gulls; Caspian, Sandwich, Black, and Little terns; Southern Gray Shrike; Spotless Starling; Corn Bunting; Lesser Short-toed Lark and a great many other birds occur.

After an early and relaxed lunch in Tavira, we’ll embark on the return journey to Lisbon, with a brief stop en route, at Salgados Lagoon. This is another coastal wetland site home to shorebirds and wading birds. Many of the birds we encounter will now be like familiar friends, but birding at this season could produce any number of surprises, while Ferruginous Duck, a very uncommon waterfowl species in Portugal, is possible in this area.

The transfer to Lisbon will take about three hours, with a late afternoon arrival expected. This evening we will gather for a final checklist session and dinner to celebrate our experiences and bid farewell.

NIGHT: Hotel das Janelas Verdes, Lisbon

April 27, Day 13: Departure for home. We will organize a group transfer to the airport this morning, but participants are free to depart Portugal at any time.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to **14** participants.

TOUR LEADERS: **João Jara** and a local leader.



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 about 30 years of field experience, João has extensive knowledge about birding in Portugal. He was a member of the board of SPEA (Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves—Birdlife in Portugal), a voting member of the PRC (Portuguese Rarities Committee) from 2005–2011, and chairman of the PRC from 2007–2011. Author and co-author of articles about birds, João just published a new book, *Where to Watch Birds in Southern Portugal*, which will be provided to each participant on this tour. João has led many field tours in Portugal and abroad, as well as bird identification courses for SPEA and for his own birding tours company, Birds & Nature Tours, which he launched in

2008. Besides birds, he has an active special interest in amphibians, reptiles, and fishes. João is fluent in English, French, and Spanish.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for this tour is **\$7,445** per person in double occupancy. This includes all meals beginning with lunch on day 2 to breakfast on day 13, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leader. The tour fee does not include airfare from your home to Lisbon and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for the tour is **\$895**.

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

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 150 days (November 16, 2022) prior to the tour departure date.

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

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:

Cancellation by Participant:

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

<u>If participant cancels:</u>	<u>Participant's refund will be:</u>
180 days or more before departure date	Participant's deposit minus \$500*
179 to 151 days before departure date	No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance of the tour fee will be refunded
150 days or less before departure date	No refund available

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

Cancellation by VENT:

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

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement. A **"Force Majeure"** event means any act beyond VENT's control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage

of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

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

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

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

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

For a price quote, or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: 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):

The coronavirus pandemic has brought uncertainty for many people currently holding travel insurance policies or who are considering future travel and purchasing such insurance. Redpoint has added a **Coronavirus FAQ page** to 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. Among the most important points: 1) Trip cancellation solely for concern or fear of travel associated with COVID-19 is not covered; 2) Should you request cancellation of your policy, a full refund of your premium is available only under a limited set of conditions; and 3) Should you request cancellation, you may be eligible to receive a pro-rated refund of the unused portion of your premium

or a travel insurance credit. Travel insurance credit (“Premium Credit”) is for the value of the policy purchased and may be applied to future policies. Premium Credits have no expiration dates. Rules and regulations apply.

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

https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/

Additionally, as countries begin opening up for travel, many are instituting an array of COVID-19 entry requirements, including mandates to purchase travel insurance covering medical expenses due to COVID-19 Illness and accommodation in case of quarantine. Ripcord’s comprehensive travel insurance plans are designed to satisfy the various country-specific travel insurance entry requirements. Those who purchase a Ripcord policy will receive a “letter of confirmation” that affirms that the policy satisfies such requirements.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international. * Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. **Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be held responsible for any air ticket penalties.**

*An air ticket will be purchased by Victor Emanuel Travel on behalf of the traveler with the traveler’s consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveler (i.e., voluntary change of plans), the same fee rates apply for the reissue process, in addition to any fees that may be charged by the airline.

BAGGAGE: The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. **Please consult your pre-departure materials and/or airline to find out specific weight restrictions.**

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/>.

CLIMATE: April is a very nice time to travel in Portugal. All of our time will be spent in the southern half of the country where our tour route will range from Lisbon on the west Atlantic Coast, to the dry interior, and on to the Atlantic Coast in the south of the country. Daytime temperatures average from the high 60s—mid 70s (F°) but could rise into the high 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 mid-50s. Precipitation in the form of rain, related to a late cold front, is possible, even likely. Overall, participants should be prepared for mild days and cool mornings and evenings.

CLOTHING: As this trip combines birding with interpretive walking tours, you should consider bringing a mix of clothing that prepares you for all activities.

The following items are recommended:

- **Pants:** A couple pairs of pants are essential. Many people prefer lightweight pants made of cotton or other material, but denim, though not as comfortable, is certainly acceptable.

- **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.
- **Shirts:** Consider bringing several long-sleeved and short-sleeved t-shirts. Other styles include flannel shirts and long-sleeved button-downs.
- **Hat:** A hat for protection from the sun is essential.
- **Sweaters and Coats:** Warm weather is anticipated on this trip, but you should come prepared for an early cold front and cool morning and nighttime temperatures. Please bring a fleece or warm coat or jacket. In the event we encounter rain, you'll want to have a water repellent jacket as well.

FOOTWEAR: For footwear we recommend a good trail-walking shoe or light hiking boot when in the field. Athletic shoes are acceptable but will not keep your feet dry and can become soiled from muddy conditions. A good walking shoe, such as an athletic shoe may be preferred when on our historical walking tours.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is available for an extra charge at all four of the hotels where we stay during the tour; however, you should bring enough clothing to get you through the trip in the event laundry service is unavailable.

CONDITIONS: Your trip to Portugal will be a full travel experience in which birding activities are combined with a few guided tours to famous archaeological sites and historic landmarks. While our program includes plenty of time in prime birding areas, it also incorporates a bit of exploration of Portugal's rich history, and participants should strongly consider this point before registering. People occasionally ask us to frame the breakdown of birding activities to cultural excursions in terms of percentages. Our time will be spent as follows: 85–90% birding; 10–15% history and culture.

Most days will be dedicated purely to birding and natural history pursuits while several other 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. Depending on one's abilities, physical demands will be easy to moderate. In particular, our city tour of Lisbon may involve a lot of walking and standing. In all cases, cities and towns 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.**

We emphasize that no one will be subjected to physical demands that exceed their capabilities. All walking will be done at a slow pace. Travel will be aboard two nine-seat vehicles.

Extra time in Portugal – Lisbon, Portugal's largest city, serves as the jumping off point for other parts of the country and other countries in Southern Europe and North Africa. Our tour program provides exposure to some of Southern Portugal's top archaeological and historical sites and many of its wonderful birds. Because there is so much to see in this lovely country, participants with an interest in enjoying other activities outside the stated program should come early or stay after the tour ends.

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 to Portugal:

- **Backpack** – Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment during all land excursions
- **Notebooks and pens**
- **Travel alarm clock**
- **Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection**
- **Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions**
- **Personal toiletries**
- **Cameras, lenses, memory cards, and extra batteries**
- **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/ 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.**

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

CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS: Your trip to Portugal includes all necessary expenses. You will want to bring enough cash to cover personal expenses not included in the program, such as taxi rides, gifts, gratuities, meals on your own, and personal items. It is best to carry small denominations of cash as any places we visit may be unable to provide change for large bills. While U.S. dollars may be accepted in more populous areas, it is always convenient to have a supply of local currency for such items. It is best to acquire local currency before leaving home, or at the airport or a bank upon arrival in Lisbon. Many, if not most, businesses accept major credit cards.

Should you extend your vacation in Portugal beyond what is offered in the program, you'll definitely want to obtain local currency. Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

The official currency of Portugal 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/>.

ELECTRICITY: The electrical current in Portugal is 220-240V (110-120V in the U.S.). Electrical outlets are one of the two European standard socket types: the "Type C" Europlug and the "Type E" and "Type F" Schuko. All of these outlets are ungrounded with openings for two round pins. You will need an adapter to plug in your appliances as well as an all-purpose transformer if your appliances are not suitable for higher voltage.

LANGUAGE: Portuguese is the primary language spoken in Portugal. All of our local guides speak English.

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

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 emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of all trip participants. **With this in mind, VENT maintains a COVID-19 vaccination requirement.** All tour participants and staff must receive the primary series vaccinations in order to travel with us while we are still in a declared public health emergency. Proof of vaccination must be provided to our office at least one week before the start of the tour. More recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has updated its guidance to recommend people be Up to Date with COVID-19 vaccinations. Although the CDC website defines “Up to Date” as the primary series vaccinations and all recommended boosters, for those eligible, VENT requires the primary series and strongly recommends boosters. The high transmissibility of certain variants and subvariants should encourage everyone who is eligible to receive boosters to please do so. VENT has determined this approach to be the best one for keeping people safe during this time. Our decision and policy anchor a regime of protocols firmly rooted in the latest CDC guidance regarding recommendations for avoiding COVID-19. Please visit the **Coronavirus Travel Update** page of our website <https://ventbird.com/covid-19>, where you may view our **COVID-19 Protocols for VENT Tours** document, which details the guidance VENT will follow in the operation of its tours in the time of pandemic. 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>.

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

Field Guides:

Birds

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.

Reptiles and Amphibians:

Speybroek, Jeroen, Wouter Beukema, Bobby Bok and Van der Voort, Jan. ***Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Britain and Europe***. Bloomsbury Nature Guides. Bloomsbury Wildlife Publishing: London, 2016.

Insects

Smallshire, Dave and Andy Swash. *Europe's Dragonflies: A field guide to the damselflies and dragonflies*. Wild Guides. London: Princeton University Press, 2020

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 trip. The Moelsworth book is an older title, but still relevant, while the Blamey guide is comprehensive and certainly covers the scope of this trip. 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

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

A member of the highly regarded “Concise” series, this book offers a comprehensive overview of the rich history of Portugal without subjecting the reader to massive amounts of information. Very “readable.”

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

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).

Novels

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.

Wilson, Robert C. *A Small Death in Lisbon*. Berkley Books: New York, NY, 2002.

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

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

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

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

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

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on January 24, 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.