



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

SOUTHWEST PACIFIC: NEW CALEDONIA & FIJI

AUGUST 22-SEPTEMBER 4, 2024

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Kagu © David Jeffrey Ringer/shutterstock

The southwest Pacific is a remote part of the world, dotted by small, often uninhabited islands sometimes thousands of miles apart. Unique avifauna and human cultures have evolved here over time, leaving a rich and highly diverse array of island inhabitants. This tour will provide participants a rare insight into this incomparable part of the world. Fiji and the French island territory of New Caledonia represent two of the larger and more diverse island groups in the region. As such they offer some of the best birding, as well as a high standard of lodgings and transport. A visit to either island is a memorable experience, but we will have the privilege of experiencing both on this compact yet comprehensive tour.

We will start our island odyssey on the main island of New Caledonia, Grand Terre. The remarkable Kagu will be high on our list of targets, but there are many more beautiful and little-known endemics to enjoy in New Caledonia. The rare and strange Crow Honeyeater, Horned Parakeet, stunning Cloven-feathered Dove, tool-using New Caledonian Crow, and the scarce New Caledonian Grassbird are just some of the great birds on offer. We will stay at fine lodgings on Grand Terre, where French cuisine is served with a tropical backdrop.



Orange Dove © Brian Gibbons

Our exploration of the Fijian islands will include the main island, Viti Levu, as well as two endemic-rich islands just a short flight away—Kadavu and Taveuni. Some world-class birds exist in Fiji, with the Golden and Orange doves both needing to be seen to be believed. We will spend ample time on each island, making excursions into the montane rainforests and along stunning coastlines in search of new birds each day. Some of the highlights include the stunning Azure-crested Flycatcher, enigmatic Taveuni Silktail, wattled and giant honeyeaters, a variety of beautiful shining-parrots, songful shrikebills, and cute parrotfinches.

August 22–24, Days 1–3: Travel to New Caledonia. There are direct flights from various western U.S. cities including Dallas, Honolulu, Los Angeles and San Francisco to Sydney and Brisbane in Australia, from where there are daily direct flights to Noumea, New Caledonia.

Upon arrival at La Tontouta International Airport (airport code NOU) on August 24, you will be transferred to our hotel in the capitol Noumea. This evening, we will meet for a tour welcome and orientation followed by dinner. Information about the specific meeting time and place will be provided in the Departure Memo, about two weeks before the start of the tour.

NIGHTS: August 22-23, in transit

NIGHT: August 24, Hotel Le Lagon, Noumea

August 25, Day 4: Birding at Parc de la Rivière Bleue (Blue River NP). There is of course one very special bird we have in mind for our first full day, but alongside the infamous Kagu, there is also a fantastic supporting cast to be found in the protected forests of Blue River National Park. Amongst the dry rainforest, dominated by houp and araucaria trees, we will search for the gorgeous Cloven-feathered Dove, New Caledonian Imperial-Pigeon, “New Caledonian” Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, the striking New Caledonian Goshawk, Horned and New Caledonian Parakeets, the rare Crow Honeyeater, Barred Honeyeater, New Caledonian Streaked Fantail, New Caledonian Cuckooshrike, the strange Southern Shrikebill, Melanesian Flycatcher, New Caledonian Whistler, cute Yellow-bellied Flyrobin, Green-backed White-eye, scarce Striated Starling, and the beautiful Red-throated Parrotfinch.



Red-throated Parrotfinch © Dennis Jacobsen/shutterstock

An afternoon stroll along the promenade near our well-positioned hotel is likely to provide a good chance for Wandering Tattler, Silver Gull, Great Crested and Black-naped terns, White-faced Heron, Osprey, or potentially some scarcer seabirds if there is a strong breeze.

NIGHT: Hotel Le Lagon, Noumea

August 26, Day 5: Birding at Farino and Le Parc des Grandes Fougères. Today we will venture further into the country, following the beautiful southern coastline from the capital to the Farino area. Here we will look specifically for the unique, but scarce New Caledonian Thicketbird in more open country before visiting the lovely Parc des Grand Fougères. Home to giant tree ferns and a good diversity of New Caledonian specialties, we will search for any species missed the previous day. Some of the more widespread species we hope to see today include Pacific Emerald Dove, White-throated Pigeon, ‘New Caledonian’ Sacred Kingfisher, Satin and White-rumped swiftlets, Whistling Kite, Coconut Lorikeet, New Caledonian Myzomela, Dark-brown Honeyeater, New Caledonian Friarbird, Fan-tailed Gerygone, South Melanesian Cuckooshrike, Rufous Whistler, Gray Fantail, Silvereye, and hopefully New Caledonian Crow.

NIGHT: Hotel Le Lagon, Noumea



Pacific Emerald Dove © Jukka Jantunen/ shutterstock

August 27, Day 6: Fly to Taveuni via Nadi. Today we will depart New Caledonia for Fiji. It is a roughly two-hour flight between the two islands. We will depart Noumea on flight (subject to change), arriving in the Fijian capitol of Nadi, before transferring to the outer island of Taveuni via another short flight. We should have a chance to explore our beautiful resort near the southern tip of Taveuni in the late afternoon.

NIGHT: Paradise Taveuni Resort, Taveuni

August 28, Day 7: Taveuni. Today we will explore the endemic-rich island of Taveuni, starting along the upper altitude road below the Des Voeux Peak (3,900 feet). Here in the early morning we will search for several species only found on Taveuni - the cosmic Orange Dove, Chattering Giant-Honeyeater, Northern Wattled-Honeyeater, strange Taveuni Silktail, and the stunning little Azure-crested Flycatcher. The forests on Taveuni are also a good place for the beautiful Many-colored Fruit-Dove, Peale's Imperial-Pigeon, raucous Red Shining-Parrot, Collared Lory, 'Taveuni' Streaked Fantail, Black-throated Shrikebill (rare), songful Fiji Bush-Warbler, and Layard's White-eye.



Collared Lory © Andy Dean Photography/shutterstock

In the afternoon we can bird along the coastline or around the resort for species such as Wandering Tattler, Lesser Frigatebird, Buff-banded Rail, Pacific Kingfisher, Orange-breasted Myzomela, Fiji Woodswallow, Vanikoro Flycatcher, Pacific Swallow, or some rarer seabirds and waders.

NIGHT: Paradise Taveuni Resort, Taveuni

August 29, Day 8: Taveuni to Suva. After some morning birding, we will transfer to the airport for our short flight to Suva on the southern side of Fiji's main island Viti Levu.

We can spend the afternoon at our leisure or visit Suva Point, close to our wonderful hotel, in search of waders, seabirds and some of the more common Viti Levu species.

NIGHT: Grand Pacific Hotel, Suva

August 30-31, Days 9-10: Suva. The forests around Suva provide some of the best birding on Viti Levu. We will have two full days to search for a number of specialities, while also enjoying the relaxing pace of life here and the stunning scenery. We will bird a variety of sites during our time here, including the Colo-I-Suva Forest Park, in the company of an excellent local guide. Two of the trickier, but much sought-after species here are the Pink-billed Parrotfinch and Long-legged Thicketbird. Both are vulnerable and endemic to Viti Levu, but will take some effort and luck to see. There are many other wonderful species we hope to encounter during our time around Suva, not least the unbelievable Golden Dove, but also Masked Shining-Parrot, Fiji Goshawk, Duetting Giant-Honeyeater, Western Wattled-Honeyeater, Fiji and Black-throated shrikebills, Chestnut-throated Flycatcher, Polynesian Triller, lovely Pacific Robin, Polynesian Starling, Island Thrush, and Fiji Parrotfinch.

NIGHTS: Grand Pacific Hotel, Suva



Golden Dove © Rich Lindie/shutterstock

September 1, Day 11: Suva to Kadavu. Today we will visit our second outer Fijian island, Kadavu. This is a true tropical island experience, as we stay at a remote, but well-served island resort where most of the specialty birds can be found right around the grounds.

NIGHT: Matava Resort, Kadavu

September 2, Day 12: Kadavu. A full day on Kadavu will allow us to really soak up the place and enjoy some relaxed birding with the option for snorkeling nearby. During our time on Kadavu we will be on the lookout for a number of new species, including four endemics: Velvet Dove, Crimson Shining-Parrot, Kadavu Fantail, and Kadavu Honeyeater.

NIGHT: Matava Resort, Kadavu

September 3, Day 13: Kadavu to Nadi. Departing beautiful Kadavu, we will begin our transit home by flying to Nadi (possibly via Suva). If time allows, we can do some local birding in the afternoon, otherwise we will enjoy one final meal together at our airport hotel.

NIGHT: Nadi

September 4, Day 14: Depart Nadi. Transfers will be provided for flights departing prior to 3:00 PM today from Nadi, Fiji (airport code NAN).

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

TRAVEL INSURANCE REQUIREMENT: Travel insurance is mandatory for entry to New Caledonia and must cover all medical and hospitalization expenses and repatriation costs, including medical evacuation. 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: This tour will be limited to 8 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: Max Breckenridge and local leaders.



Max Breckenridge was born in the UK, but has lived virtually his entire life in Sydney, Australia. At age 12, his passion for birds was fostered when his parents took him and his brother out of school for 10 weeks to travel across Australia. After completing high school in Sydney, Max drove solo from Darwin to Broome, birding all the way, and spent the next month volunteering at the world-renowned Broome Bird Observatory. Max completed a Bachelor of Biodiversity & Conservation at Macquarie University in 2018. He has birded across every state and almost every corner of the Australian landmass. Max has an excellent eye, and especially ear, for Australian birds. Some of his birding exploits in Australia include two separate trips to the remote rainforests of Iron Range National Park on Queensland’s Cape York (including a fly-in-fly-out trip during the middle of the wet season where he spent two weeks under a tarp

in order to see some of the key migrants from Papua New Guinea). Max is at home birding in the Old World and has spent the last six years covering as much of it as possible. He is incredibly passionate about wildlife conservation. In addition to his focus of study, he has spent much of his spare time volunteering alongside PhD researcher Ross Crates studying the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater and conducting paid bird surveys. Max receives immense pleasure from birding and showing birds to others, and takes pride in writing detailed trip reports.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$9245** per person in double occupancy from Noumea, ending in Nadi. This includes all meals from Dinner on Day 3 to Breakfast on Day 14, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Noumea with return from Nadi, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$975**. You will be charged a single supplement if a roommate is not found and VENT cannot provide one for you.

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

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 150 days (March 26, 2024) prior to the tour departure date.

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.

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 from the date of participant tour cancellation, 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 from the date of participant tour cancellation, 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 its **Ripcord** plan. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most comprehensive travel protection programs available.

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

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

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, mid-payment, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each

deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip cost in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Coronavirus (COVID-19): In line with the decision made by the federal government (including the CDC), Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy. Redpoint maintains a **Coronavirus FAQ** page on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

Please visit the **Coronavirus FAQ** page at the following link: https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/.

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

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

BAGGAGE:

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

Please limit baggage to one piece of luggage and one carry-on. As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag.

CLOTHING: The physical environment of this trip is tropical coastal plains and mountainous interior. The days will be warm to hot with storms possible. Lightweight, dull-colored field clothing and casual attire are suitable for this trip. The following items are recommended:

- **Pants and Shorts:** 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. Shorts can be useful in warmer locations or when relaxing around hotels.
- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI carry field clothing that many birders find appealing. Pants and long-sleeved shirts made of lightweight, yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular. These provide useful protection from the sun and occasional biting insects.

- **Shirts:** A couple long-sleeved t-shirts in addition to other comfortable styles suitable for warm weather. We do not recommend short-sleeved shirts as much as they offer no protection from biting insects or the sun.
- **Hat:** A hat, particularly of a wide-brimmed style, for protection from the sun is essential. Please bring a baseball-style cap at the very least.
- **Outerwear:** Warm weather is anticipated on this trip, but a sweater/fleece and water repellent light coat or jacket will come in handy on our visits to highland areas.
- **Swimsuit:** There will be opportunities to swim for those who desire.

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, which do occur. A lighter shoe, like an athletic shoe, will come in handy when relaxing around the lodges.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is available at all of the hotels in our itinerary.

CLIMATE & WEATHER: You will be visiting the Southwest Pacific in the austral spring. Generally, the tropical climate is warm and humid with temperatures ranging from the low 60s to the lows 90s (°F), although it can be certainly cooler at the higher points on Fiji. The dry season runs from August through December, with the hottest, driest conditions likelier later in the year. August is cooler than December, with greater chances for rain. Some rain should be expected.

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 the Southwest Pacific:

- **Daypack** – Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment, etc.
- **Notebooks and pens**
- **Travel alarm clock** – Battery operated is best (if not using this feature on your mobile phone).
- **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
- **Umbrella** – A small, collapsible umbrella can be indispensable should we be caught on the trail in the rain
- **Water bottle**
- **Tissue packs**
- **Small flashlight or headlamp**
- **Small folding stool** – Many people find this item extremely useful when patiently waiting for shy forest birds.

BINOCULARS & SPOTTING SCOPES:

Binoculars – We strongly recommend good binoculars of at least 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 magnification. We recommend that you do NOT bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like “minis” 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 8x32 or 8x42 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Spotting Scopes – Your tour leaders will have scopes available for group use throughout the trip, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:

PASSPORTS - A passport valid for six months beyond the tour end date is required for entry into New Caledonia and Fiji. Please check the expiration date on your passport. If it is not valid for the period of time as described, 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 the website of the U.S. Department of State (<https://state.gov/travelers/>) for information on how to apply for a passport or renew an existing passport.

As a safety measure, photocopy the first two pages of your passport and 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 are not required to obtain a visa for entry into New Caledonia or Fiji. Rules and regulations pertaining to non-U.S. and Canadian citizens may vary; please check with the respective consulates or embassies.

CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS: Your tour fee includes all necessary expenses; however, you will want to carry credit cards and/or a supply of cash to cover personal expenses not included in the program, such as gifts, laundry, gratuities, meals on your own, and personal items. If bringing cash, it is best to carry small denominations as the places we visit may be unable to provide change for large bills.

If you plan to extend your vacation in either country beyond what is offered in the program, you'll want to consider obtaining local currency. It is best to acquire local currency before leaving home, or at the airport or a city bank upon arrival in either country. The best exchange is always from automatic teller machines as opposed to changing at dealers. Please note that U.S. Dollars are not accepted in New Caledonia. In Fiji, U.S. Dollars may be accepted, but it is recommended that your dollars be converted to Fijian Dollars.

Major credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, American Express) are accepted at most locations. 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 New Caledonia is the CFP Franc (XPF); the official currency of Fiji is the Fijian Dollar (FJD). Exchange rates are subject to change. You can check the latest currency conversion rate by visiting "XE- The World's Favorite Currency Site" at: <http://www.xe.com/>.

ELECTRICITY: Standard voltage in New Caledonia is 220V/50H. Electrical outlets are of the F-type, with two round pins. Standard voltage in Fiji is 240V/50H. Electrical outlets are of the I-type, with three flat pins in a triangular pattern. A plug adapter will be needed and we strongly recommend a voltage converter to protect sensitive electronic equipment.

INTERNET ACCES: Expect Wifi availability at most or all hotels and lodges.

LANGUAGE: French is the official language of New Caledonia but Kanak languages (family of Austronesian languages) are widely spoken. Fiji has three official languages: Fijian, Fijian Hindi, and English.

TIME: New Caledonia is on New Caledonia Time (NCT), 15 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST). Fiji is on Fiji Time (FJT), 16 hours ahead of EST.

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>.

Typhoid – VENT recommends vaccination against Typhoid, a bacterial disease endemic to New Caledonia and Fiji. Typhoid, or Typhoid Fever, is caused by *Salmonella Typhi*. It is transmitted through consumption of contaminated food and water, typically when someone who is infected uses the bathroom and does not wash their hands. Symptoms may include high fever, weakness, stomach pain, headache, diarrhea or constipation, cough, and loss of appetite.

Malaria & Yellow Fever – Neither is present in New Caledonia or Fiji, although Yellow Fever vaccination may be required for those traveling from a country where Yellow Fever is known to occur.

Dengue and Zika – Dengue and Zika are viral diseases transmitted by mosquitos. Both are present on New Caledonia and Fiji. The best way to avoid these illnesses is by avoiding getting bitten by mosquitos. We recommend wearing long sleeve shirts and pants when in the field, and applying insect repellent to your clothing and areas of exposed skin. A stick-style repellent is easier to apply to the face and hands, while a pump-style container is ideal for clothing. Please refer to the Insect Repellent section below for more information on the use of repellents.

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

Chiggers can be avoided by following these procedures:

- Avoid walking or standing in areas dominated by grass. These areas are where one is most likely to encounter chiggers.
- Tuck your pants into your socks to avoid direct skin-to-grass contact. Chiggers can find their way through clothing, but this is a standard and effective prevention technique.
- Apply insect repellent to your skin and clothing. Please refer to the Insect Repellent section that follows for important information about selecting and applying repellent.
- Powdered sulfur applied to waist, bottoms of pants, sock and boots is also effective at repelling chiggers. However, be warned that clothes will retain the sulfur odor for several washings. If using sulfur, never touch your eyes, nose, or mouth before washing your hands first.
- Shower at the end of each day in the field. Use a washcloth to vigorously rub your legs, feet, and ankles.

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

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.

Food and Water: Food and drinking water is safe for consumption in the major cities and hotels in New Caledonia and Fiji. Water served in restaurants is always safe.

Insect Repellents – There are insect repellents for the skin and an insect repellent used to treat clothing that should not be applied to the skin.

Insect repellents for the skin are commonly available in three forms:

- DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide): A chemical compound that is marketed under various brand names (OFF!®, Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered in a variety of formulations including sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The formulations will state a percentage of the active ingredient DEET on the packaging. DEET may be applied to exposed skin directly and/or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.
- Picaridin: A synthetic formulation that is derived from piperine, a substance found in plants that produce black pepper.
- Herbal insect repellents: Various mixtures of organic ingredients such as oils from eucalyptus, citronella, cedar, and other herbs. The herbal repellents are more difficult to categorize because of the difference in ingredients from one brand to another. There is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

An insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

- Permanone® (Permethrin) is an odorless spray-on repellent that may be used for **pre-treatment** of clothing, gear, and tents. It should not be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pre-treatment process requires a number of hours to complete and must be done outdoors, so it is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment must be repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.
- Insect Shield® apparel: Clothing pre-treated with Permanone is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

The US EPA offers a search tool to help choose a repellent that is best for a particular situation. For example, some repellents work for mosquitoes, but not for ticks.

<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/which-insect-repellent-right-you>

A good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). You can check the CDC website at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html> (click on Travel Health).

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

Birds:

Melanesia

Dutson, G. *Birds of Melanesia: Bismarcks, Solomons, Vanuatu and New Caledonia*. Helm Field Guides, 2011. This is the best available field guide for New Caledonia and this region of the Pacific, also covers many species possible in Fiji, but not the endemics.

Fiji

There are currently no available field guides for Fiji. The best option is to use the Merlin Bird ID application and download the pack for Melanesia.

Watling, D. *A Guide to the Birds of Fiji and Western Polynesia*. 2004. The only field guide covering the avifauna of Fiji. Unfortunately **currently out of print**, although second hand copies may be tracked down.

APPS:

Merlin Bird ID. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Merlin is an app designed as a birding coach for beginning and intermediate birdwatchers. Excellent for use in the field, Merlin asks the observer a series of questions regarding his or her bird sighting, including date and location, and color, size, and behavior of a bird. Merlin then processes the viewer's responses to present a shortlist of possible identifications, from which the user can choose the likely bird. Species profiles include a brief physical description, photographs, and sound samples. The Photo ID feature allows anyone with a camera to snap a photo and obtain a list of suggestions. Merlin's Sound ID feature allows identification of birds through audible recognition. To use Merlin, download the app, followed by the appropriate regional "pack." For this trip, please download the pack for **Melanesia**.

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 November 22, 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.

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