



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

TAIWAN: THE BEAUTIFUL ISLE

APRIL 21 – MAY 5, 2025

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Taiwan lies on the western edge of the Pacific “Rim of Fire.” As a result, continuous tectonic movements over millennia have created majestic peaks, rolling hills and plains. Formosa—‘The Beautiful Island’—lies off the south-eastern coast of mainland Asia, across the Taiwan Straits from China—a solitary island on the western edge of the Pacific Ocean. To the north lies Japan and Okinawa, to the south, the Philippines. The isolation of Taiwan and its varied and dramatic topography have led to the development of a rich and varied flora and fauna. With at least twenty-eight endemic species and fifty-nine endemic subspecies of bird, excitement awaits around every corner!

Our journey will take us from the bustling, modern capital in the north, Taipei, through the dramatic Central Mountain Range, down along the east coast past numerous scattered islets and rich estuaries, to the tropical rainforests of Orchid (Lanyu) Island. The extraordinary scenery of this unique island rivals that of anywhere in the world and this will add considerably to the wonder and enjoyment of our tour.

One of the exciting aspects of birding in Taiwan is that it is very possible to see all of the endemic species in one visit. And the endemics are, without exception, all super birds! Names like Mikado Pheasant, Taiwan Blue-Magpie, White-eared Sibia, and Flamecrest spark the imagination and the added attraction of non-endemic spectacular species such as Fairy Pitta, Golden Parrotbill, Malayan Night-Heron and Black-faced Spoonbill make Taiwan a very difficult birding destination to resist!

Taiwan is a very safe, contemporary country with excellent infrastructure, very friendly people, and great food, but most importantly the flora and fauna of this enigmatic island is simply captivating.



And there is the added bonus of a relatively short flight from the USA. Why not join us on this very comfortable and exciting tour to this truly amazing part of the world!

April 21-22, Days 1-2: Arrive in Taipei. Flights from the United States bound for Taipei (airport code TPE) depart on April 21 and arrive the following day. Upon arrival and after clearing customs, you will be met outside the baggage claim area by a representative of our ground agent and transferred to the hotel where a room is reserved in your name. On April 22 we will meet in the hotel lobby at 7:00 p.m. for a brief orientation followed by dinner.

Taipei, Taiwan's capital city is a bustling, crowded and fascinating place full of friendly people, excellent food and some interesting historic sights. One of the major attractions is the very famous National Palace Museum with its extraordinary collection of art treasures, beginning in the 10th Century in mainland China by the emperors of the time. During the communist revolution the collection was taken to Taiwan; if it had remained in China it would almost certainly have been destroyed. Those arriving early with some spare time should try to visit this museum along some other attractions such as the Long Shan Temple.

NIGHT: Hotel Riverview, Taipei

April 23, Day 3: Taipei to Dasyueshan via Yangmingshan. Before moving on from Taipei, we will make an early morning visit to the Taipei Botanical Garden in order to beat the crowds. Our first birds may include Light-vented Bulbul, Japanese White-eyes, the strange Malayan Night-Heron, and the noisy Taiwan Barbet. All are regularly encountered here.

Afterwards, we will depart Taipei by road and make our way to Yangmingshan National Park to see the beautiful Taiwan Blue-Magpie and hopefully a dazzling Taiwan Whistling-Thrush. From Yangmingshan, it is a three-hour drive to Dongshi and Dasyueshan (also referred to as Daxueshan or Anmashan), the most important birding site in Taiwan. The mountains here are covered by rich forests from 600m to 3000m, with a mix of low altitude broadleaf shifting to coniferous closer to the peaks. If the weather cooperates, glorious scenery will be a feature of our time at Dasyueshan.

After settling into our comfortable hotel in the small town of Dongshi, the remainder of the afternoon will be spent in the low to mid-elevation forest looking for Collared Finchbill, Plumbeous Redstart, Brown Dipper, Black-necklaced Scimitar-Babbler, Taiwan Scimitar-Babbler, and Steere's Liocichla.

NIGHT: Chang-Ti Hotel, Dongshi

April 24, Day 4: Dasyueshan. We will spend two full days in the Dasyueshan area and should see a broad selection of the Taiwanese endemics. Most of the birding at Dasyueshan is done along a two-lane road which snakes up the mountain. We will be driving and stopping often, walking short distances along the paved road with easy access to the vehicle and facilities. Most birds are relatively confiding in Taiwan and Dasyueshan is no exception.

Our first morning will likely be spent birding the lower to mid-elevation forest up to the entrance gate. Key targets like Mikado and Swinhoe's Pheasants are often remarkably confiding as they have become used to passing vehicles and the odd telephoto lens! Hopefully we encounter both species, less likely the skulking Taiwan Partridge, along the road, otherwise we can try several stakeouts.

Birding often comes in waves here, with mixed feeding flocks typically dominated by the adorable Taiwan Yuhina, White-eared Sibias and Steere's Liocichlas. However, with enough time, we should encounter Rusty and Rufous-crowned Laughingthrush, both fantastic representatives of this Old World family, as well as plentiful White-tailed Robins (much easier in Taiwan than elsewhere in Asia), Taiwan Whistling-Thrush, the cracking Taiwan Yellow Tit, Ashy Wood-Pigeon, White-bellied Pigeon, Grey-capped Woodpecker, Grey-chinned Minivet, Rufous-faced Warbler, Ferruginous Flycatcher, Vivid Niltava (quite distinct from its mainland form), Snowy-

browed Flycatcher, Asian House Martin, Rufous-capped Babbler, excitable Black-throated, Coal and Green-backed Tits, Fire-breasted Flowerpecker, Bronzed Drongo, Large-billed Crow and White-rumped Munia.

After lunch we will make a visit to nearby Ku-guan which is a good place to see the striking Chestnut-bellied Tit. Taiwan Blue-Magpie is also often here.

NIGHT: Forestry Bureau Lodge, Dasyueshan

April 25, Day 5: Dasyueshan. Today will be an early start to reach the summit area of Dasyueshan. If the weather is kind, we will be able to enjoy wonderful views over Taiwan's central mountain range from one of its highest points. Conifer and bamboo forest dominate the upper sections of Dasyueshan and will reveal several species we have yet to encounter.

Targets typical of the higher altitude include the stunning endemic Flamecrest at home in the pines, White-browed Shortwing (a fantastic songster and likely split), wonderful Collared and White-browed Bush-Robins, noisy Taiwan Bush Warbler, the recently split Taiwan Cupwing (a bird so small and mouse-like it needs to be seen to be believed), Taiwan and Morrison's Fulvettas, and Yellow-bellied Bush Warbler. Rarer, but nonetheless targetable species include the beautiful Taiwan Thrush (recently split from Island Thrush), Scaly Thrush (a bird with confusing taxonomy), Taiwan Barwing, and the quiet Brown Bullfinch.

NIGHT: Forestry Bureau Lodge, Dasyueshan

April 26, Day 6: Dasyueshan to Puli. This morning we will head down the mountain, birding along the way. Occasionally, the cute, yet shy Collared Owlet can be observed at certain points on the Dasyueshan road. At the bottom of the hill we may see a species of laughingthrush known as a Hwamei. In this part of Taiwan, two species hybridize (Taiwan and Chinese), so we will make an effort to search for the local Taiwan species later in the trip where hybridization does not occur.

From Dasyuehsan, we will drive through several valleys, before stopping in the small town of Puli. Here at one of the buddhist temples, is a good location to see the striking 'Red' Maroon Oriole, a subspecies endemic to Taiwan, as well as another shot at Black-necklaced Scimitar-Babbler. Fruiting trees here can occasionally yield Eyebrowed or Brown-headed Thrush, stocking up before they migrate further north. If necessary, we can also make a quick detour to an area where Chestnut-bellied Tit is often seen.

After reaching our hotel, we can spend the afternoon in the tea plantations nearby where we should find Striated Prinia, sneaky Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler, and Vinous-throated Parrotbill (a Chinese near-endemic).

NIGHT: Ching Jing Farm Hotel

April 27, Day 7: Hehuanshan to Hualien and Taitung. An early morning departure will allow us to look for some high-altitude specialties as we cross the Hehuanshan Pass, the highest road in Taiwan. In among the high montane coniferous forest and alpine meadows, we will search for the restricted Alpine Accentor. Birds such as White-whiskered Laughingthrush, Taiwan Rosefinch, and Gray-headed Bullfinch are also encountered at this high altitude.

We then descend to the lowlands once again, passing through the small town of Tienhsiang where we will find the handsome Styan's Bulbul. This endemic species has recently begun to hybridize with the more widespread Light-vented Bulbul. The population here remains intact, but how long this will remain the case is of serious concern.

However, the main attraction today is the incredible scenery of the Taroko Gorge. During the occupation in the 1930's, the Japanese authorities designated the Taroko Gorge and its surroundings as a national park. The park is

world-renowned for its steep gorges and lofty mountains. The crystal blue glacial waters of the Liwu River have over millions of years cut through the Taroko Gorge, creating natural patterns of unparalleled beauty. The action of the water on the erosion-resistant marble has resulted in a twisted gorge with near perpendicular walls. The road that we will travel on through the gorge was constructed in the 1950's over four years by up to six thousand men working simultaneously, hewing the rock with handheld tools. A trip along the Taroko Gorge is a truly memorable experience.

We will arrive at our modern hotel in the late afternoon in preparation for the short crossing to Lanyu Island tomorrow.

NIGHT: Formosa Naruwan Galaxy Hotel, Taitung

April 28, Day 8: Taitung to Lanyu Island. Today we will make cross from Taitung to Lanyu Island by boat. Lanyu Island has a tropical climate, and its geography and ecology are considered more closely related to the Philippines than Taiwan. There are many species of plants and animals not found on Taiwan, and some are endemic to the island. The Yami aboriginal people still live on Orchid Island, and rely on farming and resources provided by the ocean for their living. Flying fish are the main target for the local fishermen and we will likely see some ourselves gliding above the water during the crossing. The distinctive traditional fishing boats used are a fantastic first impression for those visiting Lanyu. The crossing is typically pleasant and there is a chance at a few seabirds including Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Streaked Shearwater, Bulwer's Petrel, and Red-tailed Tropicbird.

Upon our arrival, we will set out to search for such key birds as Ryukyu Scops-Owl, Whistling Green-Pigeon, Philippine Cuckoo-Dove, and Japanese Paradise-Flycatcher. But there are plenty of other birds to look for including Brown Booby, White-breasted Waterhen, Asian Emerald Dove, Brown-eared Bulbul, Blue Rock-Thrush, and Lowland White-eye (an endemic subspecies).

NIGHT: Lanyu Hotel, Lanyu

April 29, Day 9: Lanyu to Taitung. Before our ferry departure today, we can visit some of the remarkable underground houses, built to withstand typhoons, and still inhabited by the local people of Lanyu. There will also be time for better looks at some of the island's specialities, with a good chance of bumping into passage migrants on their way to Japan or further north.

Back on the mainland, we will have a relaxed afternoon, with the option to visit some local spots in search of Ruddy-breasted Crake, Oriental Pratincole, Lesser Coucal, Brown and Long-tailed shrikes, Oriental Skylark, and Black-faced Bunting.

NIGHT: Formosa Naruwan Galaxy Hotel, Taitung

April 30, Day 10: Taitung to Chiayi. Today we will cross the southern tip of Taiwan and reach its east coast. Around Chiayi we will visit two wetlands' areas of international importance, Aogu and Budai, in search of migrating waders among others. Today will also be our best chance to find the endangered Black-faced Spoonbill, and a slim possibility of picking up a critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper amongst the large flocks of East Asian waders. On the expansive mudflats we may also find hundreds of Kentish Plovers, Dunlin, Lesser Sand-Plovers, Red-necked Stints, Common Greenshanks, Black-bellied Plovers, Pacific Golden Plovers, and Purple Herons. In the fishponds by the roadside, we will stop to check out the incredible numbers of Black-winged Stilts and hundreds of plovers and peeps. We might pick out Black-tailed Godwit, Long-toed Stint, Spotted Redshanks, and even the scarce Ruff. As we search through the shorebirds, Whiskered Terns and Black-headed Gulls will be flying actively around us.

Finally, at Aogu in Chiayi County we will be astonished at the huge flocks of waders and water birds in the ponds. Among the thousands of Dunlin and Kentish plovers we might find Little Grebe, Long-billed Dowitcher, Ruddy

Turnstone, Green-winged Teal, Gadwall, Northern Pintail, Great Cormorants, more Black-faced Spoonbills, Osprey, and Eastern Marsh-Harrier. Daurian Redstart can often be found in the nearby fields.

NIGHT: Ocean Hotel, Budai

May 1, Day 11: Chiayi to Alishan. This morning we can visit a few more coastal areas where there is a good chance of encountering passage migrants and residents such as Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Common Snipe and possibly Greater Painted-Snipe.

We will aim to reach the famous Firefly Homestay on the lower slopes of Alishan for lunch. This hotel is well known for its ‘pheasant blind’, a comfortable hide that allows for fantastic views of several species, with the stars of the show hopefully being the reclusive Taiwan Partridge and skittish Swinhoe’s Pheasant. We will spend the afternoon at the hide and birding in wet forest near to the hotel.

NIGHT: Firefly Homestay, Alishan

May 2, Day 12: Alishan. This morning we can spend some more time at the pheasant blind before heading uphill to Tataka, the summit area of Alishan, and reacquaint ourselves with some of Taiwan’s higher altitude birds. This eastern section of Alishan is home to East Asia’s highest peak, Yushan, at 13,113 feet. Mikado Pheasant is often easier here than at Dasyueshan. Walking along the Tataka Trail can be very exciting with possibilities including endemics such as Taiwan Barwing, Collared Bush-Robin, Taiwan Bush Warbler and Taiwan Yellow Tit.

Other standout goodies that can be seen here include Golden Parrotbill, Taiwan Rosefinch, White-browed Shortwing (a likely split) and White-browed Bush-Robin, Eurasian Nutcracker (the Taiwan race showing very little spotting), and Eurasian Wren. With luck, we may spot the elusive Taiwan Serow, an endemic goat-like creature that inhabits the cliff sides of these dramatic mountain ranges. More common is the rambunctious Taiwan Macaque, while black bears still inhabit the area, they are now very scarce.

NIGHT: Firefly Homestay, Alishan

May 3, Day 13: Alishan to Douliou. This morning we will visit Alishan again to locate any remaining targets. It is a relatively short drive from Alishan to our final destination, Douliou. After settling in at our hotel in Douliou, we will head out to the nearby bamboo foothills and meet our local ‘pitta handler’. Early May marks the return of the Fairy Pitta, a bird which has suffered dramatic declines in the last few decades, largely a result of its wintering grounds being essentially unknown. Despite this, they are eager to start calling in preparation for the breeding season upon their return to Taiwan. We will spend the afternoon exploring the small back roads and tracks here in search of the stunning and elusive Fairy Pitta. The Douliou area is also a good bet for Taiwan Bamboo Partridge, Taiwan Scimitar-Babbler, Maroon Oriole, Bronzed Drongo, Chinese Goshawk, and Oriental Cuckoo.

NIGHT: Grand Earl Hotel, Douliou

May 4, Day 14: Douliou to Taipei. This morning we will likely continue birding around Douliou with our local guide looking for Fairy Pitta. Depending on which targets we have yet to see, we will then head north and visit some more coastal sites en route to Taipei focusing on finding the uncommon Chinese Egret.

We will have our farewell dinner tonight, reflecting on the superb birding, incredibly spectacular scenery, and natural beauty hidden in the tucked away isle that is Taiwan.

NIGHT: Hotel Riverview, Taipei

May 5, Day 15: Depart Taipei. Participants may schedule their flights home at any time today. Transfers from the hotel will be available. Check out time is noon.

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

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

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 8 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Max Breckenridge



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 **\$6545** per person in double occupancy from Taipei, Taiwan. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 15, 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 Taipei and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$600**.

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 (November 22, 2024) prior to the tour departure date.

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

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

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.**

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| <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.

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. 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 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/>.

ALTITUDE: In Taiwan we will be birding mostly at elevations up to 6,000 feet. On one or two occasions we will drive to 10,000 feet and walk at this elevation for short distances. There will be several walks along forest trails and some short, but fairly steep walks. Where possible, most ascents will be by vehicle and we will then work a given area by walking down-hill.

CLIMATE: At the time of our visit (April-May), and because of the wide range of altitudes (0 to 10,000 feet) that our tour covers, we will encounter a wide range of temperatures, including cold and damp, and almost certainly some rain. Nighttime temperatures in the mountains in Taiwan may drop below freezing and even the days will be cool above 6,000 feet. By contrast, the lowlands are warm and humid, with pleasant nights.

CLOTHING: Casual and warm to cool is the order of the day in this rather conservative region, although short pants, short skirts and halter-tops are not appropriate. Participants may want to pack one set of slightly smarter clothes to wear at our hotel in Taipei. Hard wearing, easy to wash and dry field clothes are ideal. Sturdy hiking boots with a solid lug sole are **essential**; sneakers or sports type shoes **are not appropriate**, as the ground will be wet and possibly slippery a lot of the time in Taiwan. Participants should bring layers rather than one or two large items. Sturdy, rainproof jackets and pants are strongly recommended (shower proof plastic jackets are not sufficient), in addition to at least one warm sweater, down jacket or down vest.

Other items that are recommended include a warm head covering such as a beret or balaclava, in addition to a regular birding hat which offers protection from the sun, gloves and scarf. Thick socks that absorb perspiration and cushion one's feet from hard surfaces are important. It is also useful if the socks are long enough so that the bottom of one's pants can be tucked inside.

SPECIAL NOTE: Please, absolutely no bright colors. Although the birds and other wildlife are relatively approachable, we will be trying to see a number of very elusive species. Muted colors are essential to enhance our chances. Please do not wear brightly colored clothes, hats, gloves, bags, or other paraphernalia. Furthermore, if you can avoid crackling nylon/plastic jackets and pants, this will greatly enhance

everyone's enjoyment of the trip and enable the leader to hear those critical, but so easily overlooked, subtle call notes of the birds you want to see.

CURRENCY: In Taiwan the currency is the New Taiwan Dollar, which is convertible outside Taiwan. Credit cards are widely accepted in Taiwan. Participants are advised to carry sufficient funds in low denomination American Express US dollar travelers' checks and/or US cash; the latter can be very useful in an emergency.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure is required for the United States citizens to enter Taiwan. Upon entering into Taiwan, you will be obtaining a Visa Exempt Status. For this you will need a passport valid for 6 months, and a round trip air ticket. Non-United States citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions. You must carry your passport with you at all times while in Taiwan.

EQUIPMENT: You should have a pair of binoculars in good repair (please check before departure!!). Your tour leader will be carrying a spotting scope; however, you are welcome and encouraged to bring your own spotting scope if you so wish. You should bring all the camera equipment & spare batteries that you will need, as they will be almost impossible to obtain. Nearly everyone brings much too little film or digital storage media and this causes some distress. Please bring more than you think you will need. UV and polarizing filters are recommended, especially at higher elevations where glare can be a problem. Plastic bags are very useful to protect equipment from rain and dust.

A small daypack (either waterproofed or with a strong plastic bag inside) is essential for carrying excess clothing, camera equipment, toiletries, food, and water. However, in many of the areas we will be birding, we will have regular access to our transport, which will be attended by a driver and his mate. Water bottles are important if you like to carry a regular supply of water.

Other useful items include:

- Flashlight or headlamp (as we may be out at night on a few occasions). The guesthouses in the nature reserves are likely to suffer occasional power outages so a small flashlight or headlamp is essential to find your way in your room at night.
- Handy-wipes and paper tissues; these are especially useful. All participants should carry sufficient for their personal needs for the entire tour.
- Spare glasses or contact lenses. Sunglasses may prove useful on occasions.
- One bath towel and face cloth.
- Sunscreen. Lip balm is also essential.
- Umbrella- The collapsible type is easy to carry and useful both against rain and sun.

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

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

COVID-19: We continually emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. Although VENT no longer maintains any of its COVID-era prevention protocols, we strongly recommend best practices for protecting yourself and your fellow travelers against COVID-19 illness. These measures include receiving the primary series vaccinations for those eligible, staying "Up to Date" with COVID-

19 booster shots, wearing high filtration N-95 or KN-95 masks when in airports and on airplanes, and avoiding risky social settings in the lead-up to your tour. These recommendations are firmly rooted in CDC guidance regarding recommendations for avoiding COVID-19. Please visit the **Coronavirus Travel Update** page of our website <https://ventbird.com/covid-19> for our official statement regarding COVID-19 and the operation of our tours. Please visit the CDC website for the most up to date information about COVID-19 and associated guidance for proper health and hygiene: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION:

Departure Tax – An airport departure tax of NT\$300 (approx. USD\$10) is collected upon departure from Taiwan.

Electricity - In Taiwan the supply is 110V, 60 cycles, as in the U.S. A flashlight or headlamp with a good supply of batteries will be essential. Do not rely on an electric razor, or having electricity available for charging your video batteries.

Language - Within Taiwan the official language is Putonghua or Mandarin Chinese.

Time - Taiwan is 12 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time.

Snacks - It is advisable to bring granola-type bars and dried fruit or other snacks, as Western-style snacks may not be available and Chinese food may not include the roughage we have grown accustomed to in our Western diets.

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.

Mackinnon, J. and Phillips, K. *A Field Guide to the Birds of China*. 2000. Not brilliant, but it does include illustrations of the endemic species. This is the recommended book for this tour. We still await the definitive guide to China's birds.

Taiwan Wild Society of Taiwan in collaboration with the Wild Bird Society of Japan, *Taiwan Wild Bird Pictorial Guide*. This is a comprehensive pocket-sized field guide covering all the birds in Taiwan. The plates are of a generally high standard. The drawback is that it is written in Chinese so the text will not be accessible to some readers. Despite this drawback, this little guide is well worth bringing along, as it will enable you to identify any bird you may encounter in Taiwan.

Wild Bird Society of Japan. *A Field Guide to the Birds of Japan*. A useful guide which illustrates many of the wetland species and winter visitors which we may encounter on this tour. Currently out of print and difficult to get.

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 upon publication 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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