

GERMANY: BIRDS & ART IN BERLIN & BRANDENBURG

SEPTEMBER 29 – OCTOBER 8, 2018

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The German capital is a bustling world city, full of architectural and artistic treasures – and blessed with an abundance of readily accessible green space and wild habitats, a combination that makes Berlin and its surroundings a first-rate destination for the birding traveler.

Fully a third of Berlin's land area is occupied by forests, parks, lakes, and fields, with more than thirty formal nature reserves within the city limits. Autumn finds the resident birds joined by a wide variety of migrants and winterers, from noisy troops of Common Cranes to nervous flocks of colorful tits and other passerines. All this wildness goes on just a stone's throw from the great museums and architectural landmarks of the old imperial capital, which is now the leading city in Europe's largest and most influential democracy.



Our tour takes full advantage of Berlin's natural and cultural heritage, with visits to sites commemorating both the bright and the dark sides of German history and excursions in search of the area's wealth of bird species. The city itself will absorb much of our attention, but we will also venture into the nearby countryside of Brandenburg, where we will look for Red Kites, wintering geese, and even the rare (and often elusive) Great Bustard, all in a landscape that at times more

closely recalls Poland than the westerly portions of Germany. Relatively late starts, leisurely meals, and Berlin's friendly and easy-going atmosphere make this an easy and enjoyable tour for anyone.

Based at a single hotel, we'll have plenty of opportunity to explore Berlin and its surroundings at our leisure, taking full advantage of all that this once-again world-class city has to offer.

A note on transportation: Berlin and its surroundings are fortunate to have some of the finest public transit anywhere in the world – safe, immaculately clean, and above all fast. For our city excursions, we will regularly take the subway, bus, or elevated train (the S-Bahn), all of which stop in easy reach of our hotel. Participants will be provided with tickets valid for all three. Farther afield, we will be using chartered 15- or 18-passenger buses with professional drivers.

September 29, Day 1: Departure from Home. Most flights from the United States will depart in the evening, arriving at Berlin Tegel Airport (code TXL) the following morning. Participants should make arrangements to arrive in Berlin on or before September 30. Our hotel is easily reached by taxi (ca. 30 euros) or by bus and train (ca. 4 euros). On request, the VENT office will be happy to assist with hotel reservations for early arrivals.

NIGHT: In transit (overnight flight)

September 30, Day 2: Arrival in Berlin. We will meet at 5:00 p.m. in the lobby of our centrally located hotel for introductions, then walk the 100 yards to catch a bus for the 20-minute ride down Unter den Linden, Berlin's grandest and most historic boulevard. It is a quick walk from there to Republic Square, where we will have dinner together and then, if circumstances permit, ascend to the top of the Reichstag Building, seat of the German government. This neo-Baroque palace was burned in 1933, with fateful political consequences, and reconstructed in the 1990s, with the addition of a spectacular glass dome. If the dome is open – which depends on Parliament sessions, weather, and staffing – we will enjoy a beautiful evening panorama of Berlin and the surrounding countryside before retracing our steps to our hotel.

NIGHT: Victor's Residenz-Hotel Berlin-Am Friedrichshain



Reichstag Dome -- Photo Rick Wright

October 1 Day 3: Birds and Berlin. Across the street from our hotel, the 120-acre Friedrichshain Park was designed in the 1840s to commemorate the centennial of Frederick the Great's accession to the throne of Prussia. Almost two hundred years later, the formal beds, brushy edges, and tall trees boast a surprising variety of breeding and wintering birds. We will go out this morning in search of such residents as Mandarin and Tufted Ducks, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Blue and Great Tits, Short-toed Treecreeper, European Nuthatch, and Hooded Crow. Like Berlin's other parks, the Friedrichshain is a common "migrant trap," and we can hope for a surprise or two at this time of year.

If the birding is good, we are likely to spend the entire morning wandering the trails here, then have lunch together before taking a short break in the early afternoon. Afterwards, we'll hop back on a convenient bus and ride west to the Brandenburg Gate, long a symbol of divided Berlin and now at the heart of the united city. Time and weather permitting, we may duck into the Tiergarten, the city's largest park, for a little more birding, or simply explore the elegant cityscape of Paris Square, one of Berlin's finest addresses. We will have dinner in one of the area's many good restaurants.

NIGHT: Victor's Residenz-Hotel Berlin-Am Friedrichshain

October 2 Day 4: Unteres Odertal and Chorin Monastery. As it approaches the Baltic Sea, the Oder River spreads out to create one of the finest and wildest floodplains anywhere in western Europe. Flooded fields and pastures alternate with tall forests and dry brushlands, creating excellent conditions for a wide variety of migrants and winter residents. Our chartered minibus will let us out at the Teerofenbrücke, the starting point for our walk on wide, flat paved paths towards the river and the Polish border. Cranes, ducks, and geese can be common overhead, and the fields and marshes are watched over by raptors, usually including the impressive White-tailed Eagle. More heavily vegetated areas may harbor Common Kingfisher, Middle or Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, and the usual suite of colorful tits and finches, often including Hawfinches.



Geese at Gülper See -- Photo Rick Wright

After lunch in nearby Schwedt, we will pay a short afternoon visit to the beautiful old church at Chorin. The ruins of the Cistercian monastery here are among the most important examples of red-brick Gothic in Germany. Construction began in 1273; the monastery complex was repurposed in the Reformation and gradually left to fall into disrepair. "Rediscovered" by the romantic nationalists of nineteenth-century Prussia, the ruins were stabilized and are now a cultural center with a full summer program of exhibitions and concerts – and a favored site for Black Redstarts, which sing from the roof of the ruined nave just as their ancestors did. The return drive to our hotel is a bit more than an hour, leaving us a short break before dinner in Berlin.

NIGHT: Victor's Residenz-Hotel Berlin-Am Friedrichshain

October 3, Day 5: Sans-Souci. Our minibus will drive us 40 minutes to the tony suburb of Potsdam and Sans-Souci, the rococo summer retreat of Frederick the Great. The palace is set in a large and elegant park full of grottoes, statues, and formal and informal gardens. We will spend the morning walking along the wooded paths and streamside thickets of this baroque jewel, enjoying the common woodland birds of the area and always on the lookout for uncommon or surprising migrants. We can expect to see such beauties as Mandarin Duck, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Eurasian Jay, European Nuthatch, European Robin, and Wood Pigeon, and there is always the chance of an early flock of Bramblings or other "winter" finches.



Mandarin Duck -- Photo Rick Wright

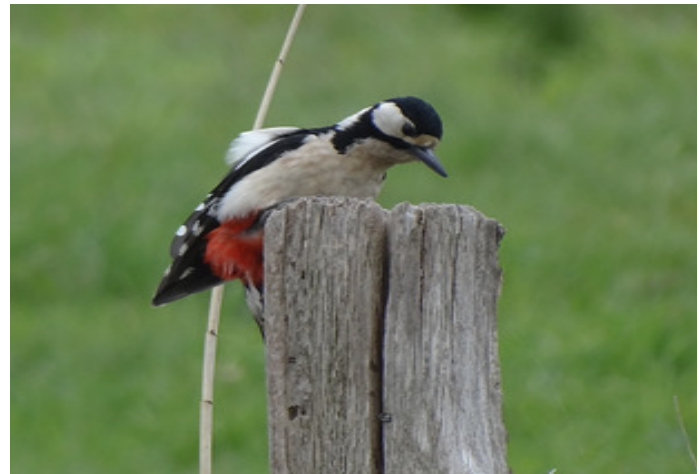
We will have a relaxed lunch in a very good restaurant in Potsdam, after which those who wish may tour the public rooms of the palace, one of the great monuments of the European Enlightenment. We will be back in Berlin in plenty of time to put our feet up before gathering again for dinner.

NIGHT: Victor's Residenz-Hotel Berlin-Am Friedrichshain

October 4, Day 6: Gülper See. Today our minibus will take us west to the rural lowlands of the Havelland, where most of Germany's remaining Great Bustards reside. From a pre-war population of some 4000 individuals, the country's bustard population had declined to about fifty birds by 1997. Intensive conservation efforts, including the human fostering and subsequent re-release of the vulnerable fledglings, has resulted in more than tripling that number, and the birds are once again reproducing on their own. Finding the bustards on the vast open fields where they winter can be ridiculously easy – or frustratingly impossible. We will drive to two sites that have been reliable in the past, and with luck will encounter anywhere from a few to a few dozen of these giant birds. As we search, we may find good numbers of Northern Lapwings on the fields. Among the birds of prey on our route, we will be looking especially for Merlin, Northern Goshawk, and Rough-legged Hawk.

We will wind up at the Gülper See, a large lake that has long been one of the best-known birding sites in Brandenburg. The sparse conifer woods here are a good spot for Black Woodpecker, and water birds may include thousands of Graylag, Tundra Bean, and Greater White-fronted Geese, along with a nice smattering of ducks and shorebirds. One of the specialties here is the White-tailed Eagle, half a dozen or more of which can sometimes be seen harassing the waterfowl or simply loafing in the shallows outside the blinds.

We will have lunch at a traditional country inn, then return to Berlin for a short rest and dinner.



Great Spotted Woodpecker -- Photo Rick Wright

NIGHT: Victor's Residenz-Hotel Berlin-Am Friedrichshain

October 5 Day 7: Charlottenburg. Set in a western suburb of Berlin, about half an hour by bus from our hotel, Charlottenburg is the largest and most important of the royal residences around the city. Originally the summer home of Queen Sophie-Charlotte, the massive house was built between 1695 and 1742; still undergoing a long process of restoration and repair, this enormous palace is perhaps the most eloquent surviving witness to the courtly culture of its period. The park combines formal gardens with less structured landscapes, and we will stroll through in search of common resident birds and migrant passerines. This is a prime spot for woodland birds such as the very secretive Northern Goshawk, and the lakes and secluded ponds shelter Gray Herons,

Mandarin and Tufted Ducks, Great Cormorants, and other water birds. We expect to walk a bit less than a mile in total, but if it is as birdy as it often is, our excursion may fill the entire morning.



Schloss Charlottenburg -- Photo Rick Wright

We will have lunch across the street from the palace grounds, then have the option to visit one of Charlottenburg's fine smaller museums. The Bröhan Museum features decorative arts from France, Germany, and Austria; the Berggruen is famous for its modern art, including a rich collection of works by Picasso, Matisse, and Klee. It is a quick ride back to our hotel and dinner in Berlin.

NIGHT: Victor's Residenz-Hotel Berlin-Am Friedrichshain

October 6, Day 8: The Märkische Schweiz. Thirty miles east of Berlin, the Märkische Schweiz is a richly varied landscape, protected under an EU directive, combining forested hills, narrow gallery woodlands, lakes, fishponds, and open fields. Waterfowl numbers are often high, and we could see a fair portion of the more than 20,000 Tundra Bean Geese that regularly winter here, much to the delight of the resident White-tailed Eagles. This is a good site for the scarce and inconspicuous Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, and we will also be alert to the possibility of Willow and Crested Tits on woodland edges.

We will break for a leisurely lunch in a restaurant overlooking the handsome ruins of yet another red-brick Cistercian church, the nunnery of Altfriedland. On our return to the city, we will leave ourselves some time to relax before heading back out to dinner in Berlin.

NIGHT: Victor's Residenz-Hotel Berlin-Am Friedrichshain

October 7, Day 9: Museum Island and the Linum Cranes. With their origins in the private holdings of the Prussian kings and, later, German emperors, the almost overwhelmingly rich collections held on Berlin's Museum Island – ranging from Babylonian and Egyptian antiquities to treasures of nineteenth-century painting and sculpture – are on exhibit in imposing buildings constructed between 1824 and 1930. These grand structures suffered badly during the Second World War, but a thorough restoration beginning in 1999 has turned them once again into a state-of-the-art cultural landmark.

There is far too much here to see in a single morning, or in a lifetime of mornings. Some of us will opt for the Pergamon Museum, with its monumental installation of the Ishtar Gate, while others may choose to visit the

Germany: Birds & Art in Berlin & Brandenburg, Page 6

small but breathtaking Islamic Museum, highlighted by delicate manuscripts paintings and the early seventeenth-century drawing room of a wealthy Syrian merchant. The “Old” Museum, an architectural treasure in itself, holds an impressive collection of objects from Ancient Greece and Rome, while the “New” Museum (built 1843-55) houses the famous bust of Nefertiti, the most recognizable piece of Egyptian art on the planet. European Impressionism is richly represented in the paintings of the National Gallery; vast collections of magnificent European and Byzantine sculpture are housed in the Bode Museum. Just off the island, the German Historical Museum is a model of thoughtful presentation and interpretation, its exhibits tracing the history of central Europe over the past millennium and a half.



Common Cranes -- Photo Rick Wright

Lunch today is on your own; we can recommend any of the museum cafés or numerous restaurants lining the streets around the Museum Island. We will re-assemble at our hotel in the early afternoon for the 45-minute drive into the soggy landscapes just northwest of Berlin. The fields, ponds, and marshes around the village of Linum are the most significant inland staging area in Europe for southwest-bound Common Cranes, and in the late afternoon, we can hope to see anywhere from many hundreds to tens of thousands on the surrounding pastures. We will bird from the roadside and, weather permitting, on the smooth, wide fishpond trail. With the noise of cranes and geese still in our ears, we will return to Berlin for one final festive dinner together.

NIGHT: Victor’s Residenz-Hotel Berlin-Am Friedrichshain

October 8, Day 10: Departures for Home. Participants may schedule their departures from Berlin any time today. It is a 30-minute taxi ride from our hotel to Berlin Tegel Airport, and the airport is small enough that two hours is generally enough time to comfortably check in and pass through security.

TOUR SIZE: This tour is limited to 8 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Rick Wright



Rick Wright, a native of southeast Nebraska, studied French, German, philosophy, and life sciences at the University of Nebraska, where he worked in the bird collections of the State Museum and served as teaching assistant to Paul Johnsgard. After a detour to Harvard Law School, Rick took the M.A. and Ph.D. in German at Princeton University. His years as an academic included appointments as assistant professor of German at the University of Illinois, reader/scholar at Princeton University’s Index of Christian Art, and associate professor of medieval studies at Fordham University. Among his scholarly publications are two books on the Latin and German animal literature of the late Middle Ages. He is also the author of the American Birding Association’s field guides to birds of New Jersey and of Arizona, and of the Peterson Reference Guide to North American sparrows. A prolific contributor to the birding literature and a

sought-after lecturer, Rick lives with his wife, Alison Beringer, and their chocolate lab, Gellert, in Bloomfield, New Jersey, where he is an appointed member of the environmental commission.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$3,795** per person in double occupancy from Berlin. Except for lunch on Day 9, this includes all meals beginning with dinner on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 10, all lodging and ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leader. It does not include airfare from your home to Berlin and return, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$450**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The initial deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person. If you would like to pay your initial 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. If you prefer to pay the initial deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard, Visa or American Express at the time of registration. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at www.ventbird.com) should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

PAYMENTS: Initial tour deposits may be made by MasterCard, Visa, American Express check, money order, or bank transfer. All other tour payments, including second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc., must be made by check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Cancellation penalties and refunds are based on the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$250** 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 fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions. *We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.*

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$250*
Fewer than 120 days 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.

Upon cancellation of the transportation or travel services, where you, the customer, are not at fault and have not cancelled in violation of the terms and conditions of any of the contract for transportation or travel services, all sums paid to VENT for services not received by you will be promptly refunded by VENT to you unless you otherwise advise VENT in writing.

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

TRIP INSURANCE: We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. VENT recommends Travel Insured International as our preferred insurance provider. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may already have under other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related

cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. **Contact Travel Insured International (800-243-3174 or www.travelinsured.com) before registration for details.** Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than Travel Insured International, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is impossible to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based on 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 on 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.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and a wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any air travel arrangements from your home and return. 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 responsible for any air ticket penalties.*

CLOTHING: As this trip combines birding with walking in cities and at historical sites, you should consider bringing a mix of clothing that prepares you for all activities. The following items are recommended:

- **Pants:** A couple pairs of pants are essential. Many people prefer mid-weight pants made of cotton or other material, but denim, though not as comfortable, is certainly acceptable for wearing in the field. In restaurants, churches, and palaces, you will be more comfortable wearing neat, but still informal, attire.
- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Cabela’s and REI carry field clothing that many birders find appealing. Pants and shirts made of lightweight, yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular.
- **Shirts:** Comfortable long-sleeved shirts of any style are good for field wear.
- **Hat:** A hat for protection from the sun is essential.
- **Sweaters and Coats:** No cold weather is anticipated on this trip, but a sweater and coat or jacket will come in handy most mornings. In the event we encounter rain or mist, you’ll want to have a water-repellent jacket as well. The weather can vary considerably in the course of a single day, so dressing in layers is a good strategy.
- **Gloves:** Even on the warmest day, morning and evening can be chilly; light gloves will help keep you warm.

FOOTWEAR: Water-resistant hiking shoes are best for our birding expeditions; boots are fine, too, of course, but not necessary at any of the sites we visit. In the city, lighter-weight shoes will be more comfortable.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service may be available at an extra charge in our hotel, but it is always best to bring enough clothes to get you through the entire tour.

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

- Small daypack for extra clothing, books, supplies, and optics.
- Notebook and pencils.

- Alarm clock.
- Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection; high-SPF sunscreen.
- Lip balm and lotions.
- Cameras, lenses, and extra batteries and memory cards.
- Telescoping walking stick – highly recommended for those with difficulty walking.
- Personal toiletries.
- Pocket packages of Kleenex.
- Umbrellas can be borrowed from the front desk at our hotel.

BINOCULARS & SPOTTING SCOPES:

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

Spotting Scopes – Your tour leader will have a scope available for group use throughout the trip, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. The leader will let you know each evening whether scopes will be useful the following day. You will find it especially useful to have your own scope when we are watching ducks, geese, and cranes.

CLIMATE & WEATHER: Early autumn is a very nice time to travel in eastern Germany. The heat of summer is past, and winter is still far away; this so-called Nachsommer, the “aftersummer,” can be full of perfect days of bright sun, warm air, and migrating birds. Nighttime low temperatures are generally in the 40s and afternoon highs in the low 60s. Rain, usually in the form of intermittent showers or mist, is always possible, but brilliant autumn days are just as likely. Our schedule is flexible enough to easily accommodate being rained out of one or the other of our destinations.

CONDITIONS: Our days will be full of natural and cultural experiences, but our pace will always be easy and relaxed. Though birding will predominate on some days and cultural tourism on others, most of this tour is characterized – thanks to Berlin’s abundance of green space – by a balance between the two.

The physical demands posed by this trip are easy to moderate, but bear in mind that some of our historical sightseeing involves a moderate amount of walking and standing. Towns and villages often have uneven pavement, and in general, European cities have more curbs, stairs, and other minor obstacles than you may be used to. You will never be subjected to physical demands exceeding your capabilities.

While we are birding, our walking will be restricted to paths and roadsides, and we will not walk more than a mile at a time. If you are not able to comfortably walk a mile on broad level paths, ascend and descend stairs in train stations, or stand for several minutes as we search for birds, you will not find this tour as enjoyable.

Some of our activities are optional, and thanks to our central location on the Tiergarten, it is always possible to simply take part or all of a day off to enjoy the city on your own if you’d like.

Extra time in Berlin and Germany: Berlin has excellent rail and good flight connections to the rest of Germany and to the other countries of central and eastern Europe. Our tour program is intended to include what we think of as many of the area’s top historical and natural sites and many of its wonderful birds. But there is much more to see in Germany and nearby portions of Europe; participants with an interest in enjoying activities beyond the stated program should come early or stay on after the tour ends.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months after your return from the tour is required, with at least two blank pages for entry stamps. Citizens of the United States and Canada do not need a tourist visa to enter

Germany: Birds & Art in Berlin & Brandenburg, Page 10

Germany. Rules and regulations pertaining to non-U.S. and Canadian citizens may vary; please check with the consulates or embassies.

CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS: Your tour payment includes most necessary expenses while you are in Germany. You will need cash to cover such personal expenses as taxis, gifts, laundry, gratuities, lunch on day 9, and snacks and meals on your own. At the end of the tour, please be ready to reimburse the leader for any alcoholic beverages you have had at meals.

The official currency in Germany is the euro; US dollars are not accepted anywhere in the country. The current exchange rate can be found at www.xe.com. You can order euros through your bank before leaving home, or withdraw them from ATM's at the airport or in Berlin; the closest ATM to our hotel is across the street at the train station, a walk of some 30 seconds. Please ask your bank or credit card issuer about the use of your ATM and credit cards abroad.

ELECTRICITY: Electrical current in Germany is 220-240V (110-120V in the US). Electrical outlets are one of the two European standard socket types: the "Type C" Europlug and the "Type E" and "Type F" Schuko. All of these outlets are ungrounded, with openings for two round pins. Most new electronic devices can run on 220V, but if you have items that do not, you will need a step-down transformer in addition to the plug adapter.

LANGUAGE: German is spoken throughout the area, but Berlin is a large, cosmopolitan city, and nearly everyone speaks good English.

TIME: Germany is on Central European Time, which is 6 hours ahead of Eastern Time and 9 hours ahead of Pacific Time. Daylight saving time will be in effect during our tour.

HEALTH: At this time, no major shots or inoculations are required for entry into Germany. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with the "routine vaccines," including influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), polio, measles/mumps/rubella (MMR), and diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT). Additionally, participants should strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B.

If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, 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.

As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots and strongly consider inoculations against hepatitis types A and B.

Those who are not fit for light to moderate physical activity, including those with physical disabilities that affect mobility and balance, or other conditions associated with poor health, are advised not to join the trip. **Comprehensive optional travel insurance is available and recommended. This coverage is available through your trip cancellation policy, if purchased through *Travel Insured International*. Please consult your insurance agent or existing policy, if in effect, for the terms and limitations of your existing coverage. Refer to the section on Trip Insurance.**

Sun Exposure – The sun's ultraviolet rays are damaging to the eyes and skin with prolonged exposure. Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. 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 ultraviolet-blocking, polarized sunglasses.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers'

Information Line 800-CDC-INFO (232-4636), or you can check the website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

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

Birds

Mullarney, K., L. Svensson, and D. Zetterstrom. 2010. *Birds of Europe*. 2nd edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press. This is the standard field guide. If you have the first edition of this splendid guide, please update to the second. If you bring another title, it should be in addition to, and not instead of, this book.

Mammals

MacDonald, D., and P. Barrett. 1993. *Mammals of Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

History, Art, Architecture

Henckel von Dommersmarck, F. 2014. *The Lives of Others: A Screenplay*. Pushkin Press.

Larsen, E. 2012. *In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin*. New York: Crown.

MacLean, R. 2014. *Berlin: Portrait of a City through the Centuries*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel your VENT leaders or drivers 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: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger 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 passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its Agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. When this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on October 25, 2017, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these

Germany: Birds & Art in Berlin & Brandenburg, Page 12

tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.

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