

BHUTAN

APRIL 8 – 27, 2018

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Bhutan is truly paradise on earth, and without a doubt one of the world's finest travel experiences. Untouched, primeval forests extend as far as the eye can see, and the birding is fantastic beyond doubt. The Bhutanese people have one of the most fascinating and least disturbed cultures in the world, a rich Buddhist culture that respects all forms of life. Some of the very special species that we encounter on this tour include the unique Ibisbill, breathtaking male Satyr Tragopan, gorgeous Himalayan Monal and Blood Pheasant, endangered Rufous-necked Hornbill, the beautiful Ward's Trogon, and the exquisite Beautiful Nuthatch. There is an abundance of other interesting and little known Himalayan species. Bhutan is THE place to see Himalayan avifauna.

Our tour is scheduled to coincide with the onset of spring. Many species will be in song and many plants will be flowering, including spectacular rhododendrons. The Himalayas are the world's highest mountains, pristine and majestic. Skies are pierced by rugged, snow-encrusted crags, their slopes blanketed in forests. For some years now, scientists and naturalists alike have been aware that the farther east one travels in the Himalayas, the richer the forests become in birds and other wildlife. Bhutan is the pinnacle of that diversity and we will sample its biodiversity from a high pass at 12,000 feet down through evergreen, broad-leaf, deciduous and subtropical forests to the sal forest of the lowlands.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours has operated more than 30 full-length Bhutan birding tours, making us the most experienced bird-tour company to explore this country. In fact we have operated a trip to Bhutan every year since 1994! Our tour has been redesigned over the years as a result of new discoveries and in order to accommodate the changing face of this fascinating country.

One thing you can be assured of is exemplary hospitality. Our ground agents do a magnificent job of making things as comfortable and enjoyable as possible. We are treated to very comfortable walk-in tents and cots for our five nights camping. Full American cooked breakfasts and lunches prepared by our ground agents in the field add considerably to the relaxation and overall enjoyment of the tour. Some of our dining locations in the shadow of towering, snow-covered mountains just have to be seen to be believed. Most of our birding will be along little-traveled, paved roads that bisect untouched forest. When appropriate and the opportunity exists, we will walk forest trails; however, this will not be a strenuous tour. Although a sense of adventure will be a decided advantage, anyone in reasonable health will be able to cope with this very special spring tour.

April 8, Day 1: International Flight to New Delhi. Most flights from the United States connect with flights bound for New Delhi that typically arrive late the following evening or in the early hours of the morning. If time permits, we suggest arriving a day early to allow for potential flight delays and to be well rested. We will depart for Bhutan early on Day 3. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with any additional lodging arrangements.

NIGHT: In transit (overnight flight)

April 9, Day 2: Arrival in New Delhi. Upon arrival, after clearing immigration and customs, you will be met by our ground agent and escorted to the Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi near the airport. Note that New Delhi's local time is one-half hour offset from the regular hourly time zones.

NIGHT: Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi, New Delhi

April 10, Day 3: Fly Delhi, India to Paro, Bhutan. Today we will take the Druk Air flight to Paro, Bhutan (currently scheduled as an early morning flight, but this could change). With a bit of luck we should enjoy good views of the Himalayas (if it is clear, spectacular views), an incredibly rugged landscape encompassing many of the highest mountains in the world, including Everest, Kanchenjunga, Makalu and Jomolhari (sacred to the Bhutanese). After clearing immigration and customs we will be met by our Bhutanese hosts and from the airport work our way to the hotel. As VENT leader Steve Hilty remarked on first setting foot in the kingdom, "This is fairytale land." Indeed so!

We will spend the afternoon exploring the lovely but relatively dry Paro Valley where we can see such typical Himalayan riverine species as Brown Dipper, White Wagtail, White-capped Redstart, Blue Whistling-Thrush and the ubiquitous Plumbeous Redstart, in addition to widespread species such as Oriental Turtle-Dove and Russet Sparrow. With luck we may spot our first Ibisbill along the clear rushing river. This unique Himalayan shorebird, placed in a family of its own, is often so subtle and well-camouflaged as to be taken for a glacial stone. There is a good chance for Black-tailed Crake and the occasional Eurasian Hobby.

NIGHT: Bondey Resort, Paro

April 11, Day 4: Cheli La; Drive to Thimphu. From our hotel we will wind upwards through blue pine and hemlock forests to a pass at over 12,000 feet. If we are lucky and the weather is clear, we may be treated to splendid views of both sacred Jomolhari and adjacent Jiju Drake, not to mention a 270 degree view of the Paro and Ha valleys and their surrounding hills. But this is not our main objective. Cheli La (La means "Pass") provides us with the only opportunity of the tour to ascend to the treeline and sub-alpine meadows and dwarf rhododendron scrub, and thus our best chance for several birds we are unlikely to find elsewhere. Without doubt our primary target will be the Himalayan Monal, a pheasant of unparalleled beauty. Coveys of Blood Pheasants are often approachable. Other species that we may encounter today include Kalij Pheasant, Snow Pigeon, Spotted Laughingthrush, White-browed Bush-Robin (elusive), Blue-fronted Redstart, White-collared Blackbird, Rufous-breasted Accentor, Rosy Pipit and the exquisite Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch, to mention a few. After breakfast and lunch in the field we will drive to Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan, arriving in the late afternoon.

Located at 7,700 feet, the small city of Thimphu is one of the few capitals in the world that lacks traffic lights! Instead some very theatrical policemen direct traffic. We will enter Thimphu across the Lungten Zampa Bridge (Bridge of Prophecy), festooned with colorful prayer flags, and wind our way through this very attractive town of civil servants and shopkeepers to our hotel.

NIGHT: Hotel Riverview, Thimphu

April 12, Day 5: Thimphu to Punakha via Dochu La. From Dochu La we have a good chance of viewing the Himalayas as they unfold in the morning light. Dochu La is an hour east of Thimphu and here, amidst seemingly endless prayer flags, we'll commence our exploration of Bhutan's mixed conifer and broad-leaf forests. The diversity of birds and flowering plants is quite fantastic. On previous tours we have watched in disbelief as the rare Fire-tailed Myzornis, or range-restricted Hoary-throated Barwings, converged on a flowering rhododendron, together with a flock of Gould's and Green-tailed sunbirds. At the same time, Olive-backed Pipits sang in display overhead, and Yellow-billed Blue Magpies foraged along a moist gully. By lunchtime we will have descended into the dry Punakha valley, afterwards following the Po Chu (Chu means "river"). We will explore along the beautiful river in search of such species as the Ibisbill, River Lapwing, and Crested Kingfisher. In addition, migrant waterfowl sometimes rest up on the riverine islands including Ruddy Shelduck or occasional Bar-headed Geese. This valley is an important migration conduit and often harbors interesting migrants. We will search a regular

feeding haunt for the world's rarest, second-largest and perhaps least-known heron, the White-bellied Heron. Just knowing that this very endangered bird is a possibility here is exciting, though we will be very lucky to find one as just a few pairs are currently known to survive.

NIGHT: Zangtho Pelri Hotel, Punakha

April 13, Day 6: Tashithang Valley. We will have the entire day to explore the magnificent forest of the Tashitang National Park. We should find many different species, perhaps including Black Eagle, Great Barbet, Striated and Mountain bulbuls, Chestnut-headed and Slaty-bellied tesias, Brownish-flanked Bush-Warbler (with a remarkable song), Spotted Elachura, Nepal Fulvetta, Bhutan Laughingthrush, Crimson-faced Liocichla (a scarce skulker), Dark-sided Flycatcher, the glowing Small Niltava and the stunning Scarlet Finch. We may have a chance to watch a pair of elegant Spotted or Slaty-backed forketails as they forage in a Himalayan torrent. Typical in the tall trees are species like Rufous Woodpecker, Greater Yellownape, Short-billed Minivet, Black-winged Cuckoo-Shrike, Maroon Oriole, Gray Treepie, Verditer Flycatcher, and Whiskered Yuhina. The beauty of the dramatic landscape coupled with the colors of the surrounding forests is truly quite enchanting. Our hotel also offers some good birding in the cool of the morning with regular sightings of Slender-billed Oriole and at dusk Gray Nightjar.

NIGHT: Zangtho Pelri Hotel, Punakha

April 14, Day 7: Visit to Punakha Dzong Then Drive to Pele La. If the head abbot is not in residence at the spectacular Punakha Dzong ("fortress"), we hope to tour the colorful inner sanctum of this working monastery. It is decorated with spectacular artwork and home to sacred Buddhist relics, many centuries old. This immense building is one of the great sights of Bhutan and photographic opportunities abound. After touring the dzong we will begin our ascent to Pele La, the next of our passes. We climb through moist oak and broad-leaf forests, before a sprinkling of tall conifers comes in at higher elevations. These exquisite mixed-forests are likely to be ablaze with flowering rhododendrons and magnolias. Just below the pass we will find ourselves in a wonderland of gnarled moss-covered trees with occasional open meadows where we are likely to spot our first yaks, perhaps grazing amidst blankets of colorful primulas. We'll make sample stops all along the way to search for the birds of the various zones and will undoubtedly be entranced by the scenes of the magnificent snow-capped Himalayan peaks soaring in the background.

A few of the more unusual birds that we may encounter today include Kalij Pheasant; Black Eagle; Wedge-tailed Pigeon; Crimson-breasted and Darjeeling woodpeckers; Black-eared and Green shrike-babblers; Fire-capped, Black-throated and Yellow-browed tits; and Brown Bullfinch. At this season these forests are filled with the calls of the arriving cuckoos, and we should hear and perhaps spot Large and Whistling hawk-cuckoos and Himalayan and Common cuckoos.

After lunch at the high Pele La pass (11,400 feet), we will make a detour to our delightful campsite among rhododendron thickets, yak pastures and vociferous Satyr Tragopans. In the late afternoon a slow cruise down the nearly-deserted old road provides a chance to spot one of these incredibly beautiful pheasants, as well as other birds of the higher zone and mammals like the Himalayan Goral (a goat-antelope) and Sambar (a large deer related to the North American elk). Even the rarely-seen Red Panda has been found here.

NIGHT: Camping – Pele La (ca. 10,800 feet)

April 15, Day 8: Birding the Pele La Area and Drive to Trongsa. We will take a morning drive to spend more time in prime habitat for the Satyr Tragopan and Himalayan Monal. While they are easy to hear, it takes luck and good eyes to spot them when they emerge from the thickets. These upper-elevation mixed forests, lit by rhododendron trees and grazed at their periphery by herds of yak, are home to much more than pheasants. Small birds can be surprisingly numerous, many of them roaming in mixed-flocks dominated by Rufous-vented and Coal tits. Accompanying the tits are likely to be a variety of laughingthrushes, leaf-warblers, treecreepers, yuhinas and fulvettas. Though irregular in their occurrence, some spectacular "northern finches" may also be found here. Species we will look for include Red-headed Bullfinch; colorful White-winged or Collared grosbeaks; rosefinches

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like Blanford's, Dark-breasted and Dark-rumped; and even the demure Crimson-browed Finch. Other birds of this environment include Himalayan Vulture, Spotted Nutcracker (typical of all of the high passes), Great Parrotbill, Scaly-breasted Cupwing, Golden-breasted Fulvetta, White-collared Blackbird and the elusive Plain-backed Thrush.

From Pele La we will descend into the heart of central Bhutan's Black Mountain region. Much of our journey will be through beautiful broad-leaf forest and of course there will be regular stops for birding, botanic exploration, and photography along the way including Chendebji, the site of a classic ancient Nepalese chorten (Buddhist monument). Trongsa, our destination for the night, lies on the slopes of the deep Mangde Chu valley, and the town and its imposing dzong will be spotted long before we arrive at our comfortable hotel.

NIGHT: Yangkhil Resort, Trongsa

April 16, Day 9: Trongsa to Bumthang. This morning we will gradually wind our way up to Yutong La through some truly magnificent rhododendron and magnolia groves, spending the morning birding the high country. Among the many exciting possibilities are such great birds as the rare and unusual Fire-tailed Myzornis, the absolutely stunning Spotted Laughingthrush, and the strange Slender-billed Scimitar-Babbler, as well as some obscure birds like Gray-sided and Hume's bush-warblers. Mixed-flocks are frequent on this mountain and every one of them offers the possibility of something new popping up.

After crossing the pass at 11,400 feet we descend through equally impressive silver fir and spruce forests to the upland valleys of the Bumthang District. These broad glacial valleys are the center of traditional Bhutanese farm country, highly photogenic and delightful. We will have time for a stop at a craft center to admire (and perhaps purchase) traditional Bhutanese weavings and a limited variety of "souvenirs." Our accommodation tonight is in a comfortably appointed, traditional-style Bhutanese lodge. The proprietor of the guesthouse is widely considered the finest weaver in the kingdom, and for those who wish to purchase something very special, she has some museum quality pieces for sale (prices ranging from US \$400 to \$1,000). There are also smaller, less expensive items available for purchase. For many participants, meeting her and seeing her work has been a highlight of the tour, and if there is interest, it may be possible to arrange a weaving demonstration.

NIGHT: Leki Guest House, Bumthang

April 17, Day 10: Drive to Sengor. The drive to Sengor, below Thrumsing La, is considered by many to be one of the most dramatic in the world. As always, our journey is likely to be conducted against a backdrop of jagged snow-capped mountains, magnificent forests, prayer flags fluttering in the breeze, and villages little changed for 500 years. Each day in this medieval land evokes perennially special memories.

Along the way we will explore the Ura valley, the loveliest of the Bumthang valleys. Red-billed Choughs "klew" from shingle roofs, while flocks of Russet Sparrows and Plain Mountain-Finches search for seeds among recently plowed fields where Eurasian Hoopoes and Eurasian Magpies forage. With its spring light and pastel shades, this valley and its village are indeed an artist's dream.

Climbing slowly through towering forests of larch, silver fir, spruce and hemlocks, we eventually top out on Thrumsing La (12,400 feet), the highest point that we will reach on the tour. Throughout the day we will make stops to sample the avifauna along the upper reaches of this magnificent road, especially alert to a Satyr Tragopan feeding by the roadside or coveys of Blood Pheasants scuttling off the road, or high-quality skulkers like the Golden and Himalayan bush-robins or Fulvous Parrotbill. At this time of the year, many species are only found in the large mixed flocks dominated by tits. With them we may find Yellow-bellied Fairy-Fantail; Buff-barred, Ashy-throated, Lemon-rumped and Blyth's leaf-warblers; colorful Chestnut-tailed and Red-tailed minlas; and Rufous-winged Fulvetta. Other species that we might encounter today include Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Hodgson's Treecreeper; Brown and Great parrotbill, Black-faced Laughingthrush, Rufous-bellied Niltava, Slaty-blue Flycatcher, Chestnut-bellied Rock-Thrush, and Fire-tailed Sunbird. From Thrumsing La we descend through a

wonderland of immense moss-draped conifers with an understory of dense bamboo to our campsite in mixed-forest at about 10,000 feet.

NIGHT: Camping at Sengor (10,000 feet or lower)

April 18-19, Days 11-12: Sengor to Yongkola. Our campsite at Sengor is in the midst of some lovely scenery. This provides an unparalleled opportunity to explore the upper elevations of the Limithang Road to look for some of Bhutan's most prized bird species: Satyr Tragopan, Fire-tailed Myzornis, Slender-billed Scimitar-Babbler, Bar-winged Wren-Babbler, Black-throated Parrotbill and the dapper Gold-naped Finch. All of these species are difficult to find anywhere besides Bhutan.

The Limithang Road is truly one of the great birding roads of the world and after birding the upper elevations, we will begin a gradual descent to the Yongkola area at about 5,500 feet. This paved but infrequently-traveled road leads through some of the most beautiful broad-leaf forests in the entire Himalayas. We have two days to explore them, from the cool mid-elevations down to the warmer subtropical. Stretching away seemingly endlessly to the horizon, these magnificent forests have many tall trees sporting impressive girths on huge buttresses. Epiphytic orchids abound on the heavy branches, while the understory is often relatively clear. The mid-story is typically strung with enormous woody vines and lianas, and thick bamboo stands line the road in places. The diversity of forest habitats makes for a great number of birds possible along this transect.

The following is a selection of the birds recorded in this area: Chestnut-breasted and Rufous-throated partridges (heard often, rarely seen); Rufous-bellied Eagle; Speckled Wood-Pigeon; Rufous-necked Hornbill; Ward's Trogon (becoming increasingly difficult); Collared Owlet; Golden-throated and Blue-throated barbets; Bay Woodpecker; Gray-chinned Minivet; Black-headed and Pied shrike-babblers; Common Green-Magpie; Sultan and Yellow-cheeked tits; Sikkim Treecreeper; Striated Bulbul; Pygmy Cupwing; all three tesias; a great variety of warblers including Gray-hooded, White-spectacled, Gray-cheeked, Chestnut-crowned and Black-faced; Black-throated Prinia; White-naped Yuhina; Rufous-capped and Golden babblers; Rufous-throated Wren-Babbler; Yellow-throated Fulvetta; the exquisite Himalayan Cutia; Striated, Scaly, Gray-sided and Blue-winged laughingthrushes; Red-billed Leiothrix; Rusty-fronted Barwing; Blue-winged Minla; Pale and Pygmy blue-flycatchers; Large Niltava; White-browed Shortwing; White-tailed Robin; Sapphire Flycatcher; Fire-breasted Flowerpecker; Black-throated Sunbird; and Scarlet Finch (the males have to be seen to be believed!).

The extensive bamboo thickets at various elevations harbor some rarely-seen specialties and with a bit of luck we might find Black-throated or Greater Rufous-headed parrotbills, Slender-billed and Streak-breasted scimitar-babblers, the range-restricted Broad-billed Warbler, and even the elusive Coral-billed Scimitar-Babbler. Some of the rarest and least-known birds of the Himalayas have also been found in this region and maybe we'll be the lucky ones to lure a Blue-fronted Robin into view or see the near-mythical Sikkim Wedge-billed (Black-breasted) Babbler.

NIGHTS: Trogon Villa, Yongkola

April 20, Day 13: Drive from Yongkola to Trongsa. Today will be a travel day as we retrace our steps back to Trongsa, with time to stop for things of special interest before arriving at our lodging in the late afternoon. Trongsa is rightly famous for its spectacular dzong. Located on a precipice dominating the entrance to three valleys, the dzong seems symbolic of Bhutan. Our attractive mountainside lodge here provides a breathtaking panorama of the valleys and the dzong, with great peaks in the distance and spectacular sunsets and sunrises.

NIGHT: Yangkhil Resort, Trongsa

April 21, Day 14: Trongsa to Zhemgang and Tingtibi. Our route today is south along the road to Zhemgang and beyond, through pastoral farmlands on steep hillsides and traditionally decorated Bhutanese homes. As we reach the lower parts of the deep Mangde Chu valley, we enter dry forest before climbing into rich, moist broad-leaf forest as we travel over the low Zhemgang ridge and then descend to our campsite at about 4,500 feet.

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We should encounter a number of special birds today, perhaps including the strange and rarely-observed Yellow-rumped Honeyguide. This bird only occurs in the vicinity of cliffs harboring the hives belonging to the rock bee. A huge colony of Nepal House-Martins nests on the same cliff, the nests jammed together in a mass, the birds rapidly coming and going. Among them we should be able to pick out a few of the Blyth's Swifts that nest here too. At stream crossings we may pick up a Little Forktail, an attractive stream specialist of the Himalayas. We will also keep our eyes peeled for raptors along this entire route and among the many possibilities are Rufous-bellied Eagle, Mountain Hawk-Eagle, and Accipiters like Besra and Crested Goshawk. Other species that we might add to our growing list include Barred Cuckoo-Dove, Himalayan Swiftlet, Rufous-necked Laughingthrush, Little Pied Flycatcher, Blue-capped Rock-Thrush and Orange-bellied Leafbird. As always, there is a chance of something exceptional, such as the rarely seen Green Cochoa or a pair of Blue-bearded Bee-eaters.

NIGHT: Camping below Zhemgang (ca. 4,500 feet)

April 22, Day 15: The Zhemgang Road. Today we will bird along one of the most beautiful and peaceful roads in the world. Furthermore, the elevations nicely complement those along the famous Limithang Road. Here we will work the warm broad-leaf forests at elevations from 7,000 feet to under 2,000 feet, enabling us to see a wonderful variety of birds.

One of the highlights of this part of the tour is the impressive number of Golden Langur Monkeys. We will be camping right in the heart of their world range, which is confined to south-central Bhutan, and should see them often and at close range. Some of the birds that we hope to find in this region include Crested Serpent-Eagle; Emerald Dove; Pin-tailed Pigeon; up to nine species of cuckoo; Red-headed Trogon; the sensational Great Hornbill; White-browed and Speckled piculets; Bay, Gray-capped and Fulvous-breasted woodpeckers; Lesser Yellownappe; Long-tailed Broadbill; Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike; Scarlet Minivet; White-bellied Erpornis; Bronzed and Lesser Racket-tailed drongos; Sultan Tit; Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch; White-throated Bulbul; Yellow-vented, Rufous-faced and Yellow-bellied warblers; Black-chinned Yuhina; Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-Babbler; the comical White-crested Laughingthrush and both the Greater and Lesser Necklaced laughingthrushes; Gray-throated Babbler; Streaked Spiderhunter; and with a bit of luck, the rare Beautiful Nuthatch. Some of these are most likely in the moister and cooler forests above our camp, while others are to be found in the warmer forests downhill from camp near the village of Tingtibi.

NIGHT: Camping below Zhemgang (ca. 4,500 feet)

April 23, Day 16 Camping at Tama La. As we descend from the Himalayan foothills to the floodplain of the Brahmaputra River, we enter range after range of forested foothills. This region of Bhutan has been poorly explored by visiting birders. What we do know is this is the location for a number of species that have not been encountered on our previous trips. In 2016 birding groups discovered Rusty-bellied Shortwing, Silver-breasted Broadbill and Collared Treepie in this region. We hope to follow on from these discoveries and hopefully find a few more highly localized Himalayan endemics.

NIGHT: Camping Tama La (ca. 7,875 feet)

April 24, Day 17: Drive to Gelephu. We have the entire day to bird our way down to the border town of Gelephu. For much of the route the road is paved and there is very little traffic, but what is most appealing are the magnificent forests that accompany us most of the way from 6,500 feet virtually down to the border at 600 feet, where we abruptly emerge from the foothills onto the rolling plains more typical of Assam, India. Thus we will encompass a huge transect of forest types and a wonderful range of birds, our schedule dictated by the weather and searches for species we may not yet have encountered. These forests have been birded very little and we can almost certainly expect some surprises.

NIGHT: Hotel Kuku, Gelephu

April 25, Day 18: Gelephu. The habitats around Gelephu are quite different from any that we have previously visited, and include sal (teak) forest, lowland deciduous woods and thickets, and scrub and gardens around the edges of this well-wooded town. A large number of the birds to be found here are more typical of the lowlands of India, but unlikely to be encountered anywhere else on this tour, including Indian Peafowl, Black Francolin, Green Imperial-Pigeon, Indian Cuckoo, Asian Koel, Lesser Coucal, Brown Hawk-Owl, Indian Roller, White-throated Kingfisher, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Wreathed and Oriental Pied hornbills, Lineated Barbet, Red-breasted Parakeet, Ashy Wood-Swallow, Black-hooded Oriole, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Cinereous Tit, Red-whiskered Bulbul, Common Tailorbird, Common Hill and Jungle myna, Chestnut-tailed and Asian Pied starlings, and Golden-fronted Leafbird. The great sal forests harbor a rich assortment of woodpeckers, including Rufous and Gray-faced woodpeckers, Greater Yellownape and Greater Flameback. All in all this should be a very exciting day, with a wide range of new habitats to explore and always the possibility of a new species to be found for Bhutan.

NIGHT: Hotel Kuku, Gelephu

April 26, Day 19: Drive to Guwahati and Fly to New Delhi. From Gelephu we will enter India, traveling across the fertile northern plains of the Brahmaputra River to Guwahati, the capital of Assam. Most of our birding will be from the vehicles, but there should be time for a few select stops at the lakes and rice fields on the floodplain. Waterbirds, so lacking in mountainous Bhutan, are numerous here.

From Guwahati we will fly back to New Delhi, likely arriving in the late afternoon. Day rooms at the lovely Radisson Blu Plaza will be available through 10:00 p.m. and we will celebrate our grand tour of Bhutan with a final dinner at the extravagant hotel buffet. Most international flights to Europe depart after midnight this evening.

DAYROOM: Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel Delhi, New Delhi

April 27, Day 20: Return Flight Home. You may schedule your return flight for any time today. Most international flights to Europe, with connections onward, depart New Delhi very early in the morning, between midnight and 3:00 a.m.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 10 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Dion Hobcroft

Dion Hobcroft has been working for VENT since 2001. He has led many tours (more than 160) to Australia, New Guinea, New Zealand, Bhutan, Indonesia, India, China, Southwest Pacific, Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Japan, Russia, Alaska, Tanzania, Uganda, Madagascar, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Subantarctic Islands, and the Bering Sea. He has led tours annually to Bhutan since 2003 showing clients over 420 species in this country. His informative and relaxed nature, combined with sharp eyes and ears, have established Dion as a favorite of many tour participants. A birder since the age of seven, Dion has birded extensively throughout the Asia-Pacific region, North America, Argentina, and Antarctica. His field studies for over 40 years on birds and other terrestrial vertebrates have allowed him to amass an extraordinary knowledge of the biodiversity in these areas. Born in Tasmania and based in Sydney, Dion has traveled widely throughout Australasia, listing over 1,200 species, placing him in the top echelons of the region's birders. He is very tuned-in to the songs and calls of bird species in the Asia-Pacific region, and specializes in rare and elusive species. He is delighted to show these skulking rarities to his travel companions. Dion has published several papers on field ornithology and is currently a member of the Australian Rare Bird Committee, and is, occasionally, the voice behind *Birdline NSW*. A popular speaker with natural history societies, Dion has undertaken work with the Australian Antarctic Division, NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change, Australian Museum, CSIRO, Sydney University, James Cook University, Taronga Zoo, and the Zoology Research Unit of the Queensland Department of Primary Industry. Dion lives in Sydney with his wife, Lise, and two children, Grace (age 16), and Daniel (age 12).

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$9,795** per person in double occupancy from New Delhi. This includes all meals from breakfast on Day 3 to dinner on Day 19, lodging during the tour, internal flights, ground transportation during the tour, airport departure taxes, Bhutan visa fees, and guide services provided by the tour leader. The fee does not include airfare from your home to New Delhi and return, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, telephone 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 **\$1,050**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodation, 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. A second deposit of **\$2,000** per person will be due 180 days prior to departure. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

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: Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 180 days or more before the departure date, any monies paid less **\$500** is refundable. If cancellation is made between 180 and 120 days before the departure date, the total deposit to date less **\$1000** is refundable. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before the departure date, no refund is available. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance to protect for your protection.***

If you cancel:

180 days or more before departure
Between 180 and 120 days before departure
Fewer than 120 days before departure date

Your refund will be:

Any monies paid less the \$500 deposit
Total deposit to date less \$1,000
No refund available.

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.

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.

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.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EVACUATION 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 presently have via 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) prior to 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.

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. *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.*

BAGGAGE: Participants are encouraged to take whatever they think they will reasonably need for this tour, including spotting scope and tripod (if you choose), camera and video equipment. While international flights may have more generous baggage allowances, the internal domestic flights restrict the amount of free check-in baggage per person to 20 kg (44 lbs) on Druk Air (flight to Paro). For the return flight from Guwahati the limit is 15 kg (33 lbs) of checked luggage plus one piece of carry-on luggage up to 13 pounds (it will also be weighed). However, excess baggage charges are not extravagant. We strongly recommend that you carry your checked baggage in two soft bags so that when camping, one bag can be kept on the luggage truck with all the things you do not immediately need. This will permit more room in your tent and more personal comfort.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS: This very special tour will provide a thorough cross-section of most of the country’s accessible habitats at a pace that permits us to properly imbibe the landscapes, culture, birds, and other natural history. There will be time to stop and stare, take photographs, explore the capital Thimphu and visit the incomparable Punakha Dzong. Our tour will be undoubtedly intensive in the sense that every day we will be in the field, often walking at a leisurely pace or driving. Daybreak is around 5:00 a.m. in Bhutan at this time of year, and we will therefore have very early starts (often at 5:00 or 5:30) in order to catch the best of the early morning birding. This is often THE time to see such spectacular pheasants as Himalayan Monal and Satyr Tragopan. Later we often have a leisurely breakfast and/or lunch in the field. These are very enjoyable affairs that give us time to relax and contemplate the morning’s gifts. However, we are rarely in a position to return to a lodge for a nap in a bed (many take a nap during a drive) and we usually reach our lodge or camp during the late afternoon, taking it easier at that end of the day than at the start.

We will of course certainly concentrate on the specialties, but so few are the opportunities to see many Himalayan birds elsewhere that most species will be “specialties” for most participants, and we will enjoy them all. We cross some high passes and spend several nights over 10,000 feet, but we will generally sleep lower than the high points during the day, and we will plan our activities with the thin air in mind (e.g., mostly birding gentle slopes or *down* the road). There may be a few optional, short, energetic activities, but those who don’t undertake these will still be in the midst of birds.

CAMPING: Bhutan is not a regular tourist destination. Consequently, the infrastructure for visitors is minimal, especially the further east and south we travel. Needless to say, the very best forests and birding sites are a long

way from the nearest guest house. Long ago when VENT first visited Bhutan (1994), it was clear then that the only realistic way to operate in this country was to camp. Our land agents will therefore set up very comfortable camps for us in the following locations: Pele La (10,800 feet), Sengor (10,000 feet), below Zhemgang (4,500 feet), and Tama La (7,875 feet). All of these are delightful sites located near beautiful forest and mountain scenery. There will be **walk-in**, comfortable-for-two tents with cots, sheets, pillows, and blankets. Participants may wish to **bring their own sleeping bag**, as previous participants who did so found this to be warmer and cozier than the blankets and sheets provided. **Many clients have commented on how much they really enjoyed the camping.**

ALTITUDE: We will be ascending to elevations above 10,000 and as high as 12,400 feet. Most ascents will be by vehicle, and we will then work a given area by walking downhill; however, there will be rare times when we may opt to walk uphill in search of something that is calling. We will almost always be along a road on easy grades and at a very slow pace, so this should not be a matter of concern for anyone in moderate to reasonable health. Those with heart or respiratory concerns should contact their doctor prior to departure.

CLIMATE: At the time of our visit (April), and because of the wide range of altitudes (150 to 12,400 feet) that this tour covers, we will encounter a wide range of temperatures, including cold and damp, possibly some snow, and almost certainly some rain. There may also be occasional hot conditions with very bright sunshine, which typically in the mountains (because of the increased radiation) causes sunburns more readily than one often realizes.

CLOTHING: Casual is the order of the day. Hard wearing, easy to wash-and-dry field clothes are ideal. Sturdy hiking boots are essential; sneakers or sports type shoes are not appropriate, as the ground will be wet at times. Wellington (rubber) boots are not really necessary if your hiking boots are rated "water-resistant," and add a lot of extra weight to your baggage, but you may choose to bring them. Flip-flops or shower shoes are recommended. **Please note that laundry service is limited.** At times the camp staff may be able to wash some clothing, and laundry can be left at the lodge in Trongsa to be picked up when we return, but otherwise one must be prepared to hand wash some clothing. Participants are advised to bring as many clothes with them as they need to stay warm in freezing temperatures. Participants should bring layers rather than one or two large items. Sturdy, rainproof jackets and pants are strongly recommended, in addition to a warm sweater and warm jacket or vest (down or synthetic). Other items that are recommended include a warm head-covering such as a fleece or knit hat, or balaclava, in addition to a regular birding hat, gloves and scarf or neck gaiter. Many of our participants have found silk, wool or synthetic thermal long underwear very handy for the cool nights and early mornings. You may not need all of this cold-weather gear, but it is far better to be prepared in case you should. Sunglasses are very useful (occasionally essential) at higher elevations. 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 your pants can be tucked inside your socks.

SPECIAL NOTE: **Please, absolutely no bright colors for your field gear.** 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: It is preferred that you change your dollars in Bhutanese currency at the airport upon arrival. This is very easy to do, with a minimum of formalities. Indian rupees are accepted, but the notes must be the 100 Rupee denomination or lower (not worth much), so they are not very practical. Credit cards are accepted by very few places in Bhutan. ATMs are available in a few large towns, but may not work well or provide large amounts of currency. Participants are also advised to carry sufficient funds in low denomination U.S. dollar cash, which can be very useful for minor tips or in an emergency. **Please note Bhutanese currency cannot be used or exchanged outside of Bhutan, including right on the border!**

NOTE: Bhutan has some very fine handicrafts, including hand-woven fabrics that have to seem to be believed. As mentioned previously in the itinerary (Day 9), we will stay at the home of the woman widely considered the finest weaver in the kingdom of Bhutan.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure date, with at least three or more blank pages, is required for United States citizens to enter India and Bhutan. **A multiple entry visa is required for entry into India** and you must obtain this prior to departure. For further information, you may wish to contact the India consulate nearest you or Travel Document Systems (www.pinnacletds.com/vent on the web or 888-838-4867 by phone), a company which handles visa procurement. Non United States citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

For your **Bhutan visa**, you must send to the VENT office a full-color scan of the pages of your passport containing the passport details, photo and signature.

EQUIPMENT: You should have a quality pair of binoculars in good condition (please check before departure). Your tour leader will be carrying a spotting scope, but you may bring your own spotting scope if you wish (but balance this against the weight and space in your luggage).

You should bring all of the camera equipment, batteries, and digital storage media that you will need, as these would be almost impossible to obtain once we depart New Delhi. **Nearly everyone brings too few batteries and too little digital storage media, and this causes some distress. PLEASE bring loads (we cannot emphasize this enough).** 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 really good flashlight or headlamp is essential**, so please ensure that yours is in good working order and that you have spare bulbs and batteries. A spare flashlight or headlamp may come in handy. Couples should bring one flashlight or headlamp each.

A small daypack (either waterproof or with a strong plastic bag inside) is essential for carrying excess clothing, camera equipment, toiletries, snacks, and water. However, in many of the areas where we will be birding, we will have regular access to our vehicle, which will be attended by a driver and his assistant. **Water** will be available on the bus at all times, and a limited selection of mid-morning snacks will be provided (gorp and/or crackers and cookies). You may wish to bring your own supply of snacks such as protein bars or nuts.

Other useful items include:

1. **Flashlights or headlamps** (as previously indicated): A small flashlight or headlamp is essential to find your way around your tent and camp at night, and for use at checklist sessions.
2. **Handywipes:** These are very handy, as are paper tissues. All participants should carry sufficient amounts for their personal needs for the entire tour. **There are no shower facilities in the camps, but small wash basins of warm water will be provided in the morning** (and in the late afternoon upon request).
3. **Spare glasses or contact lenses.**
4. **One bath towel and face cloth:** Our ground agents will provide a brand new towel for all participants. However, a second one of your own, plus your own face cloth, is handy.
5. **Sunscreen:** Strongly recommended, especially for higher elevations where the UV is much greater; **lip balm** is also essential.
6. **Umbrella:** The collapsible type is easy to carry and useful both against rain and sun.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Electricity – Both India and Bhutan use 220 volts, 50 cycles, AC. However, electricity in Bhutan can be unreliable. A flashlight or headlamp with a good supply of batteries will be essential. Do not rely on an electric razor or hair drier, or having electricity available for charging your batteries except at the major lodges (although all participants have managed well enough on previous trips).

Internet – WiFi connections are available at all of the hotels at which we stay and generally work. Cell phone connections are also generally reliable, sometimes even in surprising places in the countryside.

Language - In Bhutan, Dzongkha is the official language; and in India, Hindi, English and 14 other languages are spoken.

Time - 10 to 10½ hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time.

Snacks - It is advisable to bring some protein or granola-type bars, dried fruit and nuts or other snacks, as snacks are not always available. Most of our meals will be traditional Bhutanese foods and you may find yourself wanting “a little extra variety” at times.

Bug juice – Everyone will need insect repellent to deal with the odd occasion that we encounter biting black flies or mosquitos (actually, the latter are almost completely lacking). Leeches are very unlikely as most of our birding is from the roads, but tight socks and tucked-in trousers are the best defense against them.

TRANSPORTATION/MEALS: In Bhutan we will travel for the duration of the tour in a very comfortable and well appointed Japanese coaster bus with large, airy windows that are ideal for bird watching and photography. Additionally, a second vehicle will follow us with all of our baggage and a third vehicle will carry our camping equipment in addition to a supply of beer, soft drinks, and bottled water. Many members of our Bhutanese team travel in this truck and set out pre-dawn to prepare a marvelous cooked breakfast in the field, at some of the most unimaginably beautiful and birdy locations. Later in the day they repeat the process for lunch and then push on ahead to set up our camps. Dinners are taken at the various lodges and camps. Water will be available in the bus at all times.

HEALTH: Participants are advised NOT to drink the tap water or unboiled water placed at the table unless advised by your tour leader. Bottled water will be available at all times. Participants should not eat uncooked foods such as meat or vegetables, or food that has cooled and/or been sitting in the open, permitting flies to settle. Unpeeled fruit is fine, provided you wash the exterior first in clean water.

No vaccinations are normally required; however, cholera and yellow fever inoculations ARE required if you arrive within five days of departing from an infected area. A number of forms of hepatitis may be present in Bhutan. We recommend participants contact their doctor for advice prior to departure. **PLEASE NOTE: While in eastern and central Bhutan, participants will be at least two days from Western medical facilities in case of emergency. Please be aware of this before joining the tour.**

All participants should bring a good quantity of all their medical/pharmaceutical supplies, as these would be nearly impossible to obtain anywhere on the tour.

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.

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 (232-4636). You can check the CDC 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. We also recommend Andrew Isles bookstore for the Asia-Pacific region at www.andrewisles.com/AndrewIsles. Andrew can also often obtain difficult to find and out of print books.

FIELD GUIDES AND REFERENCE (BIRDS):

Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C. and T. Inskipp. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. Princeton; newly revised and has the most current taxonomic information.

Inskipp, C., T. Inskipp and R. Grimmett. *Birds of Bhutan*. A&C Black, 2004. The authors of the above work have produced this book specifically concerned with Bhutan. While the text is greatly reduced, this book is much more practical to carry in the field and most participants may prefer to obtain a copy of this book rather than the larger one listed above, unless they plan to bird in India too. (See www.amazon.com for purchase.) **The recommended book to bring on tour but this lacks the fine detail of the Rasmussen book.**

Rasmussen, P. C. & J. C. Anderton. 2012. *Birds of South Asia. The Ripley Guide. Vols. 1 and 2*. Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions. Washington D.C. and Barcelona. If you want something more detailed and comprehensive than the Inskipp Bhutan book, then you should also obtain the Rasmussen books.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND READING:

Ali, S. *The Fall of the Sparrow*. Bombay. OUP. 1984.

Beebe, W. *Pheasant Jungles*. Reading. World Pheasant Association. 1994.

Bole, P.V. & Y. Vaghani. *Field Guide to the Common Trees of India*. Bombay. WWF India. OUP. 1986.

Daniel, J.C. *The Book of Indian Reptile and Amphibians*. Bombay: Bombay Natural History Society, 2002.

Gurung, K.K. and Raj Singh. *Field Guide to the Mammals of the Indian Subcontinent: Where to Watch Mammals in India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan*. San Diego: Academic Press, 1996.

Insight Guides. *Indian Wildlife*. Apa Productions, 1987. A superb evocation of the subcontinent's wildlife, in addition to very useful details of its huge variety of parks and reserves.

Kazmierczak, Krys and Raj Singh. *A Birdwatchers' Guide to India*. Bedfordshire, United Kingdom: Prion Ltd., 1998. This book describes a cross-section of birding sites covering all of India's regions and main habitats, and is very informative. It's a wonderful and fascinating book co-authored by Raj Singh, co-author of *Mammals of the Indian Subcontinent*, and owner of the company handling our ground arrangements in India and Bhutan. Currently, it is not available in the USA; however, it is available through Natural History Book Service, 2 Wills Road, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 5XN U.K., phone 011-44-1803865913 or fax 011-44-1803865280, www.nhbs.com.

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McNeely, Jeffrey A. and Paul Spencer Wachtel. *Soul of the Tiger: Searching for Natural Answers in Southeast Asia*. New York: Doubleday, 1988. One of the most intriguing and beautifully written books on the complex relationships between man, his myriad beliefs and nature, and the implications for conservation.

Menon, V. *A Field Guide to Indian Mammals*. DK Delhi. 2003. Undoubtedly the very finest field guide to the mammals of India.

Owen, E.T. *Bhutan: Land of the Thunder Dragon*. London, 1998. (out of print)

Polunin, O. and A. Stainton. *Flowers of the Himalaya*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984. A very helpful guide; while not quite encompassing Bhutan, it will provide a useful insight into the flora of the region.

Pommaret, F. *Bhutan: An Illustrated Guide*. 3rd edition. Hong Kong: The Guide Book Company, 1998.

Prater, S.H. *The Book of Indian Animals (Mammals)*. Bombay: Bombay Natural History, 1971. Detailed descriptions and illustrations of most, if not all, the animals inhabiting the Indian Subcontinent. A fairly easy book to obtain in India, if it's not available near your home.

Ramsay, C.R. *Bhutan- Excursion to Enchantment: A Journey through the World's Most Beautiful Places*. Washington: National Geographic, 1988.

Santella, C. *Fifty Places to Go Birding Before You Die*. Stewart, Tabori, & Chang. New York. 2007.

Schaller, G. B. *The Deer and the Tiger*. 1998. Natraj Publishers, Dehra Dun, India.

Singh, R.L. *India – A Regional Geography*. Varanasi. National Geographic Society of India. 1989.

Whittaker, R. and Captain, A. *Snakes of India The Field Guide*. Tamil Nadu. Draco Books 2004.

MAPS: * Himalaya - 1:1,500,000, Nelles series; N.E. India (India 5) - 1:1,500,000, Nelles series.

* *Either map recommended to bring on tour.*

If participants have difficulty obtaining any titles, they may wish to contact the Natural History Book Service which has one of the most comprehensive collections of books on natural history. 2 Wills Road, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 5XN U.K. Phone: 011-44-1803865913, Fax: 011-44-1803865280, www.nhbs.com.

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: 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, motor coach, 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 June 27, 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 tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.

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