

IMPORTANT GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT FIELD GUIDES TOURS

To all participants: Please be sure to read the following important information about birding etiquette, our meal and drink policies, and other items prior to joining your Field Guides tour. Being familiar with this information will help ensure a fun and pleasant trip for all.

The participant's responsibility & birding etiquette

At Field Guides we work hard to ensure that your tour experience with us as an individual is a great one. Since each tour is also a group experience, we ask every participant to contribute to a successful tour by keeping in mind the following guidelines:

- Choose a tour appropriate to your abilities and interests, and which you are in the appropriate physical condition and good health to undertake. Be sure our office and guides know in advance of any medical or physical condition that could affect your full participation in the tour.
- Practice common courtesy with all tour members at all times. These considerations include:
 - following guide instructions
 - being on time for activities; we've added a section to the end of your tour checklist to note meeting times and the guide will go over the next day's plan at the checklist session, reminding you to note the meeting time for the next day
 - rotating position on trails, in vehicles, and at meals so that each participant has equal opportunity over the course of the tour; at the first opportunity when the group is together the guide will explain how he or she handles rotation; please make sure you understand the system and comply
 - observing the queue when the group is viewing birds or other wildlife through the tour scope(s); taking a brief initial view, then returning for a longer one when everyone else has had a chance at a first view
 - keeping your voice low in the field (especially on forest trails) or in rooms in lodges with thin walls (others may be trying to sleep)
 - consulting the guide before you turn back on any route prior to the group's return or when you wish to pursue an activity independently
- Photography and videotaping during the tour are welcome, but please keep in mind that ours are birding tours, not photography tours. We will have numerous opportunities for great photography along the way, and it is fine to pursue these opportunities so long as they do not interfere with our birding pursuits or viewing by other participants, and so long as they do not overwhelm the aesthetic experience of the tour (multiple cameras in continuous shooting mode or numerous flashes going off, for example, can easily dominate the aesthetic experience). If you are not sure what is appropriate in a particular situation, then ask the guide and s/he will let you know.

If you own a digital camera and enjoy digiscoping, please bring your own scope for that purpose so as not to interfere with a guide's or the group's use of the guide scope(s). Please do not digiscope with the guide's telescope.

•Smoking: Most of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

Meals

With few exceptions, meals are included on all Field Guides tours. To ensure our arrival (or lingering) at a birding site at an optimal hour for birding or to maximize our birding time in the field on some tour days, some of our meals will be field picnics, long popular among our participants; these frequently are mentioned in the itinerary.

Restaurant meals with a group can sometimes be slow, even in industrialized countries. To expedite service at these meals, our guides sometimes “pre-order,” which means they will obtain a menu (or a number of suggested options) from the restaurant and ask participants to make a meal choice in advance of the appointed meal hour. This can reduce the waiting time at restaurant meals, giving us all a little more time to rest, shower, or even to go out and see a few more birds!

In some restaurants or lodges, a fixed menu with only one or two options is offered; in others, participants are free to order what they wish from the menu (with the common-sense suggestion that participants be reasonable about avoiding excessively expensive menu items).

If you have informed us of any special dietary needs in advance of the tour, our guide(s) should, in most cases, be able to accommodate your needs; in more remote areas, however, local lodges or hotels may not have the staff, experience, or resources to accommodate unusual dietary requirements.

In order to minimize the time settling up the group’s bills at restaurants, participants’ personal meal charges (alcoholic, specialty, or extra drinks, etc.) are typically included on the group bill; individual participants should track their own expenses and reimburse the guide at the end of the tour (see Our Drink Policy below). We have provided space for you to track such extra expenses at the back of the tour checklist. The guide will remind you each evening to note your expenses and at the end of the tour you can reimburse the guide for the total.

Our Drink Policy

Our drink policy on tour is as follows.

- One non-alcoholic beverage is included at each meal (regular coffee, tea, and soft drinks are included in your tour fee; however specialty coffees and drinks are not).
- Alcoholic beverages are not included in the tour fee.
- In the field, where appropriate, we will provide refreshments from our cooler(s), and these drinks continue to be included in the tour fee. As has always been the case, this is not applicable for a small number of tours, including cruises.
- Beverages for use in your room (including bottled water) and other personal drinks not described above are at your expense. We ask that you not take drinks from the cooler for use in your room. The leaders have stocked the cooler for anticipated use in the field.

Making it easy to keep a tab: To expedite payment and service at mealtimes, the cost for additional personal beverages taken by you at meals will initially be covered by the guide on the group check. Please keep track of your extra drinks daily on the last page of your checklist or elsewhere and reimburse the guide at the end of the tour. Please tally your total before the last tour meal and have reimbursement ready for the guide. A personal check is preferable for this; U.S. currency is acceptable. The guide can inform you of the approximate costs (including local taxes) of different types of beverages if you have not kept up with these during the tour. This is, of course, on the honor system, and your guides, while great birders, are not good collection agents.

Changing Money Abroad

As a general rule, the speed of money changing in hotels is much greater than in banks—even though the rate may be slightly more favorable in banks. In most cases we encourage participants to use the hotels.

Checking Out at Hotels and Lodges

If you must charge anything to your room bill (phone calls, bar drinks or drinks taken from your room, food, laundry, etc.), please pay for these charges the night before the group’s departure in hotels where this is possible. Early-morning checkouts can be agonizingly slow when several people are waiting in line with a harried night clerk.

Valuables

Although incidents of theft of personal items left in rooms are rare, we encourage participants to assume that no room is safe. A hotel safe deposit box or a locked suitcase is the most secure option if you are not carrying your valuables or important travel documents with you when out of the room.

Safety

Some urban areas are unsafe away from hotels and may be so noted by guides. We encourage participants not to go out alone in urban areas or rural areas away from a lodge.

Wake-up Calls

Hotel wake-up calls are very unreliable, and participants should each bring a working alarm clock or watch.

Tipping

General tipping for meals, hotel staff, porters, drivers, and local guides is covered for the group by our guide(s). The only service that we can't tip appropriately for as a group is maid service in the larger hotels, given that rooms are often scattered and involve various maids. Small tips would always be appreciated there. Any additional tipping is at your discretion. Please check the information bulletin for your tour to see if tips to maids are included, and for other specific information about tipping on your tour.

And Most Important, Seeing Birds!

Our guides want to show each participant as much as possible during the tour. If you are having difficulty spotting a bird (or anything else), please let the guide(s) know; it's frustrating for you as a participant to miss something, and it's equally frustrating for the guide(s) to find out later that someone missed an important sighting needlessly.

Have a great tour!