

TOUR INFORMATION BULLETIN

Spring in Cape May 2025

May 11, 2025 to May 17, 2025

This page was last reviewed or updated on Apr 17, 2025.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Accommodations are good; we're based in a single, comfortable, beachside hotel for the entire tour (Sea Crest Inn, 101 Beach Ave., Cape May). The hotel has an elevator for rooms on upper stories; hair dryers are available.

ACTIVITIES/PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

*We want to be sure you are on the right tour! **Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour.** If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.*

TRAILS & WALKING: Moderate amounts of walking on flat ground (up to 3 miles per day), some of it on paved roads, some on gravel or dirt roads, some on trails that have no significant obstacles. We will probably walk up to a half mile one way on a sandy beach as well.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES: We may stand for long periods to observe flocks of birds.

PACE: Early mornings (6:00-6:30 a.m. departures with field picnic breakfasts); both morning and afternoon birding sessions, with occasional afternoon breaks.

WEATHER: Spring weather is usually mild at Cape May. Expect temperatures as cool as the high 50s or low 60s F in the evening, with days ranging from the high 60s to low 80s. Rain showers and windy conditions are possible.

VEHICLE SEATING: So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system on all tours. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.

BATHROOM BREAKS: Bathroom stops at indoor restrooms will be made regularly; comfort stops in nature are also possible, should the need arise.

OPTING OUT: As this short tour stays at the same lodging throughout, participants can easily opt to sit out a day or half-day.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they'll put you in touch with a guide.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS/ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE (if applicable)

This tour begins and ends in the Philadelphia airport (airport code PHL).

Your guide will meet those participants who are flying, arriving by train, or driving to Philadelphia **at 2:30 p.m. on Day 1, near the food stand in the Terminal B/C baggage claim area of the Philadelphia airport.** At the tour's end on day 7, please make plans to depart **no earlier than 4:00 p.m.** from Philadelphia. We will return to Philadelphia about 2:00 p.m.

Field Guides is a full-service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed. **If we are not arranging your air travel, please check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to assure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary.** Once purchased most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change; Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees if you don't check with us prior to purchasing your airline tickets. Also, **it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary**—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.

BOAT TRIPS

We'll likely take a three-hour back bay boat trip on one of our days in Cape May. The boat will remain in protected back bay waters for the duration of the trip, so the chances of encountering rough water are extremely slim. Only those exceptionally sensitive to motion sickness should bring appropriate medication and take it before boarding. The boat has a spacious, enclosed, cabin with seating and good viewing, but if you are intending on spending time outside the cabin, keep in mind that it is typically cooler while the boat is underway—dress accordingly.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Refund of deposit and full payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 180 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 179 and 90 days before the departure date, 50% of the full tour fee is non-refundable, which would include the full deposit if the final payment has not yet been paid. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable. Our cancellation policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of that insurance is not refundable, so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airline's restrictions. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

CLIMATE/CLOTHING

NOTE: Important items to bring are included in the SUGGESTED PACKING LIST in the last section of this document.

Spring weather at Cape May is generally pleasant. You should **pack clothing suitable for a range of temperatures** from the 50s F (with cool, onshore sea breezes) to the mid-80s. During our oceanside birding, you may wish to have a **sweatshirt, sweater or windbreaker**. Otherwise you will need long, light- or medium-weight trousers, and a mix of long-sleeved and short-sleeved shirts, or t-shirts, and perhaps some shorts. Walking will be easy – you should be fine in a pair of sneakers, walking shoes or lightweight hiking boots. You may wish to bring along a pair of waterproof boots (or N.E.O.S.); if we get an extended period of rain, some of the trails we'll walk can become quite muddy. Bring along **rain gear** to allow you to continue birding in a drizzle or light rain. We recommend a rain jacket and rain

pants, and a lightweight, collapsible **umbrella** that can be carried in a belt pouch or daypack, along with a few plastic bags that can be used to protect binoculars, notebooks, and other gear. Please avoid using a rain poncho, as they tend to flap (and thus frighten birds away) if there is any wind accompanying the rain. Dress will be casual throughout the tour.

Dress will be casual throughout the trip. We recommend peelable layers of clothing.

DRINKS POLICY

As always, Field Guides will pay for one non-alcoholic drink with each meal. If you choose to have an alcoholic beverage—or a second (or more) non-alcoholic drink—you'll need to pay for those yourself. On the typical tour, you will have three options for paying for your extra drinks: 1) In many instances when we are eating at our lodging, you should be able to charge drinks to your room (provided you leave a credit card number with the desk when we check in) and settle up your bill before departing the lodging; 2) when charging to your room is not possible in some more remote lodgings, you may need to pay cash; or 3) if you would prefer not to have to pay as you go, your guide(s) will be happy to pay for your drinks during the course of the tour, provided that you keep track of your tally and bring an American dollar check (or cash) with which to reimburse your guide(s) at the tour's end.

EMERGENCY CONTACT

We will provide you with a list of hotels with addresses and phone numbers which you can give to your relatives and friends. In case of emergency or missed connections en route to the tour, contact the Field Guides office at 1-800-728-4953 or 1-512-263-7295 during business office hours, Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Central Time. **If you require immediate assistance after hours, you can reach the “on-call” tour manager at 1-512-431-9347.** This is a cell phone; if we are out of range, leave a message on our voice mail and we will return your call as soon as we are back in range. **Please note that this phone cannot receive text messages!**

HEALTH INFORMATION

You should consult your physician regarding health precautions and your individual health needs while on this tour.

Follow your standard travel health precautions for this tour.

All participants will be required to confirm they will have completed a full COVID-19 vaccination course at least two weeks prior to the tour (which includes a booster for those eligible to have one). Note too, that many travel destinations may still require proof of vaccination for entry to bypass testing delays or quarantine, and that entry requirements for a destination can change at any time. Proof of a booster shot, too, may be a requirement for some travel destinations.

Our On-Tour Protocols are designed to minimize our exposure to COVID-19 as much as possible; please be sure to read them: <https://fieldguides.com/health-protocols/>. Contact the CDC (at 800-CDC-INFO or 800-232-4636; <https://www.cdc.gov/>) for further information about any potential health hazards in the areas you will be visiting.

Be sure to bring an adequate supply of your regular medications (in your carry-on!), as well as a personal supply of such basics as aspirin, cold medicine, Visine or other eyewash, lip balm, an anti-bacterial ointment, a general antibiotic recommended by your physician, and something for minor skin irritations. Sunscreen should be of a high sun protection factor (SPF) to protect your skin from the conditions we'll encounter on this tour (and remember, if your tour visits the tropics or high altitude, the intensity of the sun is greater there).

If you are taking any prescription drugs, please carry a photocopy of your prescription from the doctor with you.

INSECTS/OTHER PESTS

Though most insects are not a problem in Cape May, mosquitoes can be pesky in early morning and evening hours, and no-see-ums can be an issue at several of our bayshore and seaside locations if there's no wind, so you'll want to bring some repellent. In addition to biting insects, there is also the possibility of contact with ticks that spread Lyme Disease and other illnesses. For best protection against ticks, we recommend treating your clothing with a permethrin-based product and tucking your pant cuffs into your socks. Each evening, check your body for ticks, which normally take several hours to embed themselves. Embedded ticks are best removed by grasping the tick with tweezers as close to your body (and the tick's head) as possible, and gently pulling it away from your body with steady pressure. Do not twist or yank the tick out.

Be aware that DEET, the active ingredient in many insect repellents, is absorbed through the skin and can cause allergic or toxic reactions in high concentration. Please consult your physician about the possible harmful effects of the repellent you choose.

INTERNET/TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Wi-Fi is available at our hotel but can be spotty away from the main office, and many folks find it easier to use their phones for their internet needs here.

LAUNDRY

Coin-operated washers and dryers are available at our hotel.

LUGGAGE

If you're traveling down from the Philadelphia airport with us, we ask that you limit your baggage to two small/medium suitcases/duffels OR one larger duffel, and two carry-on items, and that you pack in such a way that no one bag is too heavy. Porters are not available at our hotel, and this will help to ensure that you and your guide are healthy and in the field rather than in bed with strained backs.

If you are traveling by air to Philadelphia, we suggest you carry all essential medications and equipment, along with a change of field clothes and any personal items critical to your enjoyment of the first days' birding, in your carry-on luggage. Dress and/or pack in such a way that you could survive if your checked luggage did not catch up with you for several days.

If you have binoculars, camera equipment, or any items that would be expensive to replace and that are not covered in your homeowner's policy, you may wish to consider taking out personal property insurance. Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible for the theft, loss, or damage of any of your personal equipment.

PERSONAL ITEMS

NOTE: Important items to bring are included in the SUGGESTED PACKING LIST in the last section of this document.

Your guide(s) will carry a scope, but you're certainly welcome, and encouraged, to bring your own; there will be many occasions to use it. If you plan to do any digiscoping, please bring your own scope, as the tour scopes will be used for viewing rather than photography.

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 and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere. Smoking in vehicles is prohibited.

SUGGESTED FIELD GUIDES AND OTHER REFERENCES

Cornell Lab, Cornell University. MERLIN BIRD ID. This app, created by the Cornell Lab, is useful for more than just bird ID help. Depending on which free pack you choose to download within the app,

each species has photos, an excellent range map, and various calls/song. App is free from the app store. Numerous packs are available, so be sure to select the appropriate pack for your tour. No internet connection is required because the data are stored on your phone/tablet (iOS or Android). Merlin allows you to ID birds through several pathways beyond viewing photos and text in the bird packs, including a photo-matching algorithm that's pretty darned accurate. Highly recommended!

Dunn, Jon L. & Jonathan Alderfer. 2017. FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA. Washington, DC: National Geographic Society. ISBN: 9781426218354. This revised (seventh) edition is an excellent reference. Since many of the species covered here either migrate through or winter in Middle America and the Caribbean, it is also a valuable guide to take on holidays "south of the border".

Sibley, David Allen. 2014. THE SIBLEY GUIDE TO BIRDS. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. ISBN: 9780307957900. Written and illustrated by David Sibley, this second edition is a standard for North American field guides. However, it is large to carry in the field. Sibley's guides to eastern and western North America are more portable if your geographic coverage is limited.

TIME

During our tour, Cape May will be on Eastern daylight savings time.

TIPPING

Tips for drivers, baggage handling, meals, etc. are already covered by your tour fee. We will tip generously for the group as a whole. Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). The only service that we can't tip appropriately for as a group is maid service in rooms at our hotels, given that rooms are often scattered and involve various maids. Small tips would always be appreciated there. Otherwise, you should worry about tipping only for your extra beverages and, on occasion, if a local performs an appreciated service especially for you. However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips, as a reflection of your appreciation, are optional and not expected.

TRANSPORTATION

During the tour, we will be traveling in a comfortable 15-passenger van driven by our guide.

TRIP CANCELLATION AND MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE

We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, you acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a refund when cancellation occurs outside of our cancellation policy as published in the itinerary (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive information from us regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel

delay, baggage loss and delay, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance prior to, or within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights and in some cases, other arrangements), pre-existing conditions are covered. You may purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/> and clicking the link to CSA. The CSA webpage also includes a contact number.

Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii.

We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance thru InsureMyTrip (<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. When purchasing insurance with a company other than CSA, you will want to understand whether the timing of your purchase will affect coverage before paying your first deposit. Insurance purchase requirements can vary from company to company, and such requirements could limit your options if you do not look into this until making your final payment for your tour. Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

SUGGESTED PACKING LIST

CLOTHING & WEATHER GEAR:

- FIELD HAT WITH A BRIM
- LIGHTWEIGHT JACKET
- LIGHTWEIGHT SHOES (sneakers/sandals)
- LONG-SLEEVED SHIRTS
- LIGHT or MEDIUM WEIGHT TROUSERS
- RAIN JACKET
- RAIN PANTS
- SHORTS
- SWEATER or FLEECE
- WALKING SHOES/BOOTS

IMPORTANT PERSONAL ITEMS:

- BINOCULARS
- ALARM CLOCK
- CHARGERS – for your cell phone, laptop, batteries, and other devices
- DAYPACK – suitable for carrying your water bottle, rain gear, etc., on the trail
- EXTRA BATTERIES – for cameras, alarm clocks, etc.
- FLASHLIGHT or HEADLAMP
- RAIN GEAR – a windproof/waterproof layer (it is often too windy for an umbrella to be useful)
- UMBRELLA – small fold-up type
- WATER BOTTLE – to bring daily in the field (very important, as we're often in the field – and away from water sources); to save luggage space, you could choose to purchase a 500-600ml soda en-route to the tour, and then reuse that bottle

OTHER ITEMS YOU MIGHT FIND USEFUL:

- CORRECTIVE LENSES — spare pair of glasses or contacts, if you wear them
- EAR PLUGS — to protect your ears as needed
- FOLDING STOOL — some find these lightweight stools useful at picnics, or to rest your legs during our outings
- INSECT REPELLENT
- LENS CLEANER/CLOTH — for glasses and optics
- LIP BALM — one with a high SPF

- MEMORY CARDS — one or more extra ones for your camera, for example
- SUNSCREEN — high SPF, preferably broad spectrum (to cover both UVA and UVB rays)
- TISSUES — small package(s)
- TRAIL FOOD — a small supply of such things as granola bars, dried fruit, nuts, etc. to help tide you over between meals
- WATERLESS HAND CLEANSER — such as Purell