

ITINERARY

***Central Mexico and Baja: Birds, Butterflies, and Whales***  
*February 7-19, 2020*



*Xantus's Hummingbird is endemic to the Baja Peninsula of Mexico, where it is found in pine-oak forests such as the highlands of Sierra de la Laguna. Photograph by Stephen Bontempo.*

We include here information for those interested in the 2020 Field Guides *Central Mexico and Baja: Birds, Butterflies & Whales* tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

*Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:*

- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reference list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen

**T**his exciting new tour in the Field Guides schedule promises top-notch birding from mountains and meadows around Mexico City to the coastal deserts and mangrove lagoons near the tip of Baja. Along the way, we'll search for some range-restricted endemics (Xantus's Hummingbird, Belding's Yellowthroat, and Sierra Madre Sparrow, to name a few) and a multitude of other Mexican specialties. We'll also have the opportunity to witness two of the most remarkable long-distance migrants in the animal kingdom: the Gray Whale and Monarch Butterfly.

Every year, Monarchs find their way to the conifer forests of Central Mexico, where they congregate in the tens of thousands to form hanging baskets that cloak the trees (that is an easy estimate to make, but the true total seems to be more difficult to determine accurately; dare we say millions?). This is one of the most impressive butterfly spectacles in the world. Two major migratory populations exist in North America. One population migrates to southern California, while

the other larger population goes to the pine-oak forests of the Trans-Mexican Volcanic Belt (the states of Mexico and Michoacan), and each spring they venture north to summering areas in the Central and Eastern U.S. and Canada. It takes several generations to complete this migration, each generation moving a little farther north, step-by-step, and, incredibly, it is the fourth generation of Monarchs that returns to Mexico, having never been there before. How do they accomplish this incredible feat?



*The over-wintering site for the eastern population of North American Monarchs was discovered only recently in the mountains of Central Mexico. We'll visit the sanctuary at Sierra Chincua, where we'll see clusters of resting butterflies festooning the trees. Photograph by guide Jesse Fagan.*

At the same time of year, Gray Whales migrate from Arctic waters to the warm lagoons off the coast of Baja. They make the longest migration of any mammal on Earth, traveling 11,000 miles between warm calving waters in Mexico and summer feeding grounds in cold Arctic seas. The mothers and calves spend time around Baja California in shallow kelp beds, and mothers will aggressively defend their young from intruders. Alongside this remarkable phenomenon, Whale Sharks, the largest extant fish in the world (average length is 32 feet), also congregate off the coast of Baja. These gentle giants can be found in feeding aggregations within the Sea of Cortez and near the port city of La Paz (in the state of Baja California Sur), one of our itinerary's destinations.

And we haven't even mentioned the birds yet (or the tacos, tamales, and cold beer)! Mexico is a fabulous country to bird, with familiar families (thrashers, wrens, vireos and orioles) but unfamiliar species. When it comes to sparrows, Mexico sure lucked out. In our days of exploring the highlands around Mexico City, we'll search for the endemic Sierra Madre Sparrow—a bird restricted to alpine meadows in the volcanic belt, and recently placed in its own genus *Xenospiza*, meaning "strange sparrow." Another species in a monotypic genus we hope to encounter is the Striped Sparrow, a drab name for a spectacular Mexican endemic of high-elevation bunch grass. And of course, we'll keep our fingers crossed for Black-chested Sparrow, found in arid thorn scrub and weedy fields at lower elevations, and just about the best-looking sparrow there is! Other birds we hope to find in the cordilleras include the range-restricted Black-poll'd Yellowthroat, the truly stunning Red Warbler (you can't get much redder than that), Golden-browed Warbler, Golden Vireo, Golden-crowned Emerald (gold seems to be a theme here), Bumblebee Hummingbird, Strickland's Woodpecker, Chestnut-sided Shrike Vireo (a very cool bird), Gray Silky-flycatcher, Red-headed Tanager, Green-striped Brushfinch, Rusty-crowed Ground-Sparrow, Elegant Euphonia, Hooded Grosbeak, and, with a bit of luck, we may stumble upon a Long-tailed Wood-Partridge... who knows!? Since we'll be visiting in February, we may bump into a few familiar faces wintering in the Mexican highlands such as Red-faced Warbler, Varied Bunting, and Yellow-breasted Chat, among resident Black-vented Orioles, West Mexican Chachalacas, and Happy Wrens.

Baja Sur hosts six endemic species according to modern taxonomists. These include Cape (Baja) Pygmy-Owl, Xantus's Hummingbird, Gray Thrasher, San Lucas Robin, Belding's Yellowthroat, and Baird's Junco. Both the San Lucas Robin and Baird's Junco are found only at the highest elevations within the Sierra de la Laguna mountains (a hard day's

hike involving camping), and, though the robin is known to occasionally descend to lower elevations, it is unlikely we will see it (or the junco) on this tour. However, we should see the remaining endemics and loads of other desert, semi-arid, and foothill species. These will include Elf Owl, Gila Woodpecker, Greater Roadrunner, Verdin, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Cassin's (San Lucas; *V. c. lucasanus*) Vireo, California Scrub-Jay, Lazuli Bunting, Scott's Oriole and lots of Black-throated Gray Warblers and Western Tanagers, among many others.

We would be remiss to not mention Mexico's colorful culture and delicious food. Make sure you bring an appetite, as we will be sampling authentic enchiladas, tlacoyos, and huitlacoche (if you don't know what those are, don't worry, they're all delicious!). And, of course, we'll fill you in on some of Mexico's rich history—from the Toltecs and the Aztecs to Frida and Diego. So, grab your binoculars and prepare to explore deep forests, high mountains, arid deserts, and open waters in search of Mexico's most spectacular natural wonders.



*We'll have some strenuous hikes to get to the butterfly sanctuary; the trails can be steep and rocky, and elevation is higher than most of us are used to.  
Photograph by guide Micah Riegner.*

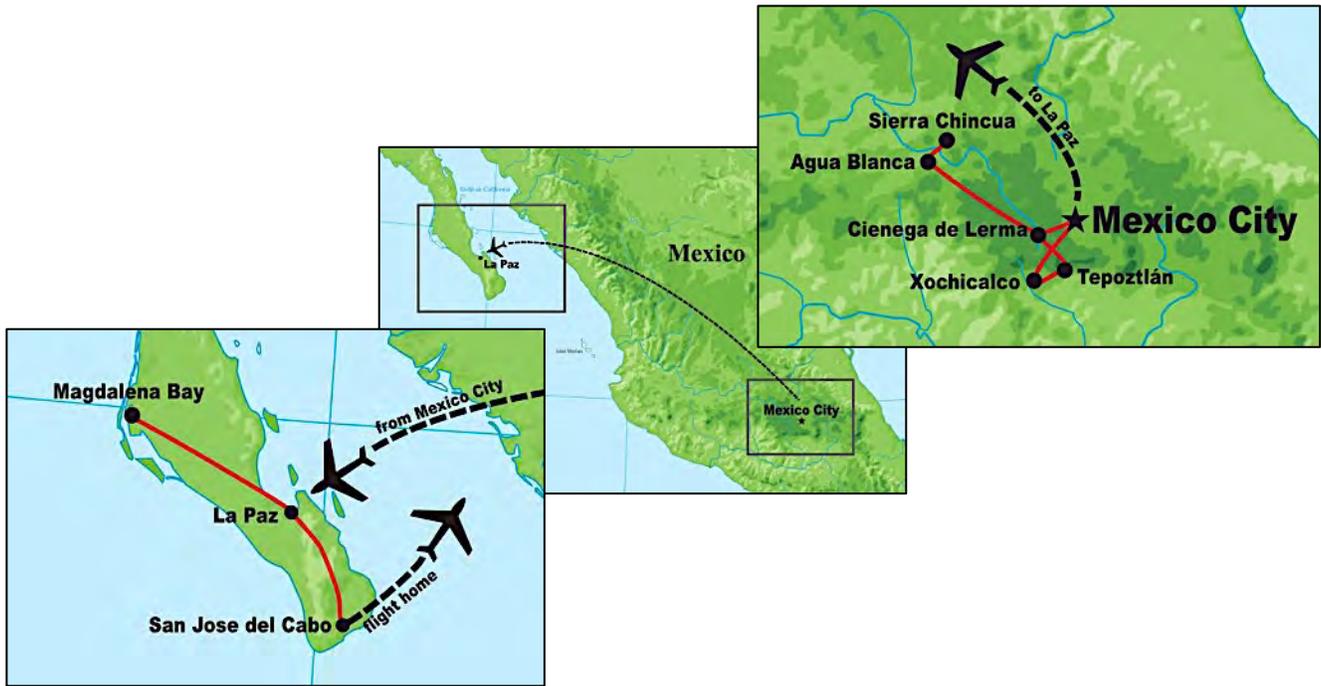
**About the Physical Requirements & Pace:** This tour will involve some strenuous hikes on steep terrain, so participants should be in good physical condition. We'll be birding at elevations ranging from sea level around Baja all the way to 10,500 feet at the butterfly reserves, and temperatures can range from the lower 40s all the way up to the 90s, so be prepared for brisk mornings and hot, sunny afternoons. Much of the birding will be done along beaches, forest trails and dirt roads, some of which can be quite dusty at this time of year. Expect several fairly long hikes (perhaps up to five miles) with several hundred feet of elevation gain on rocky, uneven, sometimes slippery surfaces. Our boat trips will be on "pangas," which are open-top fiberglass boats. Waters tend to be calm, but if you are prone to seasickness, plan accordingly. Note that we will be spending a night at a tented base camp on the coast of Baja that lacks some of the comforts and amenities you might be used to at a hotel or lodge. For more information on the Magdalena base camp see <https://www.kayakbaja.com/camp-meals-equipment/>

It is important that we make full use of the mornings, so be prepared for 5:30 am breakfasts. Most of the days will be full field days, and we will return to the hotels by around 5:30 pm. Some of the days will require 4+ hours of van time, but we will break that up with birding stops.

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 will put you in touch with the guide(s) for the tour.

## About the Birding (and butterfly and whales!) Areas

**Ciudad de Mexico (D.F.) and surrounding areas** Despite being the second largest city in the western hemisphere, with 8.9 million inhabitants (the surrounding urban area includes 20.9 million), **Mexico City** offers some good birding opportunities. The city itself sits in the Trans-Mexican Volcanic Belt and is surrounded by several snow-covered peaks, the two most iconic being the Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl on the southern horizon. We'll spend our first day birding **Parque las Maravillas**, a high-elevation meadow home to the endangered Sierra Madre Sparrow, and **UNAM Botanical Gardens** famous for its diverse cactus and agave gardens, where we'll look for Hooded Yellowthroat and other Mexican specialties. Near the city of Toluca is **Cienegas de Lerma**, a vast wetland full of reedbeds, and home to the endangered Black-pollled Yellowthroat. It's also a great place to see a variety of waterfowl, not to mention Aztec Rail and White-throated Flycatcher with a bit of luck. We'll stop here on our way out to the butterfly reserves.



**Hotel Agua Blanca** is a quaint, colorful lodge nestled in the dry valley of Jungapeo, and a convenient base for Monarch (and bird) enthusiasts. The birding is quite good in the dry woodland around the lodge. We'll be sure to look for the resident Russet-crowned Motmots, Rose-throated Becard, Golden-crowned Emerald, Golden Vireo and Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. It's also a good place to see wintering warblers like Black-throated Grays and Black-throated Greens. Oh, and we can assure you that you won't be disappointed by the food!

**Sierra Chincua** is the Monarch reserve we have chosen to visit. It straddles the border of Michoacán and the state of Mexico. To get to the site of the wintering Monarchs one must hike about 45 minutes through spectacular forest. The birding around the sierra is excellent. We'll spend a morning looking for Gray-barred Wren, Chestnut-sided Shrike-vireo, and Rufous-capped Brush-finch among flocks of wintering migrants, which may include a Colima Warbler or two. In the afternoon we'll visit the Monarch wintering site.

Only an hour's drive south of Mexico City, the town of **Tepoztlán** is a convenient escape from the hustle and bustle of the big city. The town itself is lovely, with cobblestone streets, colonial Spanish architecture and vibrant markets beneath spectacular rhyolite cliffs. The habitat surrounding the town is semi-deciduous woodland, home to Russet-crowned Motmots, Black-vented Orioles, Golden Vireos, Elegant Euphonias, Stripe-headed and Black-chested Sparrows. **Parque Nacional el Tepozteco** lies north of the town in the Pine-Oak zone.

**Xochicalco** is a spectacular archaeological site near the city of Cuernavaca. The translation means "place of flowers" because flowers were cultivated in the valley below to adorn the Aztec City of Tenochtitlan. The dry forest surrounding the archaeological site supports several specialties of the Pacific slope including Banded Quail, Lesser Ground-Cuckoo and Orange-breasted Bunting. Lesser Roadrunners often patrol the ruins.

**Baja California Sur** – Baja California is a long peninsula located in Northwest Mexico that crosses the Tropic of Cancer. It is composed of two Mexican states, Baja California and Baja California Sur, and bordered to the west by the Pacific Ocean and to the east by the Gulf of California (also known as the Sea of Cortez). Our time will be spent in the southernmost state of Baja California Sur, with the capital city of La Paz, and the tourist area of Cabo San Lucas. The region is quite dry, with long sandy beaches at sea-level, a few coastal marshes, dry forest scrub a bit higher and ranging into the foothills where taller deciduous forest occurs. Pine-oak forest is found even higher, but gradually changes into pine forest at the highest elevations in the Sierra de la Laguna around 2,100 meters (6,900 feet). All the peninsular endemic bird species can be found in Baja California Sur, but it's also an excellent place for migrants and vagrants. The offshore waters on both sides of the peninsula provide ample opportunities for marine mammal and seabird watching.



*The distinctive Striped Sparrow is a central Mexican endemic that occurs in the higher elevations. We'll watch for them as we make our way up to the Sierra Chincua Butterfly Reserve. Photograph by guide Micah Riegner.*

## Itinerary for Central Mexico and Baja: Birds, Butterflies, and Whales

**Day 1, Fri, Feb 7. Arrival to Mexico City.** Upon arrival into Mexico City, you'll be met at the airport by our local driver (who should be carrying a sign with your name and "Field Guides" on it) and transferred directly to our hotel. The ride from the airport to our hotel takes about 45 minutes depending on traffic. We'll get together in the hotel lobby at 7:00 p.m. for a short get-acquainted session; then, we'll head to dinner, where we'll discuss our plans for the tour. Night in Mexico City.

**Day 2, Sat, Feb 8. La Cima -- UNAM Botanical Gardens.** We will meet in the hotel lobby at 5:30 a.m. and head south to La Cima where we'll look for the endangered Sierra Madre Sparrow in the bunchgrass meadows. We'll spend the morning in search of other high elevation specialties (Red Warbler, Green-striped Brushfinch, Russet Nightingale-Thrush) and have lunch at a restaurant near the park. In the afternoon, we'll bird the UNAM Botanical Gardens. Night in Coyoacan, D.F.

**Day 3, Sun, Feb 9. Mexico City – Cienega de Lerma – Agua Blanca.** We'll leave Coyoacan early and drive to Cienega de Lerma to look for Black-poll'd Yellowthroat and other marsh birds. After lunch, we'll continue to Hotel Agua Blanca for some late afternoon birding. The forested hotel grounds are a good place to see Golden Vireo, Golden-crowned Emerald (a dainty hummer with a long, forked tail), flocks of wintering warblers and resident Russet-crowned Motmots. Night in Agua Blanca.

**Day 4, Mon, Feb 10. Agua Blanca—Sierra Chincua Butterfly Reserve.** We'll leave early for Sierra Chincua, and bird a drainage where we'll search for Gray-barred Wren, Mountain Trogon, Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo and Golden-browed Warbler. In the afternoon, we'll go to see the Monarchs. Some of the birds we can see on the way include Red Warbler, White-striped Woodcreeper, and Striped Sparrow. We'll return to Agua Blanca for the afternoon. Night in Agua Blanca.

**Day 5, Tue, Feb 11. Birding around Agua Blanca.** This day we'll leave open to bird sites around Agua Blanca and perhaps visit a different butterfly reserve, depending on the circumstances. Night in Agua Blanca.

**Day 6, Wed, Feb 12. Agua Blanca—Tepoztlan.** We'll leave Agua Blanca and drive toward Tepoztlan, a drive that takes roughly 4.5 hours non-stop, but we'll stop to bird, of course. We'll arrive at our hotel in time for some late afternoon birding around Amatlan, a town adjacent to Tepoztlan, birthplace of Quetzalcoatl, the pre-Hispanic feathered serpent god. There's a nice arroyo full of fig trees where we'll search for Elegant Euphonias, Brown-backed Solitaires, Gray Silky-Flycatchers, West Mexican Chachalacas and Banded Wrens. Night in Amatlan (near Tepoztlan).

**Day 7, Thu, Feb 13. Birding at Xochicalco.** We'll drive about an hour down the slope from Tepoztlan to Xochicalco, where we'll spend the morning looking for Banded Quail, Lesser Roadrunner and Lesser Ground-Cuckoo, while exploring the archaeological site. It can get quite hot, so we'll leave before lunch time and head back to Tepoztlan for the afternoon. We'll bird the "Valle Mistico" (the Mystic Valley) in search of Black-chested Sparrows, Boucard's Wren and Pileated Flycatcher in the dry forest. Night in Amatlan (near Tepoztlan).

**Day 8, Fri, Feb 14. Tepoztlan – DF, flight to La Paz.** We'll pack it up and head to Mexico City, about a 1.5-hour drive from Tepoztlan. We'll fly directly to La Paz (3:35 - 5 pm flight). Night in La Paz.

**Day 9, Sat, Feb 15. La Paz – Magdalena Bay.** We'll leave La Paz at 8 am for Lopez Mateos on Magdalena Bay. We'll arrive by noon where we'll have lunch at the "embarcadero", board the boats and let the whale watching begin! February is a great time to see the Gray Whales because many of them have calves. We'll arrive back to our luxury base camp in time for some late afternoon birding in the mangrove estuaries. Overnight stay at luxury base camp. To get a sense of what the base camp is like, watch this short video: <https://www.kayakbaja.com/by-accommodation-type/luxury-base-camps/>



*You'll need to be able to get in and out of small boats called "pangas" to do the whale-watching portion of the tour. These small boats will allow the whales to approach us if they wish, and let us get up-close views of them.  
Photograph by Stephen Bontempo.*

**Day 10, Sun, Feb 16. Morning birding around Magdalena Bay—Second Whale watching opportunity – La Paz.** We'll do some more coastal birding around Lopez Mateos before another whale watching outing. In the mangroves, we might see Ridgway's Rail, Mangrove Warbler and Large-billed Savannah Sparrow, surely a bird that warrants species-level status. After whale watching, we'll return to the base camp for lunch and afterwards drive back to La Paz. Night in La Paz.

**Day 11, Mon, Feb 17. Whale shark excursion (weather permitting) from La Paz—Cabo.** If the weather is nice (fingers crossed!), we'll do a boat trip from La Paz in search of Whale Sharks, and if you're so inclined, you can even snorkel with them! Snorkel gear will be provided. We'll return to La Paz for lunch and make our way to San Jose del Cabo. We'll stop at El Triunfo, a small mining town along the way. Night in San Jose del Cabo.

**Day 12, Tue, Feb 18. Birding around Cabo.** This will be the day we dedicate to targeting many of the Baja endemics around San Jose del Cabo and the foothills of the Sierra de la Laguna, first visiting the arid scrub lowlands and foothills north of town where we'll look for Gray Thrasher, Xantus's Hummingbird, Elf Owl, Cape Pygmy-Owl, Gila Woodpecker, and California Quail. In the afternoon, we'll try our luck at the endemic Belding's Yellowthroat in a coastal wetland. Night in San Jose del Cabo.

**Day 13, Wed, Feb 19. Last morning of birding around Cabo – Flights home.** We'll spend our final morning birding around Cabo, return to the hotel to check-out and shuttle to the airport for flights home. Please do not purchase your return flights before 2:30PM on this day.

## About Your Guides

**Jesse Fagan** (a.k.a. the Motmot or just "Mot") has been passionate about birds since his teens, when he had an encounter with a flying Pileated Woodpecker. He has birded throughout the United States, including spending seven years in Texas, and since 1995 has been birding and for a time living in northern Central America.

He has birded extensively throughout North America and in 2016 published the [\*Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Northern Central America\*](#) (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) with co-author Oliver Komar and illustrators Robert Dean and Peter Burke. He is currently working on a new field guide to the Caribbean. In addition, Mot has experience in many other areas of Central and South America, Europe, and Africa. He likes to think he can bird anywhere at any time and still show you the birds, but most importantly, a good time. Jesse holds a B.S. and an M.S. in mathematics from Texas Tech University. He is currently living in Lima, Peru.

*"Jesse is a fantastic guide. He really knows calls, infinitely patient in getting everyone on the difficult birds, fun to be with." L. F. Colombia: Bogota, the Magdalena Valley, and Santa Marta.*

**Micah Riegner** grew up exploring the Central Arizona Highlands and was fortunate to have parents who took him along on college field courses ranging from the coast of Mexico to the mountains of Costa Rica, where encounters with tinamous, barbets, and jacamars launched him into the birding world at a young age. During his time at Prescott College, he made annual pilgrimages to Amazonia, where he worked as a guide and participated in expeditions, mostly in Brazil. For his master's degree, he studied the foraging ecology of Amazonian woodcreepers. When he's not in the field, he tries to make time to paint birds and other creatures that spark his interest.

Micah guided tours with Bret Whitney, John Coons, Dan Lane, and Tom Johnson before joining Field Guides full time in 2019. Micah is a generous guide with an easy laugh and is eager to share his love of birds and nature in the years to come. We know you will have a great time traveling with him, too!

*"Micah Riegner was a delightful last-minute addition to the tour with Bret Whitney and Tom Johnson, and he added tremendous value. He was attentive to everyone and performed as though he'd worked together with Bret and Tom for years.... terrific!" D. R.; Great Rivers of the Amazon II*

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/guides> for complete tour schedules for Jesse and Micah; just click on their photos.

## Financial Information

**FEE:** \$5450 from Mexico City

**DEPOSIT:** \$545 per person (**\$300 is non-refundable; please see cancellation policy below for details.**)

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE:** October 10, 2019

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional):** \$800

**LIMIT:** 12

## Other Things You Need to Know

**TOUR MANAGER:** The manager for this tour is Caroline Lewis. Caroline will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

**DOCUMENTS:** For US citizens traveling to Mexico, a current passport is necessary to re-enter the United States. If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Mexican consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for your entire journey. Some countries require a blank page for their stamp and as a precaution it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT IMMIGRATION IN MEXICO:** Upon arrival in Mexico, the immigration officer will give you a paper form which you **MUST** keep with you at all times with your passport. Failure to present this when you are leaving for home will result in at least an extra day's delay.

**AIR ARRANGEMENTS:** *Please note that this tour begins in Mexico City (MEX) and ends in Los Cabos (SJD).*

Please plan to arrive in Mexico City on February 7 by 5 p.m. in time to join the group for dinner at 7 p.m. On February 19, you may make flight arrangements to depart at 2:30 p.m. or later.

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.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees.

**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.**

**LUGGAGE:** Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

**TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS:** The **tour fee** is \$5450 for one person in double occupancy from Mexico City. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 12, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 13, the group flight within Mexico, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). 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). 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 are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from Mexico, airport taxes, visa fees, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$800. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

**TOUR LIMITS:** Our limits are firm and we don't exceed the limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space remains open. However, on occasion, we will send along a guide in training on a tour. In these cases, one seat in the van or bus will be taken by the guide in training. Our guides will have a rotation system within the vehicle so that clients share the inconvenience equally. We hope this minor inconvenience will be more than offset by the advantages of having another guide along.

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$545** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by October 10, 2019. We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

**SMOKING:** Almost all 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.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** *Due to the cancellation policy of our supplier for the whale watching tour, we must amend our usual cancellation policy as follows: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$300, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure.* If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour fees (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 the 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 airlines restrictions.

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 in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

**TRIP CANCELLATION & 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, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (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 from us a brochure 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. **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 with InsureMyTrip ([www.insuremytrip.com](http://www.insuremytrip.com)) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. Please let us know if you have any questions about this. If you purchase the insurance within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights), pre-existing conditions are covered. The CSA brochure includes a contact number; you may also purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.html> and clicking the link to CSA. 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.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Field Guides Incorporated accepts 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. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right 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. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for

the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.  
5/19peg