

ITINERARY

Central Mexico and Baja: Birds, Butterflies, and Whales
February 12-23, 2023



We'll seek many of central Mexico's endemics, including the beautiful Golden-cheeked Woodpecker, which we will find in the forests of the Pacific Slope. Photograph by participant Sue Bryer.

We include here information for those interested in the 2023 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

These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our web site)
- 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

This 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 Hummer, Belding's Yellowthroat, and Sierra Madre Sparrow, to name a few) and a multitude of other Mexican specialties. This tour also highlights 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. This is truly one of the most impressive butterfly spectacles in the

world. It takes several generations to complete this migration, from Mexico to Canada, 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?

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, a distance of 11,000 miles. February is the best time of year to see mothers and calves wintering in these coastal lagoons. As if that weren't enough, Whale Sharks, the largest fish in the world (average adult length is 32 feet), also congregate off the coast of Baja in February. These gentle plankton-feeders can be seen perusing the waters near the port city of La Paz (in the state of Baja California Sur), where you can even swim alongside them, weather permitting of course.



*Wintering Monarch butterflies cluster by the millions in a few patches of montane forest in central Mexico.
Photograph by guide Jesse Fagan.*

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. This itinerary offers a fine array of endemic sparrows. In our days of exploring the highlands around Mexico City, we'll search for the Sierra Madre Sparrow, a bird restricted to alpine meadows in the volcanic belt, and recently placed in its own genus, *Xenospiza*. Another species in a monotypic genus we hope to encounter is the Striped Sparrow, 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-pollled 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-crowned 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 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 not to mention Mexico's colorful culture and delicious food. Make sure you bring an appetite, as we will be sampling authentic enchiladas, sopes and tlacoyos (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 binocs and prepare for awe as we explore deep forests, high mountains, arid deserts, and open waters in search of Mexico's most spectacular natural wonders!



We'll have a chance to get up close to wintering Gray Whales, and while we are on the water, we'll see Brown Pelicans and other coastal birds. Photograph by participant Fred Pinto.

All participants will be required to confirm they will have completed a full COVID vaccination course at least two weeks prior to the tour (which includes a booster for those eligible to have one). Having a vaccinated group will greatly diminish but not eliminate the possibility of the group and individual participants being adversely affected by COVID-19. **We are requiring all of our staff guides to be vaccinated, including getting the booster.** Note too, that many travel destinations are or soon will be requiring 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 become a requirement for some travel destinations if they choose to declare that vaccinations do not last indefinitely. And having a booster means your risk is lowered and your travel plans and those of our group are less likely to be disrupted.

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 this and be sure to fully explain 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.

Physical requirements of this tour

- **TRAILS & WALKING:** Good amounts of walking, usually 2-3 miles in the morning, 1-2 miles in afternoon, but with some morning walks of 4-5 miles, sometimes on dusty, slippery, steep, and/or rocky trails. Walking sticks recommended for those who use them.

- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** Two boat trips will be on “pangas,” open-top fiberglass boats. One night will be spent at a basic (but furnished) tented camp on Baja coast with a shared bathroom.
- **PACE:** Several mornings have an early start, with 5:30 a.m. breakfast, a picnic lunch, and a plan to be in the field through dinner time. On several days, we will be traveling by vehicle to the next destination in the morning or afternoon. There will be at least one nighttime excursion to look for birds.
- **WEATHER:** Winter weather in Mexico varies, depending on the location and elevation, from the low 40s in higher elevations in the morning to the 90s in the lowlands. We should expect blue skies and big puffy clouds for the majority of the time, but rain and cold fronts which last 2 to 3 days are possible (Mexico State). The Baja region is particularly hot and dry at this time of year.
- **ELEVATION:** Sea level to 10,500 feet.
- **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:** Whenever possible, we use modern, indoor restrooms, but on occasion, participants must be prepared to make a comfort stop in nature.
- **OPTING OUT:** Where we are staying multiple days in the same lodging, participants can easily opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day. This will not be possible on days when we are changing locations.

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 area— Despite being the second largest city in the western hemisphere, with 20.9 million inhabitants, **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. **Parque las Maravillas** is a high-elevation meadow, home to the endangered Sierra Madre Sparrow, Hooded Yellowthroat and Strickland's Woodpecker. Near the city of Toluca is **Cienegas de Lerma**, a

vast, but shrinking wetland full of reedbeds, and home to the endangered Black-pollled Yellowthroat. It's also a place to see Aztec Rail, with a bit of luck. We'll stop here on our way out to the butterfly reserve.

Only an hour's drive south of Mexico City, the town of **Tepoztlan** 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. Here it's possible to see birds like Long-tailed Wood-partridge, Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo, and numerous other high elevations species.

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 tropical deciduous forest surrounding the archaeological site supports several specialties of the Pacific slope including Banded Quail, Lesser Ground-Cuckoo, Banded Wren and Orange-breasted Bunting. Lesser Roadrunners often patrol the ruins. The city of **Cuernavaca** has some nice parks and birding areas. We will check out a waterfall in the middle of the city where several hundred White-naped Swifts come in to roost every night.

Santuario Piedra Herrada is one of the closer, more accessible Monarch reserves to Mexico City. In order to reach the Monarchs we will need to hike a steep trail that climbs

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 Gray Thrasher is endemic to Baja California, where it is common in the desert scrub.
Photograph by guide Micah Riegner.*



The Black-pollled Yellowthroat is restricted to a small area of central Mexico; we'll visit the Cienega de Lerma to see these marsh dwellers. Photograph by participant Judie Dunn.

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

Day 1, Sun, 12 Feb. Arrival in 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 6:00 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, Mon, 13 Feb. Mexico City-Parque las Maravillas-Tepoztlan. We will meet in the hotel lobby with bags at 5:30 a.m. and head south to Parque las Maravillas where we'll look for the endangered Sierra Madre Sparrow in the bunchgrass meadows and other high elevation specialties (Red Warbler, Green-striped Brushfinch, Russet Nightingale-Thrush). We'll have lunch at a nearby restaurant and then head to Tepoztlan. We'll bird around Tepoztlan in the late afternoon. Night in Tepoztlan.

Days 3-4 Tue-Wed, 14-15 Feb. Birding around Morelos. These two days we'll be birding the state of Morelos in the vicinity of Tepoztlan and Cuernavaca. We'll explore the ruins of Xochicalco where we'll keep an eye out for Banded Quail, Lesser Roadrunner, Lesser Ground-Cuckoo, Banded Wren, Black-chested Sparrow, and West Mexican Chachalaca. We'll stop at a waterfall in the middle of Cuernavaca to watch several hundred White-naped Swifts fly in to roost. In the high elevation oak forest around Tepoztlan we'll look for Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo, Red Warbler and Trans-Volcanic Jay. Night in Tepoztlan.

Day 5, Thu, 16 Feb. Cienega de Lerma to Rancho Viejo. We'll pack up and leave Tepoztlan and head to Cienega de Lerma for Black-pollled Yellowthroat, another endemic of Central Mexico, and from there, we'll continued toward our lodge near Piedra Herrada. Night at Rancho Viejo.

Day 6, Fri, 17 Feb. Butterfly Day! We leave early for the Santuario Piedra Herrada and spend the morning amongst the Monarchs. In the afternoon we'll bird around the lodge. Night at Rancho Viejo.

Day 7, Sat, 18 Feb. Return to DF for Flight to Baja. We'll pack it up and head to Mexico City. We'll fly directly to La Paz (3:35 - 5 pm flight). Night in La Paz.

Day 8, Sun, 19 Feb. La Paz to Magdalena Bay. We'll leave La Paz at 8 a.m. and arrive in Magdalena Bay in time for lunch. We'll have lunch before boarding the boats to go whale watching. February is a great time to see the Gray Whales because many of them have calves. In the late afternoon, We'll arrive to our base camp in time for some late afternoon birding. The camp is located in Magdalena Island located south of the Bay on a sand-dune barriers island. The camp has roomy full-height tents with two twin size beds or one king size bed, couch, pillow, large floor fan, and beside lamps. There are two full bathrooms just a few steps from your tent with hot water showers and washing sinks with mirrors. Overnight stay at Camp Chirinola.

Day 9, Mon, 20 Feb. Whale Watching at Magdalena Bay, return to La Paz. We'll have another morning of whale watching before we pack up and head back to La Paz. Night in La Paz.

Day 10, Tue, 21 Feb. Whale shark excursion (weather permitting), drive to 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 and wetsuits will be provided. We'll return to La Paz for lunch and make our way to San Jose del Cabo. Night in San Jose del Cabo.



We'll take a panga ride to look for Whale Sharks, the largest fish in the world, and we may get the opportunity to swim alongside them! Photograph by guide Micah Riegner.

Day 11, Wed, 22 Feb. Birding at Sierra la Laguna. 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 freshwater wetland. Night in San Jose del Cabo.

Day 12, Thu, 23 Feb. Flights Home. We'll leave for the airport this morning (about 20 minutes away) at around 9:30 a.m. (for 1:00 p.m. flights). If you plan to leave later (or earlier), you may take a taxi to the airport. Have a safe trip home!

Note: Many of the activities on this tour, such as the Whale Sharks and Monarchs, are weather dependent, so any foul weather could impact these activities.

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 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. 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 fun time. Jesse holds a B.S. and an M.S. in mathematics from Texas Tech University. He currently lives in Lima, Peru, with his wife, Rocio.

“Jesse Fagan is a first-rate guide, combining a great ear and eyes with a congenial personality. He manages the group well while being fun to be with. His organization skills matched his birding skills.” C.B.; Peruvian Rainforests of the Tambopata

Doug Gochfeld was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY, and his interest in birds was sparked at a young age (he participated in his first CBC at the age of 7), in part by his father. This interest soon spiraled into a full-blown obsession for Doug for a few years before he abruptly shelved it, in favor of baseball, for several adolescent years. He picked up his interest in birds again in college and once again became a dedicated/obsessed birder.

For several years before starting to lead a full slate of tours for Field Guides in 2016, he traveled extensively as a working birder. These field jobs have included guiding on St. Paul Island, in Alaska’s Pribilof Islands, for parts of four years, and multiple seasons spent monitoring migration at the legendary migration hotspots of Cape May, New Jersey, and Eilat in Israel (this last as recently as 2016). While in Eilat, he was able to thoroughly explore the southern part of the country, which is where his strong bond with desert landscapes originated. Doug is excited to share this love and appreciation of the desert spectacles with all those who accompany him to this part of the world.

Doug is a Leica Pro Staff member, and he has been a regular leader at birding festivals in Texas, Ohio, Florida, New Mexico, and Virginia. He has worked in Alaska, Suriname, and Brazil studying the breeding and wintering ecology of shorebirds, which hold a special place in his heart. His strongest interests in birding are migration, vagrancy, and patterns of distribution, and he’s always excited to share his enthusiasm in, and knowledge of, these subjects and much more on his tours, whether close to home or halfway around the world.

“Doug’s enthusiasm, skill and tenacity at finding birds is amazing. He clearly loves showing birds to people - be it a common or not so common bird”. D. S. Colorado Grouse

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for complete tour schedules for Jesse and Doug; just click on their photos.

Financial Information

FEE: \$5450 from Mexico City

DEPOSIT: \$550 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: August 16, 2022

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$800 (*singles are not guaranteed at the whale camp -1 night*).

LIMIT: 12

Special Note: Tour fees may be subject to change due to the global economic effects of COVID-19.

We have published the itinerary and price for this tour with the understanding that during these uncertain times we are likely to encounter unforeseen changes. Some of our tours may incur higher costs due to increases in currency exchange rate fluctuations or COVID-19 related fees imposed by countries and/or suppliers. Travel and hospitality companies all over the world have been adversely affected by the pandemic, and there is no guarantee that all of the lodging and transportation we have booked for this tour will still be available at the time of departure. We hope to maintain our services as indicated in our itinerary as well as our published tour fee. However, if changes are required we will make every effort to maintain the quality of the itinerary as it is published with the most appropriate substitutions available. Should any necessary changes or other unforeseen causes result in an increase in service rates to us, we reserve the right to pass on those increases in fees to the tour participant.

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 12 by 5 p.m. in time to join the group for dinner at 7 p.m. On February 23, you may make flight arrangements from Los Cabos at any time.

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 11, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 12, 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. (*NOTE: Single accommodations at the whale camp are limited and may not be available. If you must have a single, please contact your tour manager, to reserve your spot.*) 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, please [contact our office](#). Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our new electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please mail your **deposit of \$550** per person, or see our Payment Options at <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/>. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or **by August 16, 2022**. **We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.**

Please note that if you are traveling on a tour **outside your country of domicile** (for example, outside the US for US residents), we will require **proof of travel insurance**. 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: Refund of deposit and 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 tour fee is refundable. 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.

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. If you are traveling on a tour **outside your country of domicile** (for example, outside the US for US residents), we will **require proof of travel insurance**. 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 within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 90 to 179 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 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.

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. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible 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.

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