

ITINERARY

Central Mexico and Baja: Birds, Butterflies, and Whales
February 16-27, 2025



*Central Mexico has a number of range-restricted endemics, including the Sierra Madre Sparrow.
Photograph by guide Micah Riegner.*

We include here information for those interested in the 2025 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 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 tour promises top-notch birding from mountains and meadows around Mexico City to the coastal deserts and mangrove lagoons near the tip of the Baja Peninsula. Along the way we'll search for some range-restricted endemics (Xantus's Hummer, Belding's Yellowthroat, and Black-chested Sparrow, to name a few) and multiple 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 Monarch Butterflies 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 Micah Riegner.*

Mexico is a country full of fabulous endemic birds and this itinerary offers a fine array of cool 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: Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo, the truly stunning Red Warbler, Golden-browed Warbler, Golden Vireo, Golden-crowned Emerald, Strickland's Woodpecker, Gray Silky-flycatcher, Green-striped Brushfinch, Rusty-crowned Ground-Sparrow, Elegant Euphonia, and, with a bit of luck, we may stumble upon a Lesser Ground-Cuckoo. Since we'll be visiting in February, we may bump into a few familiar faces wintering in the Mexican highlands such as Hermit and Townsend's Warbler, Varied Bunting, and Yellow-breasted Chat among resident Black-vented Orioles, West Mexican Chachalacas, and Happy Wrens.

Baja Sur hosts six endemic species. 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, Western 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 Kahlo and Diego Rivera. 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!



*The Cape Northern Pygmy-Owl is restricted to the mountains at the far southern end of the Baja Peninsula.
Photograph by guide Micah Riegner.*

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:** We'll be doing a good amount of walking on steep, dusky, rocky trails, dirt roads and beaches. Walking sticks are highly recommended for those who use them. The hike to see the Monarchs is around 1.2 miles with an elevation gain of 790 feet, which makes it quite steep. There are horses available for those who decide not to hike. Those who take the horses up will still need to hike a couple hundred meters to the spot where the butterflies are roosting.
- **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 shared bathrooms.
- **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 considerably from the low 40s in higher elevations to the upper 80s 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 in Mexico State. Baja is particularly hot and dry at this time of year.
- **ELEVATION:** Sea level (or below sea level if you decide to swim with the Whale Shark!) to 10,206 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 22 million inhabitants, **Mexico City** offers some surprisingly good birding opportunities. The city itself sits in the Trans-Mexican Volcanic Belt and is surrounded by several peaks, the two most iconic being the Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl on the southern horizon. **La Cima** is a patchwork of high elevation pine forests and meadows, home to the endangered Sierra Madre Sparrow, Striped Sparrow, Green-striped Brushfinch and Strickland's Woodpecker. Near the city of Toluca is **Laguna Almoloya**, a cattail-lined lagoon, home to the declining Black-poll'd Yellowthroat of the Transvolcanic Belt.

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 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 where it's possible to see Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo, Brown-backed Solitaire, Red Warbler and Transvolcanic Jay.

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 including Banded Quail, Lesser Ground-Cuckoo, Banded Wren, Lesser Roadrunner and Pileated Flycatcher. The city of **Cuernavaca** has some nice parks and birding areas. We will check out El Salto de San Anton, a waterfall in the middle of the city where several hundred White-naped Swifts come in to roost every night. It's quite a show!

Santuario Piedra Herrada lies in the mountains a couple hours outside Mexico City. This is one of the closer Monarch wintering sites—the rest are in the state of Michoacan. In order to reach the Monarchs we will need to hike 1.2 miles on a steep but well used trail with an elevation gain of 790 feet . The highest elevation we will reach will be 10,206 feet. The butterflies change roost sites year to year and throughout the season depending on local temperatures, so it's difficult to say exactly how far we'll need to hike to go see them, but expect to walk around a mile. There are horses available for those who don't wish to do the hike.

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

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

Day 1, Sun, 16 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 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, Mon, 17 Feb. La Cima to Tepoztlan. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 5:30 a.m. and head south to La Cima, our main target being the Sierra Madre Sparrow that inhabits the high elevation bunchgrass meadows. Other specialties in this area including Red Warbler, Green-striped Brushfinch, Russet Nightingale-Thrush and Strickland's Woodpecker. After lunch we'll head to our hotel in Tepoztlan. If the weather looks good we'll do some owling in search of Balsas Screech-owls and Buff-collared Nightjar. Night in Tepoztlan.

Days 3-4 Tue-Wed, 18-19 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 low elevation tropical deciduous forests in hopes of finding Banded Quail, Lesser Roadrunner, Lesser Ground-Cuckoo, Banded Wren, Pileated Flycatcher, Black-chested Sparrow, Rusty-crowned Ground-Sparrow and West Mexican Chachalaca. We'll see the spectacular ruins of Xochicalco, then stop at a waterfall in the middle of Cuernavaca to watch several hundred White-naped Swifts fly in to roost. In the oak forests around Tepoztlan we'll look for Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo, Golden-browed Warbler, Trans-Volcanic Jay and a number of resident and migratory hummingbirds. Nights in Tepoztlan.



*Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo is one of those must-see specialties of Central Mexico.
Photograph by guide Micah Riegner.*

Day 5, Thu, 20 Feb. Tepoztlan to Laguna Almoloya to Rancho Viejo. This day will be largely a travel day. We will leave Tepoztlan, stop and Laguna Almoloya to see Black-pollled Yellowthroat before continuing to our lodge near Reserva Piedra Herrada for some late afternoon birding. Night at Rancho Viejo.

Day 6, Fri, 21 Feb. Butterfly Day! We leave early for the Santuario Piedra Herrada and spend the morning with the Monarchs. Expect to hike about a mile on a steep, but well used trail to reach the butterflies. After lunch we'll continue birding the oak/conifer forests in search of things like White-striped Woodcreeper, Black-backed Oriole, Northern Pygmy-Owl and Rufous-capped Brushfinch. Night at Rancho Viejo.

Day 7, Sat, 22 Feb. Return to Mexico City for Flight to Baja. Today we leave Rancho Viejo and drive to Mexico City for our afternoon flight to La Paz. By the time we land and get settled into our hotel it will already be time for dinner. Night in La Paz.

Day 8, Sun, 23 Feb. La Paz to Magdalena Bay. We'll leave La Paz and arrive in Magdalena Bay in time for lunch. We'll have lunch before boarding the boats to go whale watching. February is the best time to see the Gray Whales because many of them have calves. We'll arrive to our base camp located on a sand dune barrier island in time for some late afternoon birding. The camp has roomy tents with two twin size beds or one king size bed, couch, pillow, large floor fan, and bedside 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, 24 Feb. Whale Watching at Magdalena Bay, return to La Paz. Assuming we've had a good whale show the day before, we will do some boat-based birding for the morning stopping at Isla Patos, an island covered with cormorants, pelicans and gulls. We'll have lunch back in San Carlos before we pack up and drive back to La Paz. Night in La Paz.

Day 10, Tue, 25 Feb. Whale shark excursion (weather permitting), drive to Buenavista. 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 Santiago, stopping at an Oasis where San Lucas Robins have been known to occur during the winter. Night in Buenavista. **NOTE: The trips to see Whale Sharks are done with permits from the local government. Permits are only given out to boat operators if there are a sufficient number of Whale Sharks in the bay. If there are too few individuals, then we will not be able to view them. If this is the case, we will enjoy some additional birding around La Paz that morning.**



We have the opportunity to see three endemic yellowthroats on this tour. This Black-polled Yellowthroat is restricted to the high elevation marshes west of Mexico City. Photograph by guide Micah Riegner.

Day 11, Wed, 26 Feb. Birding at Sierra la Laguna. This will be the day we target many of the Baja endemics around Reserva Sierra de la Laguna, those being Gray Thrasher, Xantus's Hummingbird, Cape Northern Pygmy-Owl and the San Lucas subspecies of Cassin's Vireo. After a delicious lunch, we'll try for Belding's Yellowthroat in a freshwater wetland in Santiago. Night in Buenavista.

Day 12, Thu, 27 Feb. Flights Home. We will leave at 8:00 am for the airport, which is about an hour away. Please plan on flying anytime after 11:00 am. 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 published [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 good time.

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

Jesse Fagan is a terrific guide. His enthusiasm and knowledge is amazing -- and infectious. Plus, he is a lot of fun! We would enjoy traveling with him again. A. W.; Western Panama

Chris Benesh grew up studying natural history in California, where he was inspired by his father to take up birding as a teenager. After earning a degree in zoology from UC Santa Barbara in 1987, Chris moved to Austin to join the Field Guides staff. Since then, his life has undergone a wonderful transformation. The intervening years at Field Guides have taken him to many corners of the world and across both the Arctic and Antarctic circles! Chris takes an interest in nearly anything that flies, and you might catch him sneaking a peak at a passing aircraft, or stopping to examine a butterfly or odonate. You might also notice him getting especially excited at the sighting of a rare or wonderful mammal (heck, he can get excited about a squirrel).

Chris's passion for education has led to his serving on the Arizona Bird Committee, leading the occasional workshop, presenting at birding conventions, and—we must add—thoroughly explaining in admirable detail the nuances of flycatchers to tour participants and colleagues alike.

"I just can't say enough good things about Chris Benesh. I've travelled with Chris before and he shows incredible patience and diligence. He goes to great lengths to plan the day and it shows with the birds seen. P.P., Slice of California

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

Financial Information

FEE: \$6225 from Mexico City

DEPOSIT: \$625 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: August 20, 2024

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$1000 (*singles are not guaranteed at the whale camp -1 night*).

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.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: *Please note that this tour begins in Mexico City (MEX) and ends in San José del Cabo (SJD).* Please plan to arrive in Mexico City on February 16 by 5 p.m. in time to join the group for dinner at 7 p.m. On February 27, you may make flight arrangements from Los Cabos any time after 11 a.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.

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, restrict your luggage to one medium-sized duffel or suitcase and a carry-on. Also, 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.

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.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is \$6225 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 \$1000. (*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 us at fieldguides.com/contact-us/. 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 \$625** per person, or see <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/> for our Payment Options. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or **by August 20, 2024**. **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.**

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.

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.

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, 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.

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 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.

MR 3/24; cb 8/24
Updated 9/24peg