

ITINERARY

**HOLIDAY COSTA RICA: RANCHO NATURALISTA**

*Tour I: December 22 - 30, 2022*

*Tour II: December 30- January 7, 2023*



*A glimpse of a Resplendent Quetzal might just be the perfect thing to set off a holiday visit to Costa Rica!  
Photograph by participant Donna Schulman.*

*We include here information for those interested in the 2022 Field Guides Holiday Costa Rica: Rancho Naturalista tour:*

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- 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 the website)
- 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 for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

**Rancho Naturalista** has long been considered one of Costa Rica's best birding lodges. With its pleasant, spring-like climate, comfortable rooms, delicious food, and superb service, the lodge makes a wonderful base from which to explore the diverse habitats of the country's bird-rich Caribbean slope. Though this is a one-site tour, Rancho's location at 3000 feet in elevation on the Caribbean slope of the Talamanca Mountains makes it relatively easy to visit a good variety of habitats—from the Caribbean lowlands at Centro Manú to the cloud forests of Tapantí and the montane oak forest on Irazu Volcano—with the added bonus of being able to return to the same comfortable rooms each night. The result will be that we'll enjoy a birdy, yet relatively relaxed, few days.

The lodge itself boasts an impressive bird list, with nearly 300 species having been recorded from its private reserve, more than 200 from the balcony alone! Some mornings will find us on the balcony at first light, coffee in hand, as we enjoy the spectacle of birds coming in for their daily banana feast. Among the visitors will be Blue-gray and Scarlet-rumped tanagers, handsome Lesson's Motmots, and gaudy Collared Aracaris, as well as comical Montezuma Oropendolas. Hummingbird feeders at eye level on the balcony attract numerous hummingbirds and allow us close views of spectacular White-necked Jacobins and Green-breasted Mangos, while a flowering hedge which lines the garden may entice in some smaller species, such as the Violet-headed Hummingbird and Green Thorntail.



*Collared Aracaris are frequent visitors to the feeders at Rancho Naturalista. Photograph by participant Donna Schulman.*

Days at the lodge will be spent on the private reserve, exploring a network of trails that wind through the forested hillside behind the lodge as well as the ranch's long driveway. One target will certainly be the tiny Snowcap, for which Rancho is rightly famous; the lodge remains the best area in the country to see these wonderful hummingbirds. Along the forest trails, we hope to come across some mixed feeding flocks—woodcreepers, warblers, flycatchers, and tanagers among them. And the late afternoon may find us at a quiet forest stream, watching as a parade of birds, including that delightful Snowcap, comes to the clear water to bathe. All in all our days at Rancho are sure to be filled with many rewarding birding experiences.

On the travel days to and from the lodge or on day trips from the lodge, we'll make visits to other top birding sites at different elevations and in different habitats. At Irazu Volcano, we'll have the opportunity to become familiar with many of the species that are endemic to the highlands of Costa Rica and Panama. Here, Collared Redstart, Flame-throated and Black-cheeked warblers, Large-footed Finch, and Volcano Junco will be among our targets. Small numbers of incredible Resplendent Quetzals are also found here, and with a little luck, we may track down one of these marvelous birds. The Caribbean lowlands at Centro Manú and Donde Cope hold a variety of lowland specialties that we won't see elsewhere. Slaty-tailed Trogon, White-necked and Pied puffbirds, Mealy and Red-lored parrots, and Bare-necked Umbrellabird will be among our many targets here. And at Tapantí National Park, we'll access a pristine area of beautiful cloud forest, home to Black Guan, Prong-billed Barbet, and Spangle-cheeked Tanager, as well as many other species.

Looking to do something different for the holidays this year? What better way to spend them than with a bevy of beautiful tropical birds from a base that offers all the comforts of home, plus more? Come join us in Costa Rica this holiday season, and start your New Year's birding off with a bang!

**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, for tours departing on or after March 1, 2022, includes a booster).** 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 for the tour:

- **TRAILS AND WALKING:** For much of the trip, we'll be birding along smooth paved roads or wide, rough dirt tracks. The trails at Rancho can be steep and narrow, and potentially muddy (and thus slick) in places. The terrain at our lowland locations will be flat and easy-going. Elsewhere, we'll have to deal with some amount of elevation change. This will vary (depending on the day) from gentle climbs on several days to a fairly significant climb on a couple of (optional) trail hikes. We'll also make one or two fairly steep descents along a wide gravel road. Those who use walking sticks should be sure to bring them along. We'll typically walk between one and three miles in a day. Our pace will be leisurely enough so as to present little difficulty to anyone in reasonable health and used to some regular walking.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** Rancho's famous balcony (from which we'll bird on several occasions) and some of the guest rooms are up a flight of stairs.
- **PACE:** On most days of the tour, breakfast is served from 7:00 a.m. onwards; we'll offer an optional pre-breakfast outing on those days. On the days that we visit other habitats, things will be somewhat different, as we will aim for early morning departures (with breakfasts between 5:00 and 5:30 a.m.) to ensure that we hit the best birding areas at an optimal time of day. However, we'll try to stagger these early departures so that they don't fall on consecutive days. On many days, we'll return to the lodge for lunch and a bit of a break before heading out again in the late afternoon. On the days we visit Universidad EARTH and Tapanti, we'll take a packed lunch with us to eat in the field. Dinner is typically served from 6:00 p.m., though we'll arrange for slightly later meals on some days to allow us to stay until dusk at potential nightbird spots. Each evening, we'll do the day's checklist after dinner.
- **ELEVATION:** San Jose (and the Hotel Bougainvillea) sits at roughly 3800 feet, and Rancho Naturalista at about 3200 feet. We'll reach our highest altitudes on Volcan Irazu. The summit is at 11,200+ feet, and we may spend several hours at that elevation while we search for Timberline Wren and Volcano Junco. We'll spend several more hours lower on the volcano's flanks, at elevations ranging from 7500 – 9500 feet. At Tapanti, we'll bird at elevations between 3500 and 5000 feet.
- **WEATHER:** The climate in Costa Rica varies with the region and participants should be prepared for a range of conditions. Temperatures should be reasonably warm throughout, mainly in the 70-85F range during the day. Exceptions will be in the Caribbean lowlands (where it may be considerably hotter) and on Irazu Volcano, where it could be quite cold, especially if it is cloudy and/or rainy.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** We'll travel in a 21-seater Coaster bus. You'll need to be able to climb in and out of the vehicle using its steps (the lowest of which is about 15 inches from the ground) and to maneuver into the rear seats of the vehicle. Your guide(s) will implement a rotation system so that everyone has a chance to be "up front". Those who experience motion sickness should bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for those with medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** While we'll use modern, indoor facilities where they're available, our options in some places will be limited, so participants should be prepared for the occasional latrine or bush stop.
- **OPTING OUT:** On all but our transfer days, participants can easily opt to sit out a day. On many days, it will be possible to take a half-day off.

## About the Birding Areas



**Rancho Naturalista** is a private lodge nestled in the forested Caribbean foothills east of San Jose. Located at about 3200 feet in elevation, Rancho is perfectly sited to allow exploration into some of the richest birding habitats in Costa Rica. Bird activity in these humid middle elevations is characterized by movements of large feeding flocks, often comprising ten to fifteen or more species; these make for exciting (if somewhat frustrating!) birding. Around Rancho Naturalista and some nearby locations, we'll be watching for such species as Bicolored Hawk, Gray-headed Chachalaca, Brown-hooded Parrot, Crimson-fronted Parakeet, Dull-mantled and Zeledon's antbirds, White-collared, White-ruffed, and White-crowned manakins, Tawny-chested and Slaty-capped flycatchers, Stripe-breasted Wren, Black-and-yellow, Carmiol's, Emerald and Speckled tanagers, the striking Crimson-collared Tanager, Scarlet-rumped Cacique, Chestnut-headed Oropendola, and Black-headed Saltator. Hummingbirds on the grounds of the lodge itself, often only a few feet from the observer, include such dazzling gems as Green and Stripe-throated

hermits, Green-breasted Mango, Crowned Woodnymph, Green Thorntail, Black-crested Coquette, White-necked Jacobin, Violet Sabrewing, Green-crowned Brilliant, Violet-headed and Rufous-tailed hummingbirds, and Snowcap!

**Irazu Volcano National Park** is one of Costa Rica's most-visited national parks. Situated just a short distance from the city of San Jose, the volcano looms over the city, and occasionally spews ash over the surrounding countryside, as it did during its most recent period of activity in the mid 1960's. Though still classified as active, the volcano is more benign these days, and thus safe to visit. In the high-elevation forests of Irazu's slopes, we'll search for a number of species endemic to the Chiriqui highland regions of Costa Rica and Panama, as well as numerous more widespread species. Among the targets here will be Lesser Violetear, Volcano and Fiery-throated hummingbirds, Acorn Woodpecker, Ruddy Treerunner, Black-capped Flycatcher, Timberline Wren, Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Sooty Thrush, both species of silky-flycatcher, Yellow-winged Vireo, Flame-throated and Black-cheeked warblers, Collared Redstart, Flame-colored Tanager, Large-footed Finch, and Volcano Junco. The stunning Resplendent Quetzal, a rare resident of the oak forests here, is also a possibility.

**Centro Manú** is a small private rainforest reserve in the Caribbean lowlands. Famous primarily for its Bare-necked Umbrellabird lek, it also has planted gardens which bring in a host of hummingbirds, and a network of trails that wind through the forest. Among the species possible here are Great Potoo, Black-crested Coquette, Violet-headed and Blue-chested hummingbirds, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, Black-throated and Slaty-tailed trogons, Yellow-throated Toucan, Rufous-winged and Pale-billed woodpeckers, Red-lore and Mealy parrots, Olive-throated Parakeet, Checker-throated Stipplethroat, Chestnut-backed Antbird, Red-crowned Manakin, Rufous Mourner, Black-faced Grosbeak, Shining Honeycreeper and many more.

**Tapantí National Park** is a beautiful cloud forest park tucked away in the northern reaches of the Cordillera de Talamanca. The accessible section of the park ranges from 3500 to 5000 feet in elevation and is home to a good assortment of wet middle-elevation species. Black Guan, Black and Ornate hawk-eagles, Green-fronted Lancebill, Black-bellied Hummingbird, White-bellied and Purple-throated Mountain-gems, Prong-billed and Red-headed barbets, Spotted Barbtail, Brown-billed Scythebill, Red-faced Spinetail, Scaled Antpitta, Golden-bellied and Olive-striped flycatchers, Torrent Tyrannulet, Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush, Black-faced Solitaire, Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Elegant Euphonia, and Sooty-faced Finch are just some of the many species we could encounter here.



*The Sunbittern is common in the area near Rancho Naturalista, and we have gotten good views of these sometimes elusive birds on our tours. Photograph by participant Mike Crewe.*

## Itinerary for Holiday Costa Rica: Rancho Naturalista

**Day 1, Thu, Dec. 22 or Fri, Dec 30. Arrival in San Jose.** There are many daily flights into San Jose from several US cities. (Give our office a call and we will be happy to help you with the schedule from your home city that best suits your needs.) Upon arrival in San Jose, look for someone holding a sign with your name or “Field Guides” on it, as our ground agents will provide a transfer for you to the hotel. We will gather in the hotel lobby at 7:00 p.m. for dinner and to discuss the following day’s plans. Night near San Jose.

**Day 2, Fri, Dec. 23 or Sat, Dec 31. Irazu National Park; to Rancho.** After an early breakfast (planned for 6:30 a.m.), we’ll pack up the bus and head to the slopes of Irazu Volcano. As we approach the volcano’s summit, we’ll enter the habitat favored by many of the endemics of the Chiriqui Highland region of western Panama and Costa Rica. These birds, which include such species as Fiery-throated Hummingbird, the Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Buffy Tuftedcheek, Black-faced Solitaire, Long-tailed and Black-and-yellow silky-flycatchers, and Flame-throated Warbler, will be among our main targets today. We will also put in some effort to find the beautiful Resplendent Quetzal here. At the end of the road at the top of the volcano, we’ll search for Volcano Hummingbird, Timberline Wren, Large-footed Finch, and Volcano Junco as well as have a look at the magnificent crater lake and cinder covered caldera. We’ll have a restaurant lunch on the slopes of the volcano before heading to Rancho, possibly with a stop (dependent on time) at the Birris reservoir. Night at Rancho Naturalista.

**Days 3-7, Sat-Wed, Dec. 24-28 or Sun-Thu, Jan 1-5. Rancho Naturalista.** For the next five days we will be based at Rancho Naturalista and will split our time between the lodge’s private reserve and several nearby areas. Mornings will typically start on the balcony watching the procession of birds coming to the backyard feeders: Gray-headed Chachalacas, Collared Aracaris, Golden-olive woodpeckers, Scarlet-rumped and Blue-gray tanagers, Orange-billed Sparrows, and both species of oropendolas among others. Some of our days will be spent exploring the lodge’s trail system for some of the species that make their home in the forests here. We will, of course, spend some time at the hummingbird feeders, putting in a special effort to see the bird the lodge is most famous for—the fabulous Snowcap—and we’ll also have at least one afternoon to enjoy the wonderful hummingbird pools, where Snowcaps, Crowned Woodnymphs, Purple-crowned Fairies, and others come to bathe late each afternoon. On at least one evening, we will also make an attempt to see the local Mottled Owls that we will almost certainly hear on most nights.

In addition to our time spent on the grounds of the lodge, we’ll also visit several nearby areas with slightly different habitats and mixes of bird species. We’ll check the valleys of the Río Tuis and/or Platanillo in hopes of finding such

species as Sunbittern, Fasciated Tiger-Heron, various kingfishers, Torrent Tyrannulet, Buff-rumped Warbler, and a variety of possible raptors. A visit to CATIE, a nearby agricultural research station, will give us the opportunity to see a colony of bizarre Boat-billed Herons in addition to a variety of other waterbirds including Northern Jacanas and Purple Gallinules. Visits to these sites will be scheduled at the discretion of your guides but are just some of the possibilities the area has to offer.

On one of these days we will have an entirely different plan, arising very early and making the roughly two-hour bus journey to Centro Manú, a small private rainforest reserve in the Caribbean lowlands. Our primary target will be the bizarre and uncommon Bare-necked Umbrellabird, which gathers at a lek here. However, we'll also have plenty of time to walk the reserve's network of trails, looking for the many species which call these lowland forests home. After thoroughly exploring the site, we'll continue on to a nearby village to visit the extraordinary private garden of artist Jose Cope. We'll have our picnic lunch in the bird observation shelter on the site, while watching a parade of birds visiting the pool and nearby feeders and flowers. Hummingbird species may include Long-billed Hermit, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, Band-tailed Barbthroat, and the rare White-tipped Sicklebill. Banana feeders draw in Orange-chinned Parakeets and Red-legged Honeycreepers, as well as a host of tanagers and oropendolas, while Pale-vented Pigeons squabble over corn meal. After lunch, we'll venture into the nearby countryside in search of roosting owls and potoos before returning to Rancho Naturalista in time for dinner. All nights at Rancho Naturalista.



*The wonderful Crested Owl is one of the nocturnal species we'll seek. This male and his mate were seen well on last year's tour. Photograph by participant Holger Teichmann.*

**Day 8, Thu, Dec 29 or Fri, Jan 6. Tapantí National Park; to San Jose.** We'll make another early start today as we leave Rancho and head to the mid-elevation cloudforests of Tapantí National Park. We will spend the day here searching for the many specialties of this habitat, which may include Black Guan, Barred Hawk, Black-bellied Hummingbird, Red-headed and Prong-billed barbets, Slate-throated Redstart, Silver-throated and Spangle-cheeked tanagers, Sooty-faced Finch, and a variety of furnariids and flycatchers. We'll have a picnic lunch at the park and continue birding in the early afternoon before making our way towards our hotel where we'll hope to arrive around 5:00 p.m. We will have our final evening dinner at the hotel. Night near San Jose.

**Day 9, Fri, Dec 30 or Sat, Jan 7. Departure for home.** Time to bid farewell to new friends and this wonderful country as we head for home. Your guides will inform you of your transfer times at the final dinner. *Safe travels!*

## About Your Guide

**Jay VanderGaast** was introduced to birding by his father, and his obsession with birds was evident by age seven when he memorized the plates in Peterson's eastern field guide. He went on to earn a B.S. in biology at university and briefly contemplated a career in research, but two years on the mosquito-infested arctic tundra watching ptarmigan do little other than occasionally getting eaten by Gyrfalcons soon put an end to that plan! Instead, he strapped on a backpack and a pair of bins and began roaming the world in search of birds. His travels eventually led him to Costa Rica, where he stumbled into a job as a birding guide at Rancho Naturalista Lodge. Amazed that he was actually getting paid to watch birds, he jealously guarded his position there for six years. His career with Field Guides coincided with the dawn of the new millennium (if you believe that began in 2000!), and since then he has guided more than 100 tours on several continents. When he's not on tour, Jay's native habitat is his home near Montreal.

*"Jay VanderGaast was a delight to travel with... incredible at finding the birds and extremely helpful in getting us on the birds—which was much appreciated! ...he made the trip an exceptional experience which I will remember for the rest of my life." L.K., Costa Rica*

**Jay will be accompanied by a local guide throughout the tour.**

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for Jay's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

## Financial Information

**FEE: \$3550 per person from San Jose**

**DEPOSIT: \$350**

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE:** July 15, 2022 (Tour I); July 23, 2022 (Tour II)

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$690**

**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!

**ACCOMMODATIONS** Accommodations on this tour are good. Rancho Naturalista has long been considered one of Costa Rica's best birding lodges. With its pleasant climate, comfortable, airy rooms, delicious food, and superb service, the lodge makes a wonderful base from which to explore the diverse habitats of the country's bird-rich Caribbean slope. Note that though all the rooms are different, each one has its own charm and advantages. In San Jose, we will be staying at a very nice, modern hotel. Please be aware that credit cards, checks and traveler's checks cannot be used for purchases (including drinks) at Rancho Naturalista.

**DOCUMENTS:** A current passport valid 30 days beyond the date of your arrival is necessary for US citizens to enter Costa Rica. Passports should be in good condition; Costa Rican immigration will deny entry if the passport is damaged in

any way. Costa Rican authorities generally permit US citizens to stay up to ninety days without a visa; to stay beyond the period granted, travelers must submit an application for an extension to the Office of Temporary Permits in the Costa Rican Department of Immigration.

If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Costa Rican 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 the 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.

**In addition, all participants and your Field Guides guide(s) will be required to have completed a full course of vaccination at least two weeks prior to the tour. Be sure to share proof of such vaccination with our office and bring a physical copy of your vaccination proof on tour.**

**AIR ARRANGEMENTS:** 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 \$3550 for one person in double occupancy from San Jose. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 8, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 9, 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 Costa Rica, 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 \$690. 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 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 \$350** per person, or see our Payment Options at <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/>. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 160 days prior to departure, or **by July 15, 2022 (Tour I); July 23, 2022 (Tour II)**. **We will bill you for the final payment at either 160 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: FOR 2022 TOURS:** Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 160 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 159 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable. **FOR 2023 TOURS & BEYOND:** Note that beginning in 2023, the 50% refund period will become 179 to 90 days before departure, with no refund thereafter.

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 70 to 159 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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