

ITINERARY

Gulf of California: Mexico's Rich Desert Coast

December 5 - 10, 2022



*Brant congregate in huge numbers in the Infernillo Canal between Isla Tiburon and mainland Sonora.
Photograph by guide Micah Riegner.*

We include here information for those interested in the 2022 Field Guides Gulf of California: Mexico's Rich Desert Coast 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:

- 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 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

Roughly 6 million years ago, the northward tug of the Pacific Plate and, no, we're not talking dinner plates, tore the Baja Peninsula from mainland Mexico leaving an enormous gulf strewn with desert islands. We call this body of water the Gulf of California or the Sea of Cortez and it happens to be remarkably rich in marine life. The islands that are clustered about one third down the Gulf are known as the Midriff Islands and this region is particularly productive due to upwelling. As daily tidal currents slosh up and down the Gulf, they collide with the islands, forcing cold, nutrient-rich water to the surface where phytoplankton bloom. These are food for zooplankton, which in turn feed fish, seabirds and marine mammals—very large marine mammals. Fin Whales, the second largest whale, congregate here in the winter to feed, as do Humpbacks and the occasional Blue Whale. Long-beaked Common Dolphins and California Sea Lions feed on schools of anchovies, while Blue-footed and Brown Boobies dive-bomb the fish from above.

Craveri's Murrelets are another draw to this part of the world. These adorable Mourning Dove-sized alcids breed in rock crevices on the Midriff Islands and can be seen pairing up in December. Red-billed Tropicbird, Black and Least Storm-petrels, Black-vented Shearwater, jaegers and phalaropes can also be seen on an offshore boat trip.

The land birding is good, too. Numerous estuaries, known as “esteros” in Mexico, line the Sonoran Coast and are important stop-over sites for migrating shorebirds. At times you can look out and see thousands of sandpipers of all sizes lining the mudflats, along with Reddish Egret, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Roseate Spoonbill, and hundreds of White Pelicans. The mangroves that fringe the estuaries are home to Mangrove Warbler and Ridgway’s Rail, which sometimes emerge to snatch fiddler crabs from the mudflats.

The “Coastal Subdivision” of the Sonoran Desert here is home to a unique set of plants, some of which are truly astonishing. The Cardon Cactus, the largest of them all, forms colossal forests along sandy washes. To be among these giants is truly awe-inspiring. Some of the birds that can be found along these coastal deserts include Gilded Flicker, Lark Bunting, Cactus Wren and Gray Vireo, which feeds on the fruit of Elephant Tree during the winter.

For this week-long tour, we’ll be based in the town of Bahia Kino where Prescott College (in Prescott, Arizona) has a research facility called the Kino Bay Center for Cultural and Ecological Studies. It is a hub where student groups and researchers come to study the rich marine and desert life of the Gulf of California. We’ll stay at a hotel, but The Center will be hosting us for boat trips to explore the Midriff Islands and coastal estuaries. We’ll learn about the various research programs at the Center on marine mammals, waterbirds and estuarine ecology, as well as the ongoing collaboration with the Comcaac (also called “Seris”), the indigenous people in this region of Mexico.

And we might as well mention the wonderful food. We’ll enjoy tacos with freshly caught fish, delicious hand-made tamales and some of the best tortillas in all of Mexico (now that’s saying something!). So, strap on your Texas, put on a hat, and pick up your binocs: an exciting week along Mexico’s sunny desert coast awaits!

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.



*A Bottlenose Dolphin rides the bow of the Pardela, one of the boats we’ll be using to explore the Gulf of California.
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:** Generally easy to moderate walking on flat, often sandy terrain. There will be some desert hikes on loose, sometimes steep, terrain.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** Our boat trips will be on “pangas”, which are open-top fiberglass boats. One of these boat trips will take us roughly 40 miles from Kino into the Gulf where waters could get choppy. If you are prone to sea sickness, plan accordingly. For this boat trip we will be within 1 hour of the islands so that we can make landings for “restroom” breaks without having to lean over the edge of the boat. In order to get in and out of the boat, you’ll need to wade through up to 1 foot of water and hoist yourself into the boat, so having a pair of sandals will be handy.
- **PACE:** A typical day will involve a 6:00 a.m. breakfast and birding until lunchtime. Most days we’ll have some downtime after lunch before another birding activity in the afternoon. Most van drives will be well under 1 hour. For our offshore boat trip, we will depart in the early morning and will not return until around 4:00 p.m. We will break up the trip with stops on islands to explore, have lunch, and to use the bushes.
- **WEATHER:** Expect temps to range from the lower 50s up into the 80s. It can get quite brisk while out on the boat so it would behoove you to bring multiple warm layers, as well as warm scarf, hat and gloves. December is generally dry, but it’s always good to bring rain gear, especially for the boat trip, where ocean spray can get you wet.
- **ELEVATION:** We’ll be at sea level for most of the tour. Folks who go swimming will be below sea level!
- **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:** We will be staying at the same hotel for the entire tour, so opting out for a day will be entirely possible. And, by the way, the beach is right across from the hotel.

About the Birding Areas



Hermosillo, is the capital of Sonora where we begin the tour. Our first morning we will bird near the town of **San Miguel de Horcacitas** to the north where we will look for some of the northernmost Elegant Quail among Black-capped Gnatcatchers, Five-striped Sparrows and maybe even a Nutting’s Flycatcher.

Kino Bay was originally founded in the 1920s as a shark and Totoaba (a giant sea bass) fishing village. In the 1940s the market shifted toward shrimp trawling, which continues today; unfortunately, not without its ecological impacts. “Kino Viejo” is the original fishing village, which still retains its original character—“Kino Nuevo” is the newer extension of town where we’ll be based for the tour. Our hotel is right next to the Kino Bay Center for Cultural and Ecological Studies, who

will be hosting us for boat trips and various other activities. The Center was established in 1991 as a field station for Prescott College field courses and has been developing ever since. For more information, check out their website: <https://kino.prescott.edu/kino-bay-center/information-center/index.php>

The **Midriff Islands** are the cluster of islands about a third of the way down the Gulf. This region is particularly rich in marine life due to upwelling caused by tidal currents. As the tides slosh up and down the Gulf, they collide with the underwater base of the islands, forcing cold nutrient-rich waters to the surface where phytoplankton bloom—the basis for a dynamic food web that whales and seabirds depend on. **Isla Alcatraz** (also called Pelican Island) is the first prominent island across from Kino Bay. This island is an important site for breeding seabirds (no convicts here!). At the right time of year, the lower slopes are packed with nesting Yellow-footed Gulls, Reddish Egrets and Little Blue Herons, while Magnificent Frigatebirds, Double-crested Cormorants and Great Blue Herons nest on the steeper cliffs. The diminutive Craveri's Murrelet breeds in the rock crevices not too far from the shoreline. Amazingly, there's a marine fish-eating bat (*Myotis vivesi*) that roosts in caves on the island. It is the only known marine fishing bat, using its echolocation to detect the ripples of small fish on the water's surface. Our chances of seeing it are slim, but it's worth knowing that it's out there.

Isla Tiburon, the largest island in the Gulf of California, was connected to mainland Sonora not too long ago (geologically speaking), so there are few endemic plants and animals, as one would expect. The island is so large it supports populations of Coyotes, Mule Deer and even Bighorn Sheep. The island belongs to the Comcaac and special permits are required for an inland visit. The **Canal del Infernillo** is the narrow channel that separates Tiburon from the mainland. Sea turtles and Brant congregate in this shallow waterway to feed on the abundant eelgrass. **Isla San Esteban** is the big square-shaped island just to the southwest of Tiburon. This island is home to the endemic San Esteban Chuckwalla, a large iguanid that feeds on cactus flowers and other succulents. They like to hang out on the steep rocky slopes where they can escape from predators by wedging themselves into cracks and crevices. **Isla Datil** (also known as Turner's Island) is a small island off the southern tip of Tiburon. Right next to Datil is Isla Cholludo, a slanting rock that's completely covered in Cardons. In fact, it's the densest colony of Cardons in the world!

Winter is generally the best time of year for cetaceans (whales and dolphins) and seabirds in the Gulf. Some of the birds we may encounter on our offshore boat trip include Red-billed Tropicbirds, both Black and Least Storm-petrels, Black-vented Shearwaters, Pomerine and Parasitic Jaegers, Red and Red-necked Phalaropes, Bonaparte's Gull, numerous grebes and loons and of course the Craveri's Murrelets. As we all know, cetaceans can be hit or miss, but we stand a decent chance of seeing Fin Whales, Humpbacks and possibly Bottlenose and Long-beaked Common Dolphins. With considerable luck we may come across Orcas, Blue Whales, Sperm Whales or even Short-finned Pilot Whales (fingers crossed!).



We'll be on the lookout for Red-billed Tropicbird on our offshore boat day. Photograph by guide Micah Riegner.

Estero Santa Cruz is an enormous mangrove estuary just south of Kino Bay. In 2013, it was designated a RAMSAR site of international importance for migratory birds. It is a particularly important migratory stopover for Western Sandpipers on their way south from their breeding grounds in Alaska, but it's also a great place to see numerous other shorebirds like Snowy, Semipalmated and Black-bellied plover, dowitchers, Marbled Godwit, Dunlin, Ruddy Turnstone, American Avocet, Long-billed Curlews and American Oystercatcher. Gull-billed Terns often patrol the mudflats at low tide, swooping down to snatch unwary fiddler crabs. The mangroves that line the estuary are home to the endangered Ridgway's Rail, "Mangrove" Yellow Warbler (why hasn't that been split yet?) and wintering Northern Waterthrush. The "Large-billed" Savanna Sparrow (*rostratus*) is found in the halophyte flats that surround the estuary. This very distinctive taxon will likely be split as a full species in the future. And, of course, let's not forget the long-legged waterbirds—herons, egrets and ibises—as well as the numerous Osprey.

Estero Santa Rosa is a gorgeous estero located between Kino Bay and the Comcaac village of **Punta Chueca**. The land belongs to the Comcaac, so we'll coordinate with a local guide to take us there. The mangrove channels are great for Ridgway's Rail and Mangrove Yellow Warbler, and the gravel spit beyond the estuary is often a good place to see Brandt, which congregate in the Infernillo Channel to feed on eelgrass. Occasionally Bottlenose Dolphins will cruise through the channel just off shore.

There's an enormous "**Cardon Forest**" along the highway from Hermosillo to Kino Bay that we'll stop at for one of the afternoons. These are the tallest cacti in the world, the record holder at 63 feet! Gilded Flicker, Pyrrhuloxia, Lark Bunting and numerous other desert birds can be seen in this area.



Some of the northmost Elegant Quail can be seen outside Hermosillo. Photograph by guide Micah Riegner.

Itinerary for Gulf of California: Mexico's Rich Desert Coast

Note: Since our boat trips, particularly the off-shore boat trip, are weather-dependent, we may need to shuffle the itinerary so that we can be out on the water on the optimum day.

Day 1, Mon, 5 Dec. Arrival in Hermosillo. The **recommended group flight today is on AA3158 from Phoenix (PHX) to Hermosillo (HMO) arriving at 10:48 a.m.** Upon arrival, you will be met by the guides and taken to the hotel where we will have lunch before doing some afternoon birding around Hermosillo. Night in Hermosillo.

Day 2, Tue, 6 Dec. Birding around Hermosillo, then drive to Kino. We'll have an early start and drive to the town of San Miguel de Horcacitas where we will spend the morning birding a beautiful stretch of riparian habitat in the Sonoran Desert. Some of the species we'll be searching for include Elegant Quail, Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Nutting's Flycatcher

and Five-striped Sparrow. We will also check some open desert for wintering Bendire's Thrasher. We will return to Hermosillo for lunch, then head to Kino, about an hour away. We may stop at Estero La Cruz to scan the mudflats before arriving at our hotel in Kino. Night in Kino Bay

Note that our days in Kino might be shuffled to accommodate for good weather for boat days.

Day 3, Wed, 7 Dec. Birding at Estero La Cruz and coastal desert. This day we'll spend birding around the Kino Bay area—getting ourselves oriented to the Gulf of California. We'll visit numerous sites around Estero Santa Cruz in the morning and in the afternoon bird some sites in the desert and visit the Kino Bay Center to meet the multicultural staff and researchers working there. In the evening, we'll visit a forest of Cardons, which are the largest cacti in the world. Gilded Flickers and Lark Bunting are often in this area. Night in Kino Bay.

Day 4, Thu, 8 Dec. Offshore boat trip to Midriff Islands and Isla Alcatraz. We'll depart early and head toward the southern tip of Isla Tiburon, stopping of course, for any Craveri's Murrelets, Tropicbirds, shearwaters or storm-petrels. We'll circumnavigate Isla Datil and Cholludo, and then land on Southern Tiburon to stretch our legs, use the bushes and have a picnic lunch. We'll then head back towards Kino continuing to look for seabirds and cetaceans. We'll stop at Isla Alcatraz and have the opportunity to walk on the island, which will have breeding cormorants, pelicans and great blue herons on the cliffs above. Chuckwallas (big iguana like lizards) are found here. Amazingly, they were actually introduced to the island decades ago by the Comcaac as a food source. We'll arrive back in Kino in time to enjoy a sunset dinner. Night in Kino Bay.

Day 5, Fri, 9 Dec. Boat Trip up the Infernillo Canal. This boat trip will take us up the Infernillo Canal between Isla Tiburon and the mainland Sonora. Eelgrass grows in these shallow waters, attracting hundreds of Brant and Redheads. It's also a good area for Green Sea Turtles and Bottlenose Dolphins. In fact, the dolphins come to the sheltered lagoons along the canal to give birth. We'll have a picnic lunch on a remote beach before making our way back south to Kino. On the way back we'll stop at the Comcaac village of Punta Chueca. The women often have beautiful hand-made baskets, carvings and jewelry, so it will be a good idea to have some pesos to support the local economy. If time permits, we'll visit Estero Santa Rosa in the late afternoon.



A remote sand spit at the northern end of Isla Tiburon where we set up a picnic lunch. Photograph by guide Micah Riegner.

Day 6, Sat, 10 Dec. Return to Hermosillo for flights home. We'll do some early morning birding, then breakfast at the hotel before checking out and driving to Hermosillo for the **AA3158 flight to Phoenix (PHX) at 12:12 p.m.** For those interested in staying longer in Kino, the staff at the Kino Bay Center can do an airport transfer from Kino at an additional cost.

About Your Guides

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

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

"Micah is a great guide and a lot of fun to travel with. Micah made lots of valuable contributions guiding but his photos and videos and willingness to share them with the group was a special addition. Hope to travel with him again." J. L., Central Mexico & Baja

Tom Johnson grew up watching birds in central Pennsylvania. Interested in science and the outdoors from a young age, Tom became involved in a variety of field projects throughout his school years, including banding migrant landbirds and conducting point counts for the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas. He was fortunate to pursue undergraduate studies in biology at Cornell University, where he became even more excited to learn about systematics and migration while surrounded by the amazing ornithologists and birders of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Since graduating from college, Tom has spent much of his time studying seabirds off the east coast of North America, conducting line transect surveys from NOAA ships between Nova Scotia and the Bahamas. When he's not otherwise occupied, he loves to devote time to wandering, taking photos, and searching for vagrants and hybrid birds.

Tom has long been interested in sharing his enthusiasm for exploring bird identification, distribution, and migration dynamics; he is a regional editor for *North American Birds* magazine and writes a regular column on identification for *Birding* magazine. Perhaps most of all, he loves sharing his passion for the natural world with others out in the field, and he's excited to have the opportunity to do this while leading for Field Guides.

"Tom is a top-notch birder and has an amazing ear. I loved the detail he gave about each species...plumage, habitat, migration, etc. I learned a lot about birds and places to bird in Pennsylvania." K. N.; Pennsylvania's Warblers & More

Financial Information

FEE: \$2550 from Hermosillo

DEPOSIT: \$250 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: June 28, 2022

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$375

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 Nicole Cannon. Nicole will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

ACCOMMODATIONS: We will be based for the first night at the Holiday Inn and Suites Hermosillo Airport and then in the Casablanca Inn in Kino Nuevo for the four remaining nights. The Casablanca Inn is a comfortable hotel with wifi, private bathrooms etc. It is near the Prescott College Kino Bay Center and right across from the beach!

DOCUMENTS: A **passport** valid for six months beyond the date of your return is necessary for US citizens to enter Mexico. You will be issued a **tourist card** upon arrival; please keep this in a safe place, as you will need it to depart Mexico.

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 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.

As noted above, 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: ***We highly recommend you book these flights:*** **December 5 – Arrive in Hermosillo (HMO) from Phoenix (PHX) on AA 3158 at 10:48 a.m. December 10 – Depart from Hermosillo HMO to Phoenix PHX on AA3158 at 12:12 p.m. (Flights are subject to change.)** 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 **\$2550** for one person in double occupancy from Hermosillo. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 5, all meals from lunch on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 6, 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 Hermosillo, 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 **\$375**. 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 \$250** 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 June 28, 2022**. **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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