

ITINERARY  
**Jamaica**

*Tour I: February 23-29, 2020*

*Tour II: March 1-7, 2020*



*The Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoo is one of 27 endemic species we'll be looking for on this tour. Although it can be a skulker, like most cuckoos, we've gotten very good looks at this interesting bird on previous tours. Photograph by guide Eric Hynes.*

*We include here information for those interested in the 2020 Field Guides Jamaica 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 outings

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

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our web site)
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reference list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing 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

**J**amaica is one of the hotbeds of avian endemism in the West Indies with at least 27 species found nowhere else. Add to that a host of regional specialties and numerous wintering wood warblers and you've got an irresistible birding destination close to the United States. It doesn't hurt that it's all based from a single hotel on a lush tropical island with fabulous food, vibrant culture, and world-renowned music. In just a week, we stand a good chance at encountering all of Jamaica's endemics, from the fabulous Streamertails to the taxonomically curious Orangequit.

Jamaica is the third largest island in the Caribbean at 146 miles long and 51 miles at its widest point. But don't worry; we won't be racing around the whole island. Instead, we'll spend our time at the safe northeastern end of the island, birding at a leisurely pace. Our goal is not to see every species in Jamaica but to see every species that you can only find in Jamaica (this includes the 19 endemic subspecies). We won't be pressing to reach every corner of the island or chancing any risky sites to find a species easily seen somewhere else.

Green Castle Estate provides casual elegance at its picturesque home overlooking 1650 acres on the northeast coast of Jamaica. This safe and isolated property is managed for a cross-section of habitats, which host more than half of Jamaica's endemics. Jamaican Spindalis, the red-billed subspecies of Streamertail, Jamaican Woodpecker, and Jamaican Tody can all be seen while holding a cup of local coffee or organic juice freshly squeezed from the estate's orchards. The trails on site should yield other endemics like the Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoo, Jamaican Becard, Sad Flycatcher, Yellow-shouldered Grassquit, and White-chinned Thrush. The Caribbean breeze, a dip in the pool, a good book, and a rum punch or fresh-squeezed juice might be really tempting. The beauty of staying at the same hotel is you are welcome to succumb to temptation and pass on any outing you wish (except for the ride back to the airport).

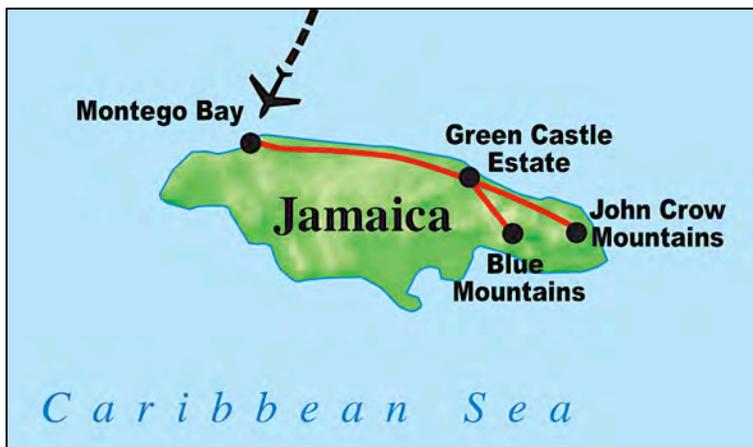
In order to round out our list of endemics, we will take field trips to the John Crow Mountains, Blue Mountains, and Cockpit Country. Our higher elevation targets will include Ring-tailed Pigeon, Crested Quail-Dove, Yellow-billed and Black-billed parrots, Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo, Blue Mountain Vireo, and the odd Jamaican Blackbird. We will make stops along the coast to look for terns, frigatebirds, shorebirds, and herons.

**About the Physical Requirements & Pace:** The formation of Jamaica was a result of uplifting events; so much of the island is hilly or mountainous. We will likely cover three to five miles on foot each day. Expect to be walking up and down gentle grades most of the time, with steeper pitches at a couple of the sites. We will avoid any major climbs, but most of the terrain we will be covering is sloped. Green Castle Estate sits atop a hill. All the walks on-site go down but then we must walk back up to return. We will be walking road edges or well-maintained trails for the most part. We will not be stepping over boulders or climbing over logs, but there will certainly be sections of the trails that are loose, uneven, or slippery. Sturdy walking shoes or hiking boots are recommended. Over the course of the day, expect to walk several miles but never in any one march. If a sustained uphill walk leaves you winded or unsteady, consider bringing a walking pole or collapsible stool.

Jamaica in general is pretty hot and humid, but our mornings at elevation might be a bit chilly. We are visiting during what is known as the dry season but rain or showers are always a possibility, especially in the John Crow Mountains.

The early birder gets the bird. Some roads in Jamaica have room for improvement and all the roads in Jamaica are windy. The circuitous routes to distant off-site birding locations will necessitate predawn departures on several of the days of the tour.

## About the Birding Areas



**Green Castle Estate:** This 1650-acre historic plantation will be our home base for the duration of the tour. This eco-retreat works hard to strike a balance on the land and has much of it in protected forest. Active agriculture is pretty limited these days. Twenty-one of the 27 endemic species have been recorded at this site, and the property list stands at 124 species and growing. The lovely flowering trees and shrubs around the guesthouse draw many of the more common and widespread endemics like Jamaican Tody, Jamaican Mango, the red-billed subspecies of Streamertail, Yellow-shouldered Grassquit, Jamaican Euphonia, Jamaican Spindalis, and Jamaican Woodpecker. The network of trails will put Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoo, Jamaican Becard, Rufous-tailed Flycatcher, Jamaican

Vireo, White-chinned Thrush, and numerous wood-warblers in reach. The reservoir on the estate draws lots of ducks, coots, waders, and shorebirds. The landscape is hilly but the trails are all well maintained and have reasonable footing.

**Blue Mountains:** Famed for their outstanding coffee, the Blue Mountains are thinly populated, comprised mostly of igneous shales, and still covered in many places by lush, mature, wet montane forests. We will walk the road through marvelous cloud forest at Hardwar Gap, with abundant mosses, bromeliads, and tree ferns. Our search images will be tuned to the shaky gait of the Crested Quail-Dove (one of the most challenging endemics to see), Ring-tailed Pigeons overhead, and various endemic flycatchers and the Blue Mountain Vireo in the trees. We will be keen to spot the uncommon Jamaican Blackbird. We will hear the ethereal song of the Rufous-throated Solitaire and scan for the impressively large Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo as well.



*The Blue Mountain Vireo is another endemic we'll seek. This little songbird is another skulker, but we had a great view of this one on our 2019 tour when it popped out and perched in plain view! Photograph by guide Eric Hynes.*

**John Crow Mountains:** Named after the Turkey Vultures (called “John Crow” locally) that course back and forth across their cloud-covered peaks, the John Crows are the easternmost mountains in the country. This area is rugged, formed of rather sharp karst limestone, and its razorback peaks receive quite a bit of rain (up to 300 inches per year!), owing to their exposure to the Northeast Trade Winds. This area is the only place in Jamaica where all the endemic bird species are possible. Our number one target on this day trip will be the black-billed subspecies of Streamertail, whose tiny range is restricted to these mountains. This site will be our first chance to spot Jamaican Crow and both the Yellow-billed Parrot and the harder-to-find Black-billed Parrot. Another species we will concentrate on is Jamaican Blackbird, which is one of the hardest endemics to track down and a rather unusual Icterid. Keep your eyes peeled for Arrowhead Warbler and Crested Quail-Dove this day too.

**Cockpit Country:** This region sits southeast of Montego Bay and derives its name from the classic karst topography. It is made up of steep hills and valleys and is pockmarked with sinkholes and covered in dense forest. We will visit this region toward the end of the tour. It serves as an excellent back-up if we have missed either of the endemic parrots, Jamaican Crow, Crested Quail-Dove, or Blue Mountain Vireo up to this point. The Jamaican subspecies of Olive-throated Parakeet is conspicuous here.

**Rockland’s Bird Sanctuary:** Have you ever experienced a hummingbird on your finger? Well, you can hand feed both endemic hummingbirds here. This site will serve as our grand finale. Over the course of many years, quite a few of the endemic species have become remarkably habituated at this elaborate feeding station. Photographic opportunities abound. Northern Potoo and Jamaican Owl are sometimes found on their day roosts at this site as well.

## Itinerary for Jamaica

**Day 1, Sun. Arrival at Montego Bay’s Sangster International Airport and travel to Green Castle Estate.** Please schedule your flight to arrive no later than 2 p.m. in order to meet your guide and the rest of the group at **3 p.m.** for the start of the tour. After clearing the last checkpoint in the immigration zone, follow the overhead signs for “Public Arrivals Area” when you enter the open space. Turn right at the Island Rental Car counter and head outside. If you survive the gauntlet of harassing taxi drivers, you will see Groovy Grouper Beach Bar & Grill immediately to the right. Let’s meet on their patio. Your guide’s photo is on the website for easy recognition. Please be sure to use the Field Guides luggage tags provided to you by our office so the guide can easily recognize you as part of the Field Guides group. An air-conditioned Coaster bus will transport us to Green Castle Estate. Expect the drive to take about three hours. We are not expected to drive by anything we won’t see later in the tour, so this drive will be fairly direct. However, it is a birding tour after all, so undoubtedly, we will make a couple brief stops. Be sure to have your binoculars out for this drive. After getting settled in our rooms, we will enjoy dinner. Night at Green Castle Estate.

**Day 2, Mon. Birding Green Castle Estate.** After a long day of travel yesterday, we will avoid getting into any vehicles and just bird the plantation. We will take our time and soak in the more common endemics like Jamaican Vireo, Jamaican Tody, Jamaica Woodpecker, Orangequit, Sad Flycatcher, Jamaican Euphonia, and White-chinned Thrush. We'll devote time to tracking down more uncommon endemics like Yellow-shouldered Grassquit, Jamaican Elaenia, and Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoo. Jamaican endemic subspecies of Olive-throated Parakeet, Loggerhead Kingbird, and Vervain Hummingbird should be right outside your door. The fascinating hum generated by the elaborate plumes of the Streamertail when flying might stir you from sleep. In the afternoon we will descend to the reservoir hoping to catch up to the elusive West Indian Whistling-Duck. More reliably, we see several duck species, herons, shorebirds, coots and grebes. Expect to walk four to five miles over the course of the day over hilly terrain with uneven or slippery footing in some sections. Night at Green Castle Estate.

**Day 3, Tue. Foothills of the John Crow Mountains and coastal sites.** We will head out early to Ecclesdown Road at the far eastern end of the island. This is the only place in all of Jamaica where all of the endemic species have been recorded. New targets for this site will be the confounding Crested Quail-Dove, Yellow-billed Parrot, Black-billed Parrot, Jamaican Crow, and the black-billed subspecies of Streamertail, which is a likely armchair lifer someday (after it's split). Jamaican Blackbird, White-eyed Thrush, Arrowhead Warbler, Blue Mountain Vireo, and Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo are distinct possibilities as well. We will walk several miles on this quiet road with good footing and a gentle rise. For lunch, we will stop in Boston Bay, the world-famous home of Jamaican jerk, for jerk chicken and pork, bammy, festival, and other traditional dishes. As time allows, we will make stops on our return drive along the coast, adding wading birds and shorebirds to our trip list. Night at Green Castle Estate.

**Day 4, Wed. Vinery and Green Castle Estate.** Vinery is not far from GCE but we will still depart early to give ourselves the best chance to see the elusive "Mountain Witch" or Crested Quail-Dove if it still eludes us. Jamaican Tody, Yellow-shouldered Grassquit, and White-eyed Thrush can be very cooperative on this untraveled road. Ruddy Quail-Dove is a distinct possibility here as well. Lunch will be back at Green Castle Estate after stops on the coast for shorebirds and the like. In the afternoon we might bird areas of the estate we skipped on the first day or return to the reservoir, hoping for the elusive West Indian Whistling-Duck. Other noteworthy species we hope to find there are Purple Gallinule, Black-necked Stilt, Northern Jacana, and Stolid Flycatcher. Night at Green Castle Estate.



*Yellow-shouldered Grassquit is an endemic we'll seek in the Vinery area. Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.*

**Day 5, Thu. Blue Mountains.** This will be an early departure to Hardwar Gap. A perched Barn Owl sighting is a distinct possibility as we depart GCE predawn. The two most challenging endemics to see are Crested Quail-Dove and Jamaican Blackbird. Along with Blue Mountain Vireo and Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo, those four species will be the endemics we are most focused on in the Blue Mountains if we don't have them already. Other endemics at this 4000-foot site include: Ring-tailed Pigeon, Jamaican Vireo, Rufous-tailed Flycatcher, Jamaican Pewee, Jamaican Spindalis, Arrowhead Warbler, and Jamaican Elaenia. The hauntingly beautiful song of the Rufous-throated Solitaire will be one of the highlights of the morning. The footing will be good as we bird along the road. Expect to walk several miles over a gentle slope, but in one stretch it is rather steep. To help round out our Jamaican experience, will make a quick visit to a coffee plantation for a tasting. Night at Green Castle Estate.



*The tiny and colorful Jamaican Tody is always one of the favorite birds on the tour, and no wonder!  
Photograph by guide Eric Hynes.*

**Day 6, Fri. Cockpit Country and Montego Bay sites.** We will say goodbye to the wonderful staff of GCE and venture west to Cockpit Country. This region is rich with both endemic parrots, Jamaican Crow, Crested Quail-Dove, Rufous-tailed Flycatcher, and numerous wood warblers. If we have been fortunate enough to tally all of the endemics prior to this day, we may make our way to an alternate site in search of new species. After our walk, we will continue toward Montego Bay for lunch on the coast, just shy of the city. The grand finale will be a visit to Rockland's Bird Sanctuary in the afternoon where you can have Streamertails and Jamaican Mangos sip sugar water from handheld feeders while Orangequits, Jamaican Orioles, Caribbean Doves, Bananaquits, and grassquits visit feeders little more than an arm's length away. On the way to our hotel, we will visit the Montego Bay Sewage Ponds for great looks at a number of waterbirds. We will say our goodbyes over a scrumptious dinner right at our lovely hotel. The tour concludes this night.

**Day 7, Sat. Depart for Home.** A delightful complimentary breakfast is yours to enjoy at the hotel. The rooftop deck is a great birding spot in the morning. Plan your flight home whenever it is convenient for you. We will arrange a shuttle for you to Sangster International Airport, which is only five minutes away.

## About Your Guide

**Eric Hynes** has been fascinated by birds and passionate about birding since he first heard the ghostly wailing of a Common Loon at summer camp in Maine more than 30 years ago. Upon completion of his B.S. at the University of Vermont, where he studied environmental studies and wildlife biology, Eric began a serious endeavor as a bird hobo that lasted more than a decade. His travels ranged across the U.S. with a number of trips to Central America as well. During this quest, Eric did everything from monitoring breeding raptors in the Snake River Canyon, to guiding for two summers in Alaska on St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs, to ground squirrel rustling in Montana, to owl banding and hawk counting in Pennsylvania.

Getting married to Christine helped settle Eric into a fulltime position at Maine Audubon but not until after a birding trip to Panama cleverly disguised as their honeymoon. As the staff naturalist and adult education coordinator, Eric taught numerous bird identification workshops and led field trips locally and abroad for Maine Audubon. His positive energy and infectious enthusiasm for all things wild has drawn many a convert to birding and conservation. Eric served several terms on the Maine Bird Records Committee.

Eric and his family recently relocated to Telluride, Colorado where he focuses on tracking down Gunnison Sage-Grouse and rosy-finches as a scout in-residence for the Colorado Grouse tour.

*Eric Hynes is a great birder, excellent leader, very well organized. Very productive birding and always focused on the birds. S.C., Jamaica*

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/guides> for Eric's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

## Financial Information

**FEE: \$3450 from Montego Bay**

**DEPOSIT: \$400 per person**

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE: October 26, 2019 (Tour I); November 2, 2019 (Tour II)**

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$515**

**LIMIT: 8**

## Other Things You Need to Know

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

**DOCUMENTS:** A current passport, valid beyond the date of your return, is necessary for US citizens to enter Jamaica. If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Jamaican 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.

**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 \$3450 for one person in double occupancy from Montego Bay. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 6, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 7, 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 Jamaica, airport taxes, visa fees, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, phone calls, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$515. 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, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$400** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by October 26, 2019 (Tour I); November 2, 2019 (Tour II)**. **We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached**

**sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

**SMOKING:** Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour fees (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

**TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE:** We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive from us a brochure regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, and emergency medical transportation. **Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii.** We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance with InsureMyTrip ([www.insuremytrip.com](http://www.insuremytrip.com)) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. Please let us know if you have any questions about this. If you purchase the insurance within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights), pre-existing conditions are covered. The CSA brochure includes a contact number; you may also purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.html> and clicking the link to CSA. Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Field Guides Incorporated accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated

reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

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