

ITINERARY

Japan in Spring

May 21-June 3, 2019

Hokkaido Extension

June 3-7, 2019



The Izu Robin is endemic to the Izu Islands, which lie south and east of the Tokyo region. We will visit Miyake-jima, and will look for these lovely songbirds as well as several other endemics. Photograph by guide Jun Matsui.

We include here information for those interested in the 2019 Field Guides Japan in Spring 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

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

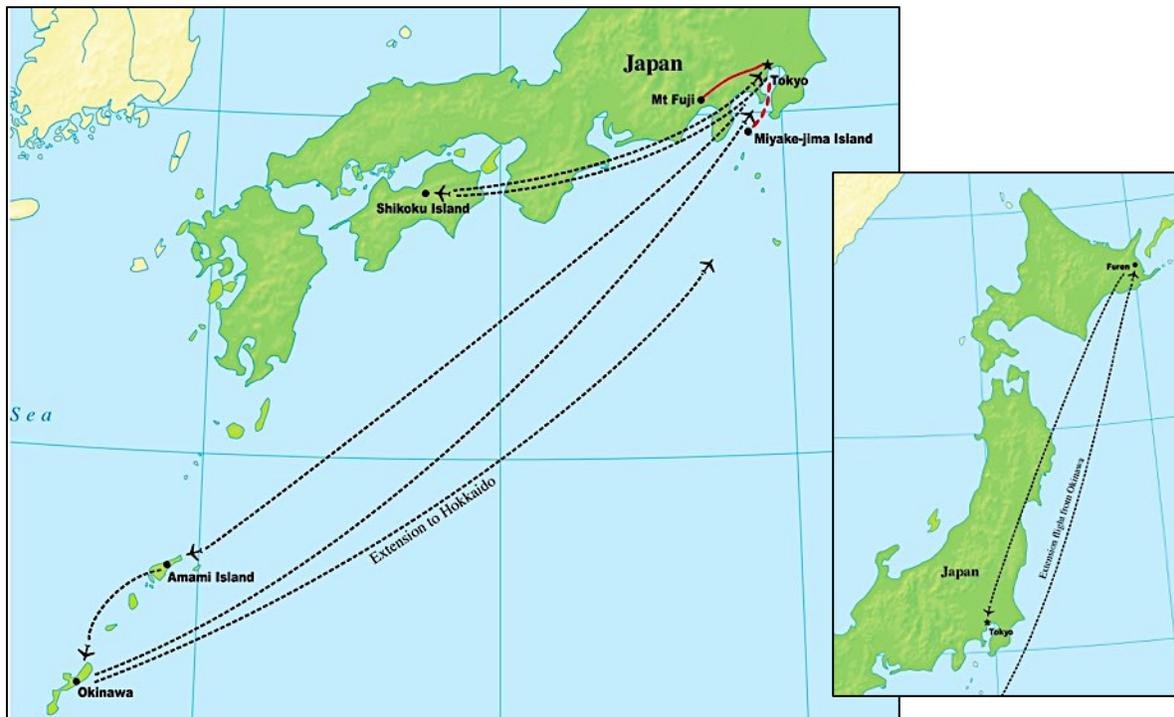
- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reading list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

The islands of Japan lie at the eastern edge of Eurasia and cover a diverse range of habitats, from the sub-tropical Ryukyu Islands to the almost Siberian taiga-like wilds of Hokkaido. Japan is a surprisingly mountainous and wooded land, with beautiful varied coastlines and very heavily populated lowlands, where tiny rice fields dot the landscape amidst the rural dwellings. Add to this the seabirds, wildfowl, thrushes and alcids, the challenge of the large Asian gull complex, plus a useful sprinkling of endemics, including the huge, marvellous, and rare Blakiston's Fish-Owl, and you have the makings of a truly memorable visit.

Japanese culture is also a feature of the trip, as some of our lodgings are in traditional Japanese guest-houses or minshuku, with sliding walls, tatami rush matting and futon bedding, whilst a couple of the hot spring hotels, called onsen, have wonderful deep hot-spring baths. The food is also very distinct, with a fantastic selection of sauces for the elaborate fish, rice, and vegetable dishes which make up the traditional cuisine, and we will have some memorable meals.

About the Physical Requirements & Pace: The pace of the tour is moderate, with no unduly long or strenuous hikes. The tour is ideal for photography and video, with beautiful scenery and light and some large spectacular species at close range.

About the Birding Areas



Shikoku—The fourth largest of Japan’s main islands, Shikoku lies to the southwest of Honshu. It is a beautiful forested, largely rural, mountainous island. Considerable efforts in recent years have been made to encourage and protect the beautiful Fairy Pitta, which breeds around Kochi. Kochi has taken the Fairy Pitta to be its emblem bird.

Miyake-jima—A volcanic island some 180 km south of Tokyo in the Izu island group. It has 4 special endemic birds of its own and is a great place for migrants. The return boat trip is in daylight and can be very good for seabirds.

Mt. Fuji area—Mt. Fuji is probably the number one tourist area in Japan. Despite this, it has a thriving population of woodland birds and late May/ early June is one of the best times of year for birders to visit, as birds will be in breeding plumage. The majority of the core woodland birds found throughout Japan can be found here, including several endemic species. Different birds can be found at different elevations, and most birding will be done by walking the extensive network of woodland trails.

The Ryukyus—The subtropical Ryukyu islands are at the southern end of the Japanese archipelago. With lush vegetation and coral reefs, they are a popular holiday destination. The two islands of Amami and Okinawa both have an interesting endemic avifauna, sharing some species but each having some of their own. Unfortunately, the introduction of the mongoose from India has put many of these birds, at risk including the Okinawa Rail.

Hokkaido—The most northerly of the main islands, famous for its boreal forests, hot springs, dairy farming and beautiful scenery, with the mountain areas being excellent for both birds and mammals, including Brown Bears, and with whales and seals offshore.

Itinerary for Japan in Spring

Days 1-2, Tue-Wed, 21-22 May. Departure from the US; arrival in Narita. There are direct flights from many US cities to Narita; our office will be happy to help you with the best schedule from your home city. From the US, you'll cross the international dateline, arriving the afternoon of Day 2 (May 22). If you arrive in time, the grounds of our hotel and the nearby Tokko creek channel [just across the main roads, about a mile, exit the Tobu Narita, take first right downhill (100m away), turn left along the path by the motorway (300 m) then use the pedestrian crossing to cross the highway before heading downhill to the creek]. You may see Bull-headed Shrike, Japanese Wagtail, Japanese White-eye, and Eurasian Tree Sparrow. We'll gather for dinner in the lobby of our hotel at about 7pm. Night in Narita.

Day 3, Thu, 23 May. We'll take the morning flight over to Shikoku and drive to the Kochi area where the Fairy Pitta can, with luck, be found. We will spend the balance of the day exploring the area and seeing what is around. Night at Seira Shimanto or similar.

Day 4, Fri, 24 May. Full day in Shikoku area. We'll make an early start so that we are on the trails around dawn looking for the Fairy Pitta, and then we will spend the day exploring the area looking for other migrants. Night at Uwajima Oriental Hotel.

Day 5, Sat, 25 May. Early morning around Kochi, then fly back to Haneda, where we travel up into the Mt Fuji area and start our exploration of the of the different altitudinal levels. Japanese Wagtail, Japanese Grosbeak, Brown Dipper, Japanese and Pygmy Woodpeckers are amongst the target birds for the day.

Day 6, Sun, 26 May. A full day exploring the forested slopes around Mt Fuji and Lake Yamanakako. Our targets today will include raptors such as Japanese Sparrowhawk and Oriental Honey Buzzard, plus passerines such as Japanese Yellow Bunting, Eurasian Nutcracker, Red-flanked Bluetail, and Siberian Blue Robin.

Day 7, Mon, 27 May. Morning around the Fuji area, then head back to Tokyo. Late afternoon, we will make our way over to the Takeshiba Pier and embark on our boat to Miyake-jima.

Day 8, Tue, 28 May. Disembark from the boat and explore Miyake-jima. We will be looking for the endemic Izu Island Thrush plus Ijima's Leaf Warbler, Pleske's Grasshopper Warbler, Japanese Robin and the recently split Izu Tit, plus Chinese Bamboo-Partridge. The return crossing to Tokyo is in daylight, and we will be looking for Streaked and Short-tailed Shearwaters and perhaps Tristram's Storm Petrel and more. Night in Haneda area.

Day 9, Wed, 29 May. Today, we fly to Amami in the subtropical Ryukyu Islands, where there is a very different avifauna and some interesting endemics. These include the stunning Lidth's Jay, the secretive Amami Woodcock, plus the Amami Thrush. There are also a number of endemic subspecies, including one for Ryukyu Robin and for the White-backed Woodpecker. A night drive may help us find the Japanese Scops Owl and an endemic mammal - the Amami Black Rabbit.

Day 10, Thu, 30 May. The day will be spent exploring Amami for Amami Thrush, Ruddy Kingfisher, Ryukyu Flycatcher, Whistling Green Pigeon, Japanese Paradise Flycatcher and more.

Day 11, Fri, 31 May. We'll make an early start to catch the flight over to Okinawa and transfer to our hotel, where the shy Okinawa Rail, one of our target birds, can be found, with luck, in the hotel grounds. They can sometimes be found roosting in exposed bare branches out of reach of predators during a night drive, on which we would also hope to see Ryukyu Scops Owl and Northern Boobook.



Lidth's Jay is an endemic we'll seek on Amami, one of the Ryukyu Islands. Photograph by participant John Hardister.

Day 12, Sat, 1 Jun. Okinawa Rail and Okinawa Woodpecker will be target species here. Neither are easy birds, but there is plenty more to see as we look for them. These additional species include Ryukyu Minivet and an endemic subspecies of Varied Tit. We will also be checking the shoreline for Greater Painted Snipe, Oriental Pratincole and White-breasted Waterhen as well as seabirds.

Day 13, Sun, 2 Jun. A second full day on Okinawa.

Day 14, Mon, 3 Jun. This morning we will fly back to Tokyo, where those who are doing only the main tour will fly home.



On the extension to Hokkaido, we'll have the chance to see the magnificent Red-Crowned Cranes, possibly with young, like this family group. Photograph by guide Jun Matsui.

Hokkaido Extension:

Day 1, Mon, 3 Jun. Those on the extension will fly north from Tokyo to Hokkaido. The least populated of Japan's major islands, Hokkaido has large areas of forest, a windswept coastline, and is an important agricultural area. Famous in winter for its large flocks of Red-crowned Cranes and Steller's Sea Eagle, at this time of year the flocks have dispersed but we still hope to see some of these impressive birds. Most of our birding will take place in the north-east of the island. Night in Hokkaido.

Day 2, Tue, 4 Jun. Full day birding Hokkaido, looking for the Cranes, the Sea Eagles and Blakiston's Fish Owl. Night in Hokkaido.

Day 3, Wed, 5 Jun. The coastal headlands around Furen are home to large breeding colonies of seabirds, including Pelagic and Red-faced Cormorants. The grassy headlands with patches of dwarf bamboo are often good for Lanceolated and Middendorf's Grasshopper Warbler, Siberian Rubythroat and more. Night in Hokkaido.

Day 4, Thu, 6 Jun. This morning, weather permitting, we will take a pelagic to look for some of the more exciting of Hokkaido's seabirds, including Spectacled and Pigeon Guillemots, Thick-billed and Common Murres, Tufted Puffin, Ancient Murrelet, Rhinoceros Auklet and more. Later in the day, we will be looking for migrants in the nearby forests. Night in Hokkaido.

Day 5, Fri, 7 Jun. Return to Narita; flights home. We'll transfer this morning to the Kushiro airport for a late-morning flight back to Haneda and then take an Express bus to Narita. Most flights to the US depart Narita after 4:00 p.m. You will arrive on the same day, after recovering that lost day by once again crossing the International Date Line—in the opposite direction.

About Your Guides

Phil Gregory was born in Southampton, UK, and became a birder as a youth when the steam engines were scrapped and birding offered a way to travel and look for wonderful things. The quest for birds has led to many forays in Europe, Africa, Asia, Australasia, and the Pacific. He and his wife, Sue, worked as teachers for eight years in Nigeria and Zambia, where they raised their family and made serious inroads into the birds of Africa, before transferring to the Falkland Islands for a two-year stint. In 1991-97 they relocated to Papua New Guinea where the 450 + endemics proved a great challenge, and since then they have lived in the Northern Territory and far north Queensland, Australia.

Phil's major interests are field identification, vocalizations, and the geographic distribution of birds. He is also a writer with assorted contributions to many reference books including some family accounts for the *Handbook of Birds of the World* and a *Field Guide to the Birds of New Guinea and the Bismarcks* for Lynx Edicions. He is currently working on a *Birds of Paradise and Bowerbirds* title in the Pica/Helm family monograph series (due 2019), and a *Photoguide to Birds of North Queensland* (due 2018) with Jun Matsui, our local co-leader on this tour. He has also published and now maintains three on-line checklists, one for the birds of Australia and its island territories, the others for the Solomon Islands and New Guinea and associated islands.

Phil and his wife run the well-known Cassowary House, a birding and nature lodge situated in a great birding spot in the rainforest at Kuranda, near Cairns in the far north of Queensland. This will be his seventeenth trip to Japan which remains one of his favorite tours.

“Phil's tours are among our favorites. And we enjoyed traveling with his assistant guide/driver, Jun, who was beyond patient when it came to explaining what we were eating, etiquette, and the like.”
B. S.; Winter Japan

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

Jun Matsui has had a lifetime interest in wildlife. He started guiding in 1993 when he worked as a volunteer ranger at the Hikarigoaka nature park in Tokyo. After working for the Japanese Environment Agency where he collected and managed data and at several reserves where he was involved in setting up environmental education projects and guiding, he decided in 1999 to move to Australia. He spent a year traveling around the country and volunteering at various birding hotspots (including Broome Bird Observatory), and then he settled in the tropical Far North Queensland town of Cairns and took a job as a specialist bird tour guide for inbound Japanese groups.

Jun is a keen photographer and has been involved in several bird publications. He is the author of the very popular Japanese language *A Photographic Guide to the Wildlife of the Cairns Region* and is currently working on a bird-finding guide to Far North Queensland and the *Photoguide to North Queensland Birds*. He joined Sicklebill Safaris in 2007 and has been working with them ever since, with Japan tours his specialty, of course.

Financial Information

FEE: \$7750 from Narita (does not include flights within Japan; see note below)

Hokkaido Extension: \$2850 from Hokkaido

DEPOSIT: \$800 per person

INTERNAL FLIGHTS: \$1200 main tour and \$400 for extension (subject to change)

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: January 21, 2019

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$400 main tour (singles will not be available on the boat trip to Miyake-Jima. Cabins may not be available for everyone but we will do our best. There are deck chairs for those who don't have cabins.) \$250 for the extension.

LIMIT: 7

A NOTE ON THE INTERNAL FLIGHTS: We often try to include flights 'in-country' in the tour fee; however, in this case we have excluded them, and included them instead as an estimated cost. This allows participants to use a Japan Airlines airpass to purchase flights within Japan (only available with the purchase of an international ticket), which saves substantially over buying the tickets separately.

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Karen Turner. Karen 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 are generally good on this tour. Most hotels will be western-style, but a few will be Japanese-style, with Japanese-style bathhouses (see cultural etiquette below). Futons make a great warm, firm base on which to sleep, and you simply pile quilts up on top to make a really comfortable nocturnal nest. Some places may get you to make up your own futon and quilts, and these are simply folded up and put away in a cupboard next day (as at Washi-no-Yado). Some shared rooms may be necessary in Hokkaido, sleeping on platforms or tatami rush matting floors. We try to ensure en suite where possible.

CULTURAL ETIQUETTE: Some of the accommodations will have Japanese-style bathhouses. If you use the onsen (hot spring facilities), you need to shower beforehand just outside the hot spring baths, and stack your clothes in the lockers there. Footwear is removed before going into Japanese houses and non-western style hotels. There will be an array of slippers available to wear, but as our feet tend to be larger than the average in Japan, we advise packing a light pair of slippers of your own.

Toilets are usually western-style, and the Japanese lead the world in toilet technology with such things as in-built bidets, piped relaxing music, and warmed seats, which can be very handy when in Hokkaido!

Bowing is a traditional way of greeting, and you may respond with a similar bow, but a smile and handshake will not cause offence. Bows are part of the service in many places. Blowing your nose in public is also taboo, and gauze masks are common in many places to avoid catching colds or infecting others.

DOCUMENTS: US citizens will need a current passport to enter Japan. If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Japanese 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.

MAIN TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is \$7750 for one person in double occupancy from Narita. It includes all lodging from Day 2 through Day 14, all meals from dinner on Day 2 through breakfast on Day 14, all ground transportation, entrance fees, tips for baggage handling and meal service, and the guide services of the tour leader(s).

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from Tokyo or flights within Japan, 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 \$400. 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).

HOKKAIDO EXTENSION INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **Hokkaido Extension fee** is \$2850 for one person in double occupancy from Narita. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 5, all meals from lunch on day 1 to lunch on Day 5, all ground transportation, entrance fees, tips for baggage handling and meal service, and the guide services on the tour leader(s).

The above fee does not include your internal flights within Japan, 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 personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the extension is \$250. 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.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the enclosed Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$800** 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 January 21, 2019**. **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 another guide for the original one. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members, and they will have the right to cancel their participation and receive a full refund.

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, 24-hour accident protection, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance when 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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