

ITINERARY

SLICE OF CALIFORNIA: SEABIRDS TO SIERRA

Tour I: September 4 – 13, 2025

Tour II: September 9 – 18, 2025

These two departures run the route in different order.
Click on the dates above to jump to the itinerary for your departure.



A highlight of this tour is a pelagic trip out from Half Moon Bay, where we will find an incredible diversity of seabirds. Black-footed Albatross is one of the possibilities. These birds breed on Midway Atoll, but spend much of their time cruising the Pacific, including the coast of California. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.

We include here information for those interested in the 2025 Field Guides Slice of California tours:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:

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

Within the US, California has few rivals when it comes to habitat diversity. It seems that things change every few miles, which makes for a wonderful assortment of birds, from Sooty Shearwaters visiting from the southern hemisphere, Black-footed Albatrosses from Hawaii, to enigmatic Wrentits, Nuttall's and White-headed woodpeckers, Williamson's Sapsucker, California Thrashers, Lawrence's Goldfinch, and Oak Titmouse. Even some species widespread elsewhere have California twists, such as "California Raven" (a potential split) and "Thick-billed" Fox Sparrow.

From the coast we'll cross the Diablo Range and the agricultural Central Valley on our way to the Sierra Nevada range. We will spend a couple of days exploring different elevations in the Sierra, birding the conifer forests and productive deciduous riparian and meadow habitats.

We'll spend the remainder of the trip exploring the San Francisco Bay Area in depth. In summer, coastal fog comes in off the ocean and is caught by the coast slopes, often only passing through the famous Golden Gate or low passes in the hills. This creates an incredible moisture gradient, giving each region of the Bay Area a different climate and habitat type. We will be covering the rocky coast, coast slope, San Francisco Bay itself, as well as the inland Diablo range—each with different avifaunas. The diversity within the Bay Area makes for great birding. A highlight will be a pelagic trip to the rich waters of the Pacific, where our main quest will be a diversity of seabirds, from shearwaters, to storm-petrels, phalaropes, and yes, even a Black-footed Albatross. Most common at this time of year are Sooty and Pink-footed shearwaters, Common Murre, Cassin's (if there is krill) and Rhinoceros auklets, and who knows what else—the ocean always holds surprises. Mammal watching tends to be spectacular during our pelagic trip.



*Yellow-billed Magpie is a California endemic found in the oak savannahs of the Central Valley.
Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.*

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:** Moderate amounts of walking (up to 2 miles per outing), some of it on paved, dirt, or gravel roads, some on fairly wide trails, and some on uneven or narrower trails with obstacles such as rocks, fallen limbs, or tree trunks. No steep trails, but participants should be able to walk up to 2 miles over undulating, sometimes uneven terrain (lightweight hiking boots recommended).
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** We cover a lot of ground on this tour, and some days will feature long periods of time in the vans and lots of roadside birding with plenty of getting in and out of vans. Sea conditions for our boat trip out of Half Moon Bay may vary from fairly calm to choppy (motion sickness precautions are recommended).

- **PACE:** Early mornings (5:30-6:30 a.m. breakfasts) with both morning and afternoon birding sessions but one or two afternoon breaks during the tour. On some afternoon, we will be in transit between lodgings. Most days will include a full day of birding with a picnic lunch in the field or a stop in a café.
- **ELEVATION:** Birding on this tour will be from sea level to moderately high elevations in the Sierra (9700 feet). Our highest nights will be in Lee Vining at 6,781 feet above sea level.
- **WEATHER:** Fall weather is usually pleasant but increasingly variable in California. Expect temperatures in the low 50s in the evening, with days ranging from the low 70s to mid-80s F. Sometimes early mornings in the Lee Vining area can dip into the 30s F. Rain showers are possible, and wind can make it feel quite chilly, especially in the mountains.
- **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 should be prepared to make a comfort stop in nature.
- **OPTING OUT:** Where we are staying multiple days in the same lodging, participants can easily opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day. This will not be possible on days when we are changing locations.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with one of the guides

About the Birding Areas



The Diablo Range creates the eastern border of the San Francisco Bay Area. Unlike the coastal Santa Cruz Mountains, the Diablo is dryer and therefore differs in its birdlife. The mix of grassland, chaparral, oak woodland, and Gray Pine stands makes for an exciting diversity of birds. Here we will be looking for Wild Turkey, California Quail, Greater Roadrunner, Nuttall's and Lewis's woodpeckers, California Thrasher, Oak Titmouse, Phainopepla, Yellow-billed Magpie, Lawrence's Goldfinch, California Towhee, and Rufous-crowned Sparrow.

The Sierra Nevada — The great Central Valley of California is circled by a ring of oak savanna on the slopes of the Diablo Range on the west and the Sierra Nevada on the east. A little higher up in the Sierra Nevada, the forests are dominated by conifers, from the massive Giant Sequoias at lower elevations to Lodgepole Pine in higher elevations. To fully appreciate the bird life of this zone we need to move up and down in elevation. We will visit the Calaveras Big Trees State Park where we will concentrate on finding woodpeckers including the beautiful White-headed Woodpecker. In this general area we'll look and listen for Mountain Quail, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Mountain Chickadee, Hermit and MacGillivray's warblers, and Cassin's Vireo, among others. Venturing higher up on the Sierra we may see some of these same species, with a better chance for Williamson's Sapsucker, Clark's Nutcracker, Townsend's Solitaire, Cassin's Finch, Red Crossbill, and 'Thick-billed' Fox Sparrow.

On our drive east and south from the crest of the Sierra Nevada to Lee Vining, the landscape will become drier and drier—the east slope of the Sierra receives less precipitation than the west slope—but birds here congregate in riparian zones and along waterways. We will bird conifer forests and a good riparian zone up above Lee Vining to find any forest birds that have eluded us so far. We may also encounter the rare Black-backed Woodpecker, American Dipper, Green-

tailed Towhee, and Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay. The Mono Lake Basin around Lee Vining is a wide-open landscape of high desert (including some of our favorite views in all of North America), and we'll search for Greater Sage-Grouse, Sage Thrasher, Sagebrush Sparrow, Pinyon Jay, Mountain Bluebird, and more.

California's Central Coast—The San Mateo County coastline, with its beautiful beaches, the Santa Cruz Mountains, seaside cliffs, and rocky shoreline, all add up to a lovely area for birding. In the coastal chaparral we will look for Wrentit, California Quail, Bewick's Wren, "Nuttall's" White-crowned Sparrow, and Spotted Towhee. The coastal slope is wetter than any other area we will visit on this tour, so there are plenty of creeks with great willow/ alder riparian forests to bird. Here we will look for "California" Red-shouldered Hawk, Band-tailed Pigeon, Vaux's Swift, Pacific-Slope Flycatcher, Bushtit, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Pygmy Nuthatch, Warbling Vireo, Orange-crowned and Wilson's warblers, and more. At this time of year vagrant landbirds are found on the coast, and these sometimes provide a nice spice to the tour. We will be alert and looking for any oddities, but our emphasis will be on finding the "California birds" that belong here.

Coastal birding throughout the county might reveal Pacific Loons, Western Grebes, or Surf Scoter, or maybe some shorebirds such as Willet, Marbled Godwit, and Snowy Plovers. Other common coastal birds include Brown Pelican, Brandt's and Pelagic cormorants, and Western and Heermann's gulls. As shorebirds will be heading south at this time of year, we will make sure to visit some great shorebirding sites in the Bay Area.



The wetlands of California's central coast attract many shorebirds, which in turn attract predators such as the Peregrine Falcon. We'll watch for dramatic scenes like this as we bird this area. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.

Pelagic Birding—A highlight of any California birding trip is a pelagic trip. The waters off Half Moon Bay have proven to offer exciting opportunities for pelagic birding. We will likely go at least twenty miles offshore, but this varies depending on sea conditions and where the activity is. September is the peak of seabirding in California, with the greatest diversity of any time of year. We expect numbers of Sooty and Pink-footed shearwaters, as well as some Buller's and maybe even the rare Flesh-footed. If we are lucky, we could encounter storm-petrels, with Ashy and Black being the most common species. We have had excellent success finding Black-footed Albatross, and occasionally we've even seen Laysan Albatross here. Resident Common Murres will be around as well as Rhinoceros and Cassin's auklets, although the latter is dependent on the presence of krill. The marine mammal show can be fantastic, with Humpback Whale, Blue Whale, Northern Fur Seal, Dall's Porpoise, Steller's Sea Lion, Northern Right Whale Dolphin, and Risso's Dolphin all possible. As is always the case on a pelagic trip, we may just run into something very surprising – in recent years, we've seen Blue-footed and Brown boobies, Northern Gannet, Hawaiian Petrel, and more during our tours!



*The enigmatic Mountain Quail is one of our targets in the higher elevations of the Sierra.
Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.*

Itinerary for Slice of California

Tour I

Day 1, Thu, 4 Sep. Arrival in San Francisco. Upon arrival in San Francisco you may take the hotel courtesy bus from the airport. Please plan to arrive in time to meet in the hotel lobby at 6:00 p.m. for our welcome dinner. Night in Burlingame, near San Francisco Airport.

Day 2, Fri, 5 Sep. San Francisco Bay birding. We will begin our California adventure by searching for birds along the southwestern shore of the San Francisco Bay, from Burlingame south to the San Jose area. This day should get us acquainted with the legions of waterbirds and shorebirds that call the Bay home, as well as Ridgway's Rail, Nuttall's Woodpecker, California Scrub-Jay, Burrowing Owl, Vaux's Swift, California Towhee, and more. Night near San Francisco Airport.

Day 3, Sat, 6 Sep. Central Valley; drive to Sierra. After an early breakfast, we will head east to the Sierra Nevada with many important stops in-between. First we'll explore the scrubby chaparral zone of Mines Road in the Diablo Range, searching for Yellow-billed Magpie, California Thrasher, California Quail, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Bell's Sparrow, Lewis's Woodpecker, and more along the way. We will descend through Del Puerto Canyon and head east across the Central Valley, into the west flank of the Sierra Nevada where we will get back into forested habitats again. This will be a long, but birdy and enjoyable day. Night in Sonora.

Day 4, Sun, 7 Sep. West slope of Sierra. Today we'll concentrate on birding the conifer forests of the western Sierra. Our primary destination is Calaveras Big Trees State Park, where we'll stroll through an impressive grove of Giant Sequoias and look for White-headed Woodpecker, Red-breasted Sapsucker, and Pacific Wren (among others). Later, we will continue to higher elevations to focus our efforts on finding the elusive Mountain Quail. Night in Sonora.

Day 5, Mon, 8 Sep. Sierra to Lee Vining. This morning we'll cross the Sierra on Route 108, cresting at Sonora Pass. We'll bird along the road and at the pass in search of Sierran specialties like Mountain Quail, Cassin's Vireo, Hermit Warbler, and more. In the afternoon, we'll be introduced to the magnificent Mono Lake Basin. Night in Lee Vining.

Day 6, Tue, 9 Sep. Lee Vining. We'll devote a full day to birding environs near Mono Lake and the town of Lee Vining, hoping to find Pinyon Jays, Brewer's and Sagebrush sparrows, and Sage Thrashers. In the afternoon we will visit the ghost town of Bodie, where we can enjoy a historical tour and look for the Greater Sage-Grouse that are quite reliable here. Night in Lee Vining.

Day 7, Wed, 10 Sep. Return drive to the coast. In the early morning, we'll seek out any species or habitats that we haven't sampled yet in the Lee Vining area. This is a travel day; however, we will be watching for any species that may have eluded us so far and will make an effort (time permitting) to find as many of them as we can. Night in Half Moon Bay.

Day 8, Thu, 11 Sep. Pelagic trip. After an early breakfast, we'll head to the harbor and board our boat. We will join Alvaro Jaramillo and embark on our pelagic adventure together. We will be at sea for at least eight hours, possibly more. Night in Half Moon Bay.

Day 9, Fri, 12 Sep. Birding the outer coast of San Mateo County This day will give us an opportunity to visit coastal harbors, riparian zones, agricultural fields, and even a stunning grove of towering Coast Redwoods. Our target birds will depend a bit on what we haven't seen yet at this point in the tour, but may include Wrentit, Surfbird, Hutton's Vireo, Tricolored Blackbird, Snowy Plover, Townsend's Warbler, and Pacific-slope Flycatcher. We will enjoy a farewell dinner at a restaurant in the Half Moon Bay area. Night in Half Moon Bay.

Day 10, Sat, 13 Sep. Departure for home. We'll leave for the airport this morning (about thirty minutes away) at around 8:00 a.m. (for 11:00 a.m. flights). If you plan to leave later (or earlier), you may take a taxi to the airport (around \$70). Have a safe trip!



The distinctive White-headed Woodpecker is a specialty of coniferous forests of the far western US. We'll look for them when we visit the Calaveras Big Trees State Park. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.

Tour II

Day 1, Tue, 9 Sep. Arrival in San Francisco. Upon arrival in San Francisco you may take the hotel courtesy bus from the airport. Please plan to arrive in time to meet in the hotel lobby at 6:00 p.m. for our get-acquainted dinner. Night near San Francisco Airport.

Day 2, Wed, 10 Sep. Bay Area birding. The schedule today is not set in stone. Our options in and around the Bay Area are many. Perhaps we will venture to the crest of the Santa Cruz mountains and then descend to the south bay near San Jose looking for lingering shorebirds, Forster's Terns, Black-necked Stilt, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Western Bluebird, or a dizzying number of other species that make the San Francisco Bay Area their home. Night in Half Moon Bay.

Day 3, Thu, 11 Sep. Pelagic trip. After an early breakfast, we'll head to the harbor and board our boat. We will join the Slice of California I group to embark on our pelagic adventure together. We should be at sea for at least eight hours, possibly more. Night in Half Moon Bay.

Day 4, Fri, 12 Sep. Coastal birding. Today we will visit the coastal chaparral, marshes, rocky coasts, and willow thickets of San Mateo County. The habitat is diverse and so will be the species we see. We will keep our options open and visit several areas that have proven to be recently productive. Night in Half Moon Bay.

Day 5, Sat, 13 Sep. Central Valley; drive to the Sierra Nevada. After an early breakfast, we will head east to the Sierra with many stops in-between. First we'll explore the scrubby chaparral zone of Mines Road in the Diablo Range, winding our way through to the Central Valley, and searching for Yellow-billed Magpie, California Thrasher, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Lewis's Woodpecker, and more along the way. We will continue across the Central Valley, heading east to the foothills and into the west flank of the Sierra Nevada where we will get back into the forests again. This will be a long, but birdy and enjoyable day. Night in Sonora.



*We'll bird in some beautiful montane habitat along the eastern flank of the Sierra Nevada.
Photograph by participant Bill Telfair.*

Day 6, Sun, 14 Sep. West slope of Sierra. Today we'll concentrate on birding the conifer forests of the western Sierra. This will mean working Highway 4 with a productive stop at Calaveras Big Trees State Park to walk through the Giant Sequoias and search for woodpeckers. We will continue to higher elevations if time permits. Night in Sonora.

Day 7, Mon, 15 Sep. Sierra to Lee Vining. This morning we'll cross the Sierra Nevada on Route 108, cresting at Sonora Pass. We'll bird along the road and at the pass in search of Sierran specialties. Night in Lee Vining.

Day 8, Tue, 16 Sep. Lee Vining. We'll devote a full day to birding environs near Mono Lake and the town of Lee Vining. In the afternoon we will visit the ghost town of Bodie, where we can enjoy the place and look for sage species such as Greater Sage-Grouse. Night in Lee Vining.

Day 9, Wed, 17 Sep. Return drive to San Francisco. Today is a travel day; however, we will be watching for any species that may have eluded us so far and will make an effort (time permitting) to find as many of them as we can. If conditions allow, we might finish the daylight hours in San Rafael watching Vaux's Swifts go to roost. Night in San Francisco.

Day 10, Thu, 18 Sep. Departure for home. You may plan to depart for home at any time today; the hotel has a free shuttle to the airport. Have a safe trip!

About Your Guides

Tour I:

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

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

*"I would travel with **Chris Benesh** anywhere, any time. He is calm, pleasant, and good-humored. He is not only brilliant at finding and spotting birds, but equally brilliant at ensuring that every member of the group gets a great look at the bird..." B.M., Arizona's Second Spring*

Tour II:

Alex Sundvall is a proud Minnesota native and has truly loved birds all his life. At the young age of five, he took a field trip with his kindergarten class to their local Nature Center and learned all about birds. At the end of the trip, the class got to watch staff release a Dark-eyed Junco they had been rehabilitating, and from that moment he was hooked! With the help of his very supportive and encouraging parents, he learned everything he could about birds and birding. Even as a child, whenever anyone asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up, he would always reply: "I'm going to be an ornithologist!"

This love of birds and nature has followed him throughout his life. He graduated from the University of Minnesota's College of Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resource Sciences with a degree in Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology with a double minor in Forest Ecosystem Management and Conservation; and Environmental Sciences, Policy, and Management. In 2016, Alex received the Young Birder Award from the Minnesota Ornithologists Union, and he has served as an alternate on his State's Bird Records Committee.

Growing up in Minnesota, Alex developed a passion for studying bird migration. In the past he has worked as both a Counter and Count Interpreter at Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory in Duluth, MN. Even now, in his free time he'll often drive somewhere, post up for the day, and just count migrating birds as they pass by.

In recent years, Alex has led numerous tours across the US and beyond -- from the deserts and sky islands of the Southwest to the hallowed shores of Attu, Alaska, and everything in between. He loves teaching people about birds and showing them all that nature has to offer!

*"**Alex** was so delightful and kind. He was thoughtful and charming to everyone! He is smart AND accomplished; Field Guides is lucky to have him." J.M., Texas's Big Bend & Hill Country*

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

Financial Information

FEE: \$5225 from San Francisco

DEPOSIT: \$525 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: March 8, 2025 (Tour I); March 13, 2025 (Tour II)

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$975

LIMIT: 7

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Caroline Lewis. Caroline will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

A NOTE ON ELEVATION: We will reach an elevation of 9,624 feet on this tour at Sonora Pass; our Sierra Nevada birding will mostly be between 4,500 feet and 8,000 feet in elevation.

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.

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

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is \$5225 for one person in double occupancy from San Francisco. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 9, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through dinner on Day 9, all ground transportation, boat trips, 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 San Francisco, airport taxes, 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 \$975. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

TOUR LIMITS: Our limits are firm and we don't exceed the limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space remains open. However, on occasion, we will send along a guide in training on a tour. In these cases, the guide in training will be taking a seat in the van or bus. Our guides will have a rotation system within the vehicle so that clients

share the inconvenience equally. We hope this minor inconvenience will be more than offset by the advantages of having another guide along.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact us at fieldguides.com/contact-us/. Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our new electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please mail your **deposit of \$525** per person, or see <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/> for our Payment Options. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or **by March 8, 2025 (Tour I) or March 13, 2025 (Tour II)**. **We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and full payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 180 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 179 and 90 days before the departure date, 50% of the full tour fee is non-refundable, which would include the full deposit if the final payment has not yet been paid. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable.

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

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

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

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

US citizens will receive information from us regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance prior to, or within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights and in some cases, other arrangements), pre-existing conditions are covered. You may purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/> and clicking the link to CSA. The CSA webpage also includes a contact number.

Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii. We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance thru InsureMyTrip (<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. When purchasing insurance with a company other than CSA, you will want to understand whether the timing of your purchase will affect coverage before paying your first deposit. Insurance purchase requirements can vary from company to company, and such requirements could limit your options if you do not look into this until making your final payment for your tour. Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

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

Field Guides operates under permit on the Inyo National Forest, Stanislaus National Forest, Bodie SHP, and Mono Lake Tufa SNR.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, and reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity while at Inyo National Forest. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible State or local Agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information is also available in languages other than English.

To file a complaint alleging discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provided in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (a) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (b) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (c) email: program.intake@usda.gov."

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

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.

TBJ 1/23
Peg2/23; 2/25