

ITINERARY
PANAMA'S CANOPY CAMP: LOWLAND DARIEN
December 28, 2018-January 5, 2019



The Gray-cheeked Nunlet is a small puffbird with a rather restricted range. They are not common, but we should see them near the camp. Photograph by participant Anthony Collerton.

We include here information for those interested in the 2018 Field Guides Panama's Canopy Camp 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 (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*

Darien Province in eastern Panama has long been a well-known, yet remote destination for birding in Central America. Given that a number of South American species reach the northern limit of their range here, Darien is one of those must-go places. One of the biggest obstacles to birding in Darien has been the lack of adequate infrastructure, but this difficulty has been eliminated by the recent opening of the Canopy Camp. This new "camp" continues the tradition of Panama's Canopy Tower and Canopy Lodge in combining a great birding site with extremely comfortable quarters, outstanding food, and unsurpassed attention to a great birding experience. The brainchild of Raul Arias, whose vision of sustainable ecotourism has revolutionized birding in Panama, the Canopy Camp is located in a shaded clearing adjacent to tall forest and hills. Accommodations are in large safari-style tents that are atop metal platforms with wood decking. Each tent has at least two twin beds (some with a single queen bed), chairs, shelving, and adjacent private bathrooms with sink, shower, and flush toilets. There is a central building with the dining room, kitchen, and library, with a veranda for scanning the forest. The camp is essentially all solar at this point except for a few propane items in the kitchen.



*Golden-hooded Tanagers should be right in camp for us to enjoy.
Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.*

However, despite the comfortable lodge, the birds are the main attraction here. This area of lowland Darien has no fewer than 25 specialty birds that are essentially restricted to eastern Panama, as well as a plethora of more widespread tropical species. Such species as Pale-bellied Hermit, Barred Puffbird, Gray-cheeked Nunlet, Red-rumped Woodpecker, Yellow-breasted Flycatcher, White-headed Wren, and Orange-crowned Oriole may be seen right from the clearing. Scanning from the veranda one might locate soaring King Vultures, Semiplumbeous Hawk, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Keel-billed and Chestnut-mandibled toucans, White-necked Puffbird, and groups of parrots flying off to work in the morning. The camp's ever developing trail system allows access to tall forest where trogons, woodcreepers, antbirds, and a seemingly inordinate number of Golden-headed Manakins can be found. Even relaxing in one of the hammocks during a siesta one might see Golden-hooded Tanagers, Green Honeycreepers, and Thick-billed Euphonias feeding in a fruiting tree. Some of our days will be spent visiting nearby areas with different habitats, and

thus, different birds. Walking a forested road will get us into more likely habitat for Red-throated Caracara, Blue-and-yellow Macaw, Dusky-backed Jacamar, Golden-green Woodpecker, Double-banded Graytail, Red-billed Scythebill, Black Antshrike, Rufous-winged Antwren, Bare-crowned Antbird, Gray Elaenia, White-vented Conebill, and Black Oropendola. Getting to a local marsh and open forest will help us find Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Cocoli Heron, White-throated Crake, Spot-breasted Woodpecker, and the unusual Black-capped Donacobius. Another day will find us boarding boats to explore the riverine habitat for water birds, perched raptors, and forest edge species such as the very local Spectacled Parrotlet. One of our recent tours even enjoyed a perched Harpy Eagle carefully watching a group of monkeys; this is but one of the sightings of Harpy in the area, and there is a fair chance of an active and accessible nest of this magnificent species.

We are sure you will find this tour to be a great experience in birding one of the still out-of-the way places in Central America.

About the Physical Requirements & Pace: This tour does not demand much physically and it will operate at a comfortable pace throughout. Participants should be able to walk up to two miles at a "birder's" pace and be able to walk trails that ascend a couple of hundred feet in elevation. Birding will take place along roads, wide tracks, forested trails, and from our boats along the rivers. While the heat may slow us down some during the middle of the day, temperatures early and late in the day are pleasant, and it is usually comfortable inside the forest. With this in mind, it is important to be in the field early to catch the peak of the bird activity.

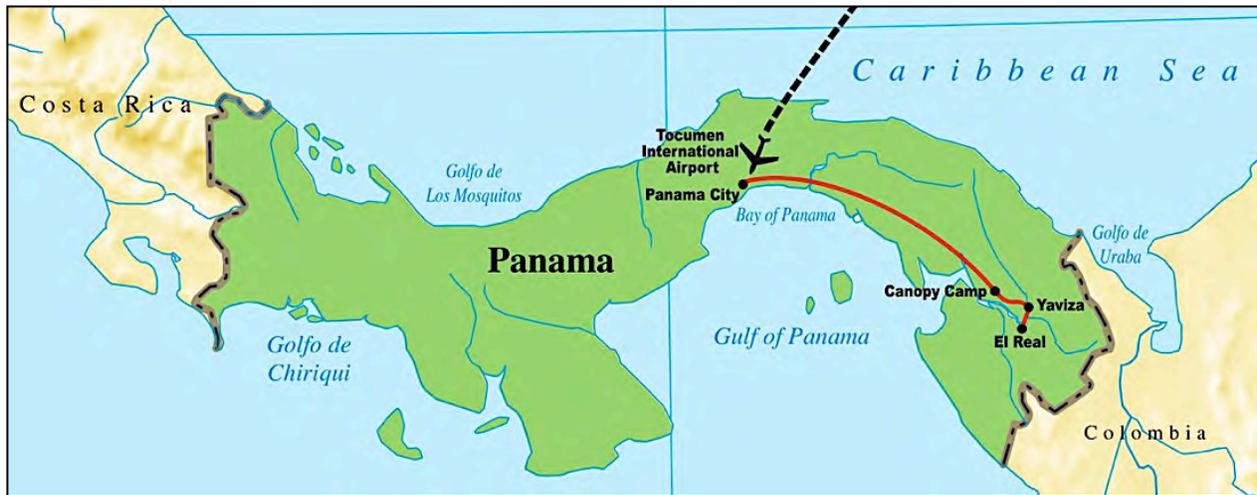
Days will start with birding around the camp clearing or breakfast at or a little before first light. You can count on afternoon siestas on the days we return to the camp for lunch. It should be remembered that outings are always optional, so one may elect to skip one to relax at the Camp. Our main purpose is for all to see well and enjoy a rich diversity of species, but emphasis will be given to indigenous birds special to the Darien lowlands of Panama.

As is customary on most of our tours, we will use playback, sensitively, with the aim of bringing into view otherwise difficult-to-see species—for example, furtive species, canopy species, nightbirds—or flock-leaders whose response will often attract a number of species at once.

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 the guide.

About the Birding Areas

Please note that the Canopy Camp in Darien is a different location from the Wild Darien: Cana & Cerro Pirre tour we have operated in the past and hope to do again in the future. The Canopy Camp tour does not reach the higher elevations of Cerro Pirre and involves no true camping. Instead, we will be birding the clearing and forested areas of the Canopy Camp property and traveling by van to nearby sites to reach wetlands, other forest trails, and open habitats.



Darien is the easternmost province of Panama and borders Colombia, which is a good distance east of where we will be birding. The province is essentially joined to the rest of Panama by one road and an intricate system of waterways that have provided transportation for the local people for centuries. Coming from the north, the Pan-American Highway reaches its terminus at the village of Yaviza. The territory between Yaviza and where the highway recommences in Colombia is known as the Darien Gap, the only section that prevents one from driving from Alaska to the tip of South America.

Traveling from Panama City to the Canopy Camp along the Pan-American Highway, we will make a few birding stops, especially near Lake Bayano where we might encounter Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Red-rumped Woodpecker, Black Antshrike, White-eared Conebill, and Orange-crowned Oriole. Once at the Canopy Camp, we will be birding the clearing and forested areas of the lodge property and traveling by van to nearby sites to reach wetlands, other forest trails, and open habitat. All of this birding will be at lowland locations. At the camp, the surrounding forest is dotted with huge large-buttressed Cuipo trees which emerge from the shorter canopy and often have raptors, toucans, parrots, and puffbirds perched in them in the early morning. The trails at the camp have been chopped through the forest at places to take advantage of the terrain and to reach a diversity of habitats. Some are loop trails of about a kilometer while others are one way and might climb a few hundred feet in elevation. Our best chances of encountering mixed-species flocks, birds attending army antswarms, and a number of skulking species will be along these trails. Away from the camp, we will be on flatter ground with longer stretches of dirt roads available for birding. The forest will not be as tall as around the camp but will be better for understory antbirds (Bare-crowned and White-bellied), Black Antshrike, Golden-collared Manakin, wrens, migrant warblers from North America, and tanager flocks. Due to the remote location of some of the birding areas, weather and road conditions might cause us to change the sites we visit.

Itinerary for Panama's Canopy Camp: Darien Lowlands

Day 1, Fri, 28 Dec. Arrival in Panama City. You will arrive to Panama City and transfer to the nearby and very modern Riande Airport Hotel on the hotel's free shuttle. There will be a room reserved in your name. Your guide will be at the hotel and will contact you upon your arrival. Night at Riande Airport Hotel.

Day 2, Sat, 29 Dec. To the Canopy Camp; afternoon birding at the camp. After the complimentary breakfast buffet at the hotel, we will be picked up by a Canopy Camp vehicle for the drive along the Pan-American Highway to Darien Province. Be prepared for birding. Driving directly to the Canopy Camp would take about four hours; however, we will make birding stops along the way, including the Lake Bayano area. After lunch at a restaurant in the town of Torti, where many hummingbird species visit the feeders, we'll continue to the Canopy Camp where we will be introduced to our home for the next six nights. There will be time for afternoon birding at the camp. Night at Canopy Camp.

Day 3, Sun, 30 Dec. Canopy Camp birding. We will meet around dawn for birding the clearing of the camp. We will want to scan the forest treetops for perched parrots, toucans, and other delicacies. After breakfast, we'll walk one of the forest trails that leaves from the clearing. We will return to the camp for lunch and a siesta before checking another of the camp's trails in the afternoon. Night at Canopy Camp.

Day 4, Mon, 31 Dec. El Salto Road. After an early breakfast, we'll drive the short distance to the El Salto Road. We will spend the morning birding sections of this forested road. We are likely to walk productive sections then drive a short ways to the next section. The road deadends at the Rio Chucunaque, a major transportation route for the local Embera people. In the afternoon we'll have time to watch the flowers and forest edge around the Canopy Camp for hummingbirds and other goodies. We may encounter a Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, an extremely rare bird in Panama, frequenting the verbena flowers in the afternoon. Night at Canopy Camp.



*We'll hope to luck into a Harpy Eagle, but even if we don't, there will be plenty of other raptors, such as this lovely Black-collared Hawk.
Photograph by guide Cory Gregory.*

Day 5, Tue, 1 Jan. Boat trip on the Rio Chucunaque and its tributaries. After breakfast, we will likely take a boat trip on the Rio Chucunaque which may entail a drive to the town of Yaviza at the end of the Pan-American Highway or a closer locale depending on where the best birding has been at the time. We'll explore the inlets and waterways of the area and this could give us access to a Harpy Eagle site if a nest has been discovered. We will be out most of the day with a picnic lunch, returning to the camp in the late afternoon. Night at Canopy Camp.

Day 6, Wed, 2 Jan. Morning birding at Tierra Nueva and El Salto; p.m. to Las Cienegas or marshes along the Pan-American Highway. We will likely return to the rich El Salto area this morning before heading to the nearby forested site of Tierra Nueva. This area has been reliable for Golden-green Woodpecker in the past and has very good general birding. We will return to the Canopy Camp for lunch and will head out later in the day to get to the marshes at Las Cienegas or along the highway for afternoon birding. Along the way we might encounter a Spot-breasted Woodpecker and we will certainly see some

Red-breasted Blackbirds in the open country. At the marshes we hope to find a pair of duetting Black-capped Donacobius and perhaps a Black-collared Hawk amid the Wattled Jacanas, Muscovys, and other wetland birds. We will also search for Dwarf Cuckoo, a South American species, which was recently discovered here, one of the very few places in Central America where it has been recorded. The afternoon will be spent in open country so be sure to apply a second layer of sunscreen. Night at Canopy Camp.

Day 7, Thu, 3 Jan. Morning birding at Nuevo Vigia; afternoon birding at Marraganti and Rio Tuquesa. We will head off after an early breakfast to explore the forest near Nuevo Vigia an Embera community on the north side of the Rio Chucunaque. Each dry season, the locals build a substantial vehicle bridge over the Chucunaque to allow access to their village. This recently "discovered" birding area allows access to a Black Oropendola colony as well as habitat for Dusky-backed Jacamar. We will take a picnic lunch with us so we can stay a good part of the day in this excellent forest. Night at Canopy Camp.

Day 8, Fri, 4 Jan. Morning departure to San Francisco Reserve; p.m. continuing to Panama City. After a last early breakfast at the Canopy Camp and loading our luggage, we will head back toward the town of Torti and bird at the nearby San Francisco Reserve. The beautiful forest on the slopes of the foothills is taller and more lush than the lowlands of Darien giving it more of a feel of the infrequently birded areas of the Canal Zone. Some of the specialties we could encounter are Yellow-green Tyrannulet, Sirystes, and possibly even Black-crowned Antpitta. We are sure to add a number of new birds here. After lunch in nearby Torti we will continue on the Panama City. We will have our final dinner at the hotel. Night at Riande Airport Hotel.

Day 9, Sat, 5 Jan. Departure. The airport shuttle runs every 30 minutes, and it is only a three minute drive to the airport. The complimentary breakfast buffet begins early enough so everyone should be able to eat before catching flights.

About Your Guide

John Coons combines birding excellence with a natural ability as a tour guide. He has been leading tours since 1985. Since then his great group skills, attention to detail, easy laugh, and unfailing sense to spot (and remember!) what's fascinating in things large and small have brought delight to innumerable Field Guides participants on tours from the High Arctic to the tip of South America and throughout Australasia.

When not on tour, John enjoys exploring and birding the remote mountains, canyons, and mesas of his home in northern Arizona. His ambition of developing a completely sustainable yard of native wildflowers, grasses, trees, and shrubs is an unending goal that consumes more time than expected each spring and summer.

*"Brilliant guide. **John Coons** is thoughtful, very skilled at considerate group management, endlessly patient, and terrific at finding birds." P.A., Texas Migration Spectacle*

John has extensive experience in Panama and has led previous tours to the Darien lowlands and the Canopy Camp. John will be accompanied by a local Canopy Camp guide.

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

Financial Information

FEE: \$4250 from Panama City

DEPOSIT: \$425 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: August 30, 2018

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$1250

Deluxe Tent at the Canopy Camp: \$300 per person

LIMIT: 8

Other Things You Need to Know

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



*The Standard safari tents at the Canopy Camp are quite comfortable.
Photograph by Alex Alba, Canopy Family website.*

ACCOMMODATIONS: The Canopy Camp, our lodging and headquarters for birding eastern Panama, is a comfortable site with accommodations in "Safari-style" tents. Scattered around the site are six large, double-occupancy tents and two deluxe tents, all erected on metal framed platforms with wood decking.

Each safari tent has a separate indoor wood floor. The tents have several screened windows that can be closed completely by zipping them closed or partially closing them by velcro coverings. Each tent has a separate but private shower, sink, and flush toilet located right next to the platform.

The standard tents are 173 square feet in area, and can be furnished with a queen bed or two single beds, plus bedside tables, chairs, and shelves for storage. The deluxe tents are a little larger (249 square feet), and can be furnished with a queen bed, or two twin beds, plus bedside tables, etc. The larger

tents also have a small separate area that can be used for storage of your gear.

Our tour fee includes the standard tents; please call our office to let us know which type of tent you prefer. Deluxe tents carry an additional cost of \$300 per person. The deluxe tents are offered on a “first come, first served” basis; however, if *only* the deluxe tents are available when you sign up, you will be billed for the larger tent. You can find a detailed description of the tents with photos at the Canopy Family website: <http://www.canopytower.com/CCD-tents>

In the middle of the Canopy Camp is the main building that houses the dining room, kitchen, library, and lounge area. There are hammocks here for relaxing during an afternoon siesta and an observation platform where you can scan the surrounding forest or watch for soaring raptors.

The Riande Airport Hotel in Panama City is very comfortable with complimentary Wi-Fi, a nice restaurant, bar, and complimentary breakfast buffet.

DOCUMENTS: US Citizens traveling by air to and from Panama must present a valid passport when entering or re-entering the United States. You will be issued a tourist card by the airline to be filled out before arrival.

If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Panamanian 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 \$4250 for one person in double occupancy from Panama City. This fee includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 8, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 9, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). The tour fee includes lodging in the Standard tents; **deluxe tents carry an additional cost of \$300 per person, and if only the deluxe tents are available when you sign up, you will be billed for the larger tent.** 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 Panama, 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 \$1250. 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). In addition, if only the deluxe tents are available, you will be billed for the larger tent.

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, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$425** 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 August 30, 2018. 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, 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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