

ITINERARY

PANAMA'S CANOPY CAMP: LOWLAND DARIEN

December 27, 2026 - January 4, 2027



The Barred Puffbird has a small range that includes the Darien region of Panama. They are sit and wait predators, so we'll need to keep a sharp eye out to find one. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.

We include here information for those interested in the 2026 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

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

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 bird species reach the northern limit of their range here, Darien is one of those must-go places. The Canopy Camp, inaugurated in 2012, has made the logistics of reaching and birding this region wonderfully simple. This "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.

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, Ochre-ored (Yellow-breasted) Flatbill, 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 Yellow-throated toucans, White-necked Puffbird, and groups of parrots flying off to work in the morning. The camp's trail system allows access to tall forest where trogons, woodcreepers, antbirds, and a 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, Chestnut-fronted Macaw, Dusky-backed Jacamar, Golden-green Woodpecker, Double-banded Graytail, Red-billed Scythebill, Black Antshrike, Rusty-winged Antwren, Bare-crowned Antbird, Gray-headed Elaenia, White-vented Conebill, and Black Oropendola. Getting to a local marsh and open forest will help us find Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Cocoi 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. For the past few years there has been an active Harpy Eagle nest in the area and with the ongoing local knowledge it is expected to continue. We will make all efforts to visit a nest site of this magnificent bird of prey. Additionally, a couple of Crested Eagle nests have been found in the last few years and although this is not as reliable for the future as a Harpy, there is a possibility of seeing this more rarely seen species. To get to these sites it is likely we would be taking boat trips in motorized dugouts on one of the river systems of eastern Darien. 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.



Spectacled Parrotlets have a limited range in eastern Panama, Colombia and Venezuela. They can often be found by listening for their vocalizations. Photograph by participants David and Judy Smith.

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.



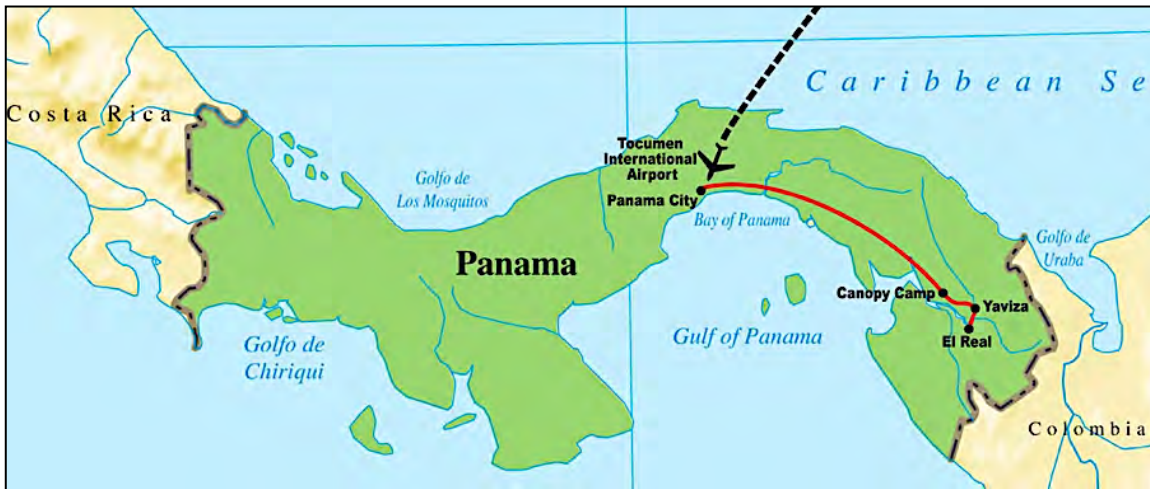
We will be using motorized “dugout” canoes to transport us along the rivers to reach several of our birding spots. We’ll also be walking on muddy trails: note the boots in this image! Photograph by guide John Coons.

Physical requirements of this tour

- **TRAILS:** The trails are generally flat, but there are a couple that will ascend a couple hundred feet in elevation and participants can expect to walk up to two miles in a morning. We will be birding along roads, wide tracks, and forest trails. If there has been rain, some trails could be muddy.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** We will be taking boat trips to reach some otherwise inaccessible areas. Participants will need to get in and out of motorized dugout canoes and it may be necessary to scramble up a riverside bank to access a trail. In some years, there may be a Harpy Eagle or Crested Eagle nest that might require a walk of 2+ miles one-way through open country or forest. These trails might require walking through mud part of the way and needing to step over downed logs under hot and humid conditions.
- **PACE:** While the tour is more relaxed, since we will be at one lodge for the duration of the birding, participants should expect pre-sunrise meeting times, sometimes as early as 4:00 am. There will be midday siestas on the days we return to the camp for lunch.
- **ELEVATION:** The Canopy Camp tour does not reach the higher elevations of Cerro Pirre. Instead, we will be birding the clearing and forested areas of the Canopy Camp property and traveling by van or higher clearance SUVs to nearby sites to reach wetlands, other forest trails, and open habitats. These would all be classified as lowland tropical sites.
- **WEATHER:** Temperatures will get up to the high 80’s (or 90’s in the sun) with high humidity. However, most of our birding will be done while avoiding the midday heat and we will get to enjoy pleasant temperatures in the early and late times of day.
- **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:** As we will be birding in undeveloped areas, bush stops will be necessary on most of the days that we get away from the Canopy Camp. We will take advantage of actual restrooms where they are available.
- **OPTING OUT:** While at the Canopy Camp, it should be remembered that outings are always optional, so participants may elect to skip one to relax at the camp

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 Rufescent 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, Sun, 27 Dec. Arrival in Panama City. You will arrive to Panama City and transfer to the nearby Riande Airport Hotel on the hotel's free shuttle which runs every hour. There will be a room reserved in your name or under a portfolio listed as "Field Guides" or "Canopy". Your guide will be at the hotel and will contact you upon your arrival or that evening if you come in early. We will meet in the hotel lobby before dinner. Night at Riande Airport Hotel.

Day 2, Mon, 28 Dec. To the Canopy Camp; afternoon birding at the camp. After the complimentary breakfast 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 five hours; however, we will make birding

stops along the way, including the Lake Bayano area. After lunch at a restaurant in the town of Tortí, 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, Tue, 29 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 a nearby birding site in the afternoon. Night at Canopy Camp.



We'll hope that the Harpy Eagles will be nesting, and that we'll be able to see these impressive predators. This one was observed on our 2025 tour. Photograph by participant Sue Bryer.

Day 4, Wed, 30 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.

Day 5, Thu, 31 Dec. 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. Depending on a nest being within reach, it may be necessary to walk a trail for up to two miles one-way. 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, Fri, 1 Jan. Morning birding at Tierra Nueva and El Salto; p.m. to Yaviza Wetlands 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 Meadowlarks 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. The afternoon will be spent in open country so be sure to apply a second layer of sunscreen. Night at Canopy Camp.

Day 7, Sat, 2 Jan. Morning birding at Nuevo Vigia; afternoon birding at Marraganti and Rio Turquesa. 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. If the river is still high we will take dugouts to the village. This recently “discovered” birding area allows access to 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, Sun, 3 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 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, Choco Sirystes, and possibly even Black-crowned Antpitta. We are sure to add a number of new birds here. After lunch in nearby Tortí we will continue to Panama City, where we will enjoy our final dinner at the hotel. Night at Riande Airport Hotel.

Day 9, Mon, 4 Jan. Departure. You may enjoy the complimentary breakfast buffet at the hotel starting at 6:30 am, then take the hourly shuttle shuttle to the airport, just three minutes away. Safe travels!

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 unflinching 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 a goal that consumes more time than expected each spring and summer.

“John Coons! A primary reason for choosing this itinerary was to spend time with John Coons. We enjoyed seeing the New Year 'in' so much last year at Canopy Lodge, we decided to do it again this year at Canopy Camp.” A. W.; Panama’s Canopy Camp

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for John’s complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

Financial Information

FEE: \$5450 per person from Panama City
Deluxe Tent at the Canopy Camp: \$350 per person
SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$1300
DEPOSIT: \$550 per person
FINAL PAYMENT DUE: June 30, 2026
LIMIT: 7

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!

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

The Canopy Camp, our lodging and headquarters for birding eastern Panama, is a comfortable site with accommodations in “Safari-style” tents. In the middle of the camp is the main building with the dining room, kitchen, library, and lounge. Hammocks are available for relaxing during an afternoon siesta, and an observation platform provides views of the surrounding forest and soaring raptors.

Scattered around the site are six large, double-occupancy tents and two deluxe tents, all on metal framed platforms with wood decking. Each tent has a separate indoor wood floor, several screened windows that can be fully zipped or partially closed with velcro coverings, private shower, sink, and flush toilet located right next to the platform.

The standard tents are 173 square feet, 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), furnished with a queen bed or two twin beds, plus bedside tables, etc. and a small separate area for gear storage.

Detailed descriptions of the tents with photos are available at <https://canopytower.com/canopy-camp/accommodations/>.



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

Please note: the tour fee includes lodging in the standard tents. **Deluxe tents carry an additional cost of \$350 per person** and are offered on a first come, first served basis. If only deluxe tents are available when you register, you will be billed for the larger tent. **Please let us know your preferred tent type when registering.**

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: This tour begins and ends in Panama City, Panama (Tocumen International Airport, PTY).

Arrival: Panama City (PTY) on December 27 at any time.

Departure: Panama City (PTY) on January 4 at any time.

Please wait to purchase airline tickets until we notify you that the tour is confirmed to operate. At that time, we'll be glad to assist with your flight arrangements at no service fee.

DOCUMENTS: Be sure to verify the latest entry requirements for each country you will visit or transit.

Passport: A valid passport is required for international travel. It should be in good condition, valid for at least 3 months beyond your return date, and have at least one blank page for each country on your itinerary.

Visa: U.S. and Canadian citizens are not required to obtain a visa for a short tourist visit. Non-US citizens should consult the consulates of each destination for current entry requirements.

You will be issued a **tourist card** by the airline to complete before arrival; please keep it in a safe place, as you may need to present it upon departure.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: **The tour fee is \$5450 for one person in double occupancy from Panama City.** It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 8 **in the standard tents**, 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). 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.

Please note: Deluxe tents carry an additional cost of \$350 per person and are offered on a first come, first served basis. If only deluxe tents are available when you register, you will be billed for the larger tent. **Please let us know your preferred tent type when registering.**

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 is \$1300 for those requesting a single room. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee.

The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact 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 electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please send your deposit of \$550 per person; see fieldguides.com/payment-options/ for our Payment Options. Full payment of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or by June 30, 2026. 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.

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. **Please note:** we have limited this tour to just 7 participants, plus the Field Guides leader(s) and a local guide, to ensure the best overall experience and satisfying birding on narrow trails. This affects the tour fee slightly, but we believe the intimacy and expertise are well worth it.

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 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 purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to protect your investment in case of injury or illness to you or an immediate family member before or during a trip. Because we must remit early and substantial deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer refunds for cancellations outside of our Cancellation Policy. If a participant is unable to join or continue a tour due to illness, all related expenses will be their responsibility, and no refunds can be issued for missed days. Please wait to purchase insurance until we notify you that the tour is confirmed to operate, as most policies are non-refundable.

For full details, visit our Trip Cancellation Insurance page at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/>.

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.

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.

1/26 JC; 3/26 RK; mz; 4/26peg