

ALASKA MAINLAND

JUNE 13-24, 2009

BARROW EXTENSION

JUNE 24-26, 2009

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Alaska epitomizes grandeur. Its immense expanses consist of range upon range of snowy mountains, glaciers, islands teeming with seabirds, coastal fjords edged with fog-drenched forest, vast boreal taiga, and untold miles of rolling tundra. This tour offers an excellent cross-section of the birds and habitats of this vast land, focusing upon three very different areas: the rugged hills, tundra, and seacoast around the old gold rush boomtown of Nome; Kenai Fjords National Park and the coastal forests of the Kenai Peninsula; and finally the sprawling wilderness in the shadow of North America's highest peak, Denali (Mt. McKinley).

A visit to Barrow will take us to the northernmost town on the North American continent. In a setting of 24-hour sunlight, the birdlife is unmistakably High Arctic. All four eiders use the lakes here, and displaying sandpipers are everywhere. Every pond is alive with gorgeous Red Phalaropes, and we should be treated to the sight of Snowy Owls cruising over the tundra.

Those interested in taking only the Barrow Extension will need to be in Anchorage before June 24 in order to assure meeting the group for the flight to Barrow.

June 13, Day 1: Arrival in Anchorage. Participants will arrive in Anchorage today and take the complementary shuttle to our hotel. We'll meet in the hotel lobby at 6:30 p.m. for dinner.

NIGHT: The Coast International Inn, Anchorage

June 14-16, Days 2-4: Anchorage to Nome; Nome Area. After a morning flight to Nome (subject to change), we will "hit the ground running" to take full advantage of our three days in this bird-rich and historic area. Nome is the ivory capital of Alaska and was its gold capital in years gone by. Today the town is a major center for the natives of the region. Once a part of the Bering land bridge, the Seward Peninsula has been colonized by several Old World species: Yellow Wagtails hover above the tundra, White Wagtails (very uncommon and local) lurk around decaying old gold dredges, vociferous Bar-tailed Godwits feed in the shallow lagoons and river mouths, and Arctic Warblers trill from the willow thickets. Remarkably, in 1987, a VENT tour discovered the highly sought and spectacular Bluethroat nesting near Nome. These gorgeous little thrushes have been found on each of our tours since then (including another nest in 1990) and have become one of the trip's true highlights.

In addition to its Old World specialties, Nome is teeming with other birdlife. Safety Lagoon and the surrounding coastline harbor a wide variety of nesting and migrant waterbirds. Among the many possibilities are Pacific and Red-throated loons, Tundra Swan, Brant (the western race *nigricans*), Common Eider, Black Scoter, Harlequin Duck, Whimbrel, Red-necked and Red (uncommon) phalaropes, Semipalmated and Western sandpipers, Long-tailed (common!) and Parasitic jaegers, Sabine's Gull (uncommon), and Arctic and Aleutian terns. Even such rarities as Eurasian Wigeon, Red-necked Stint, and Slaty-backed Gull have been found here with some regularity

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on past tours. Willow thickets along the Nome River may yield Gray-cheeked Thrush; Northern Shrike (uncommon); Orange-crowned, Yellow, and Wilson's warblers; Northern Waterthrush; American Tree, Golden-crowned, and Fox sparrows; and Hoary and Common redpolls. The river itself is home to Harlequin Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, and Wandering Tattler. The extensive tundra and rocky slopes should yield Willow and Rock ptarmigan, American and Pacific golden-plovers (split by the AOU in 1993), Northern Wheatear, and Lapland Longspur. Although occurring in rather low densities, several species of raptors can be found here as well, so we will want to keep a constant watch on the skies for Rough-legged Hawk, Gyrfalcon, Merlin, Golden Eagle, and Short-eared Owl. Time-permitting, we may take an optional hike in pursuit of the elusive and nearly-mythical Bristle-thighed Curlew, which nests in very small numbers on the peninsula.

NIGHTS: Aurora Inn, Nome

June 17, Day 5: Nome to Anchorage. On our final morning in Nome, we'll search for any species previously missed or attempt to ferret out some accidental or stray. Such spectacular vagrants as Arctic Loon, Whooper Swan, Mongolian Plover, Gray-tailed Tattler, Great Knot, and Ross' and Ivory gulls have been found here by previous VENT groups over the years. While the chances of spotting any of these species are very remote, the possibility of an Asian stray adds to the excitement of birding Nome. We will depart for Anchorage around midday (subject to change) and will likely visit Westchester Lagoon in the late afternoon. This pleasant city park is home to multiple pairs of Red-necked Grebes and often harbors shorebirds such as Hudsonian Godwit and Short-billed Dowitcher.

NIGHT: The Coast International Inn, Anchorage

June 18, Day 6: Anchorage to Seward. Today we bird our way to Seward, enjoying fabulous scenery en route. With special permission from the Seward Ranger District, we'll have access to a variety of areas in the Chugach National Forest.

The Kenai Peninsula has much to offer, perhaps an American Dipper bobbing along a rushing, glacier-fed stream; a Barrow's Goldeneye in the reflection of a snow-capped peak on a glass-smooth lake; a Spruce Grouse nervously leading her downy charges safely through the forest; or a Three-toed Woodpecker quietly flaking bark from a dead spruce. Frequent stops are inevitable, whether to appreciate the majesty of a close Bald Eagle, to scope a distant slope for mountain goats, or simply to snap a picture of some dazzling alpine backdrop.

NIGHT: Breeze Inn Motel, Seward

June 19, Day 7: Boat Trip to Kenai Fjords National Park. This will be a day of great adventure, as we embark on an all-day boat trip through protected waters to Kenai Fjords National Park. The breathtaking scenery alone would justify the trip. Our boat navigates past massive headlands, fog-drenched spruce forest, icy fjords, and scores of snow-covered mountains. It will be the birds and mammals that will steal the show, however. As we depart Resurrection Bay, we'll keep a close eye out for comical Sea Otters, whales (both Humpback and Killer are regular here), and Marbled Murrelets dotting the water's surface. En route to Northwest Glacier, a calving tidewater glacier, our boat will slowly cruise along the coast. Harbor Seals and Black Oystercatchers adorn the low rocks. Pelagic Cormorants and Pigeon Guillemots forage in the near shore waters. We should arrive at the glacier by late morning, hoping it will be actively calving during our visit—a sight and sound extravaganza never to be forgotten! We will carefully scan the waters at the base of the glacier for the uncommon and local Kittlitz's Murrelet, which occurs here in small numbers.

Then it's on to the Chiswell Islands, a naturalists' paradise. Craggy sea-stacks are draped in white by thousands of nesting Black-legged Kittiwakes. More than 20,000 Horned and Tufted puffins buzz in and out of the grassy tussocks like so many bees. Small numbers of the highly sought Red-faced Cormorant nest in this area as well. The rocky shores below are covered by the huge, brown forms of dozens of Steller's Sea Lions, and the waters about the boat are liberally sprinkled with rafts of Common and Thick-billed (scarce) murrees and Rhinoceros Auklets.

Some years, small numbers of Parakeet Auklets and Ancient Murrelets nest here. Our return trip takes us through slightly more offshore waters, with at least the possibility of such truly pelagic species as Short-tailed and Sooty shearwaters and Northern Fulmar.

Birders and non-birders alike have raved about this trip, and many Alaskan residents have labeled it the finest of its kind in the state. Unlike the ferries that navigate the state's inland waterways, our boat will stop for birds and mammals, allowing plenty of time for observation. With decks much closer to the water, we are also assured of better viewing and photographic conditions.

NIGHT: Breeze Inn Motel, Seward

June 20, Day 8: Seward Area and Return to Anchorage. The moist Sitka spruce forest that hugs the coast near Seward shelters birds like Spruce Grouse, Rufous Hummingbird, Steller's Jay, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Varied and Hermit thrushes, Townsend's Warbler, Pine Grosbeak, and the sporadic White-winged Crossbill. Nearby coastlines may yield Harlequin Duck, Northwestern Crow, and numerous Bald Eagles. We'll spend some time searching for these species before returning through the scenic coastal mountains to Anchorage.

NIGHT: The Coast International Inn, Anchorage

June 21, Day 9: Anchorage to Denali. The entire morning will be spent driving to Denali National Park. After arriving in the park, we'll check into our hotel and then embark on our first excursion on the Paxson Road. Spruce forests along this road may harbor Merlin, Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee, and Bohemian Waxwing. Nearby ponds are home to majestic Trumpeter Swans and stunning Barrow's Goldeneyes. Our real target here, however, is the localized Northern Hawk-Owl. A couple of pairs of these wonderful owls nest every year somewhere along the first 30 miles or so of this road. Our search for the often elusive hawk-owl may yield other finds such as Northern Flicker, Arctic Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, American Tree Sparrow, and Common Redpoll. Moose, red fox and porcupine are seen along this road with some frequency.

NIGHT: McKinley Village Lodge, Denali National Park

June 22, Day 10: Denali National Park. No Alaska experience is complete without a visit to the huge national park centered on Denali (Mt. McKinley), the highest peak in North America. A shuttle bus tour (lasting about 8 to 9 hours) will allow us to see much of this spectacular park. The birds are impressive, with Golden Eagle, Willow Ptarmigan, Northern Wheatear (scarce), Northern Shrike, and Arctic Warbler all present, although sometimes elusive. However, even the most dedicated birder may be distracted by the grandeur of the surroundings and by the opportunity for encountering large mammals—moose, caribou, grizzly bear, Dall's sheep, red fox, and even gray wolf. On a clear day the view of Mount McKinley (Denali) from the Eielson Visitor Center is one of the most spectacular sights in the world!

NIGHT: McKinley Village Lodge, Denali National Park

June 23, Day 11: Denali to Anchorage. After leaving Denali this morning, we'll make a detour on the Paxson road to search for species that may have previously eluded us. If any Smith's Longspurs are accessible (none have been seen the past few years), we will make a special effort to find this beautiful and localized species. After lunch we'll continue south on the Parks Highway to Anchorage, arriving in time for a final checklist session and dinner.

NIGHT: The Coast International Inn, Anchorage

June 24, Day 12: Departure for Home or Begin Barrow Extension. Participants not continuing on the Barrow Extension may depart Anchorage any time on June 24 or, depending on flight schedules, on overnight flights departing after our farewell dinner on June 23.

Barrow Extension

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June 24-25, Days 1-2: Barrow Area. After a morning of rest, an afternoon flight (subject to change) will take us from Anchorage up to Barrow. Lying well above the Arctic Circle, with sunlight 24 hours a day in summer, Barrow is High Arctic—quite different from other areas we will have visited in Alaska. The remarkably flat coastal tundra here is pockmarked with shallow surface lakes and puddles (the melt water cannot penetrate the underlying permafrost) and supports a different set of breeding shorebirds. Baird's Sandpipers and Red Phalaropes are common, and Pectoral Sandpipers are everywhere, performing their odd hooting flight displays. In some years, one or more Buff-breasted Sandpipers, White-rumped Sandpipers, or Red-necked Stints have also been present and occasional rare migrants like Gray-tailed Tattler have sometimes been found. This is our best stop on the mainland for eiders. We should see flocks of Kings migrating along the coast, Steller's (declining remarkably in the past decade) on the inland lakes, and hopefully the bizarre and endangered Spectacled Eider, all in their finest breeding dress. Although the numbers of predators here vary (along with the local population cycles of lemmings), we are almost certain to see at least a few Snowy Owls. Our stay at Barrow will allow us time to explore all the roads out of town as well as the Point itself, a long gravel peninsula extending north into the ice-choked Arctic Ocean.

Time will also be available for participants wishing to make an optional excursion to the end of the point to search for Polar Bears. These excursions (roughly 2.5 hours in length) are locally operated and are not officially included in the tour. (Rates for 2008 were \$60 per person.) Polar Bear sightings are not guaranteed, although our groups have enjoyed roughly a 30% success rate over the past few years. Your leaders will make on-site arrangements for those participants wishing to take part.

NIGHTS: Top of the World Hotel, Barrow

June 26, Day 3: Final Day in Barrow; Evening Flight to Anchorage. After a second full day in Barrow, our flight should depart for Anchorage in the early evening (subject to change). Depending upon actual flight schedules, most participants will find it necessary to overnight in Anchorage and depart the following day. A hotel room for this evening is not covered by the Barrow Extension tour fee. However, upon request, VENT will be happy to arrange pre-paid reservations at The Coast International Inn in Anchorage.

TOUR LEADER: Barry Zimmer

Barry Zimmer has been birding since the age of eight. His main areas of expertise lie in North and Central America, but his travels have taken him throughout much of the world, including such exotic locales as Japan, Russia, Madagascar, Africa, and New Zealand. Barry is a longtime member of the New Mexico Bird Records Committee, and served on the Texas Bird Records Committee for 12 years. He has co-authored three books: *Birds of the Trans-Pecos*, *A Birder's Guide to the Rio Grande Valley*, and *Birds and Birdfinding in the El Paso Area*. Barry has a keen interest in nature photography, having captured over 1,000 species of birds on film. His other interests include sports (a diehard Red Sox fan), cooking, and movies. He received his degree in psychology at the University of Texas in El Paso. Barry resides in El Paso with his wife, Yvonne, and their daughter, Alexandra.

TOUR SIZE: Both sections will be limited to 7 participants.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for **Alaska Mainland** is **\$5995** (early booking discount available—see below) per person in double occupancy from Anchorage, Alaska. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to dinner on Day 11, all lodging as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation, flights between Anchorage and Nome, and guide services provided by your tour leaders. This fee does not include airfare from

your home to Anchorage and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

Participants registering prior to April 1, 2009 will receive a discount of \$200.

The single supplement for **Alaska Mainland** is **\$1060**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you. Note that single accommodations are limited at the Aurora Inn in Nome and you may be asked to share. If so, you will be credited appropriately.

The fee for the **Barrow Extension** is **\$1995** per person in double occupancy from Anchorage, Alaska. This includes all meals from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 3, all lodging as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation, flights between Anchorage and Barrow, and guide services provided by your tour leader. This fee does not include airfare from your home to Anchorage and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for the **Barrow Extension** is **\$200**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

The **Barrow Extension** is an exception to VENT's guaranteed domestic departure policy. VENT reserves the right to charge a small-party supplement or cancel the tour due to low enrollment.

On both tours, participants will be responsible for any extra expenses incurred during the tour (extra hotel nights, additional transportation, etc.) which directly result from events out of VENT's control (weather delays, flight cancellations, strikes, acts of God, etc.) For more information, please see the enclosed letter from Victor Emanuel and the RESPONSIBILITY section at the end of this itinerary.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person per tour section. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Cancellation Penalties and Refunds are based on the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, the deposit less \$300 per person is refundable. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions, as well as any transfers from one tour to another. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.***

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$300.
Fewer than 120 days before departure date	No refund available.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE: Application forms for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. We **strongly recommend** that you purchase trip

cancellation insurance to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **A waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering. Contact the VENT office prior to registration for details.**

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

BAGGAGE: In case your checked luggage is delayed, it's recommended that you pack all documents, medications, a change of clothes, your binoculars, and toiletry items in a carry-on bag.

CLOTHING: The weather in Alaska in June is notoriously unpredictable and can still be quite cold. The "layered" technique is your best defense against the variable weather. We suggest you combine a thermal undershirt, shirt, sweater, and coat or jacket. Medium-weight wool or synthetic equivalent for shirts, slacks, and sweaters is ideal. Cold-weather gear is essential and should include a warm coat or down jacket, warm hat, gloves, long underwear, wool or synthetic equivalent socks, and warm shirts. A rain jacket or poncho is also essential for times when the weather turns misty. Since it can be surprisingly warm, too (sometimes in the mid-70s), you should bring some lighter field clothing as well. Temperatures around Anchorage will likely be in the 50s or 60s, while at Nome something in the 40s (or colder) would be more likely. (In 1998, our Alaska Mainland group experienced temperatures in the mid-70s in Nome!) Regardless of the temperature in Seward, the boat trip will be quite cold. At Barrow, daytime highs are often in the upper 30s to low 40s.

FOOTWEAR: Much of our birding will be done roadside with any comfortable shoe (tennis shoes or hiking shoes) appropriate. Insulated waterproof boots, N.E.O.S. Overshoes, or walking shoes are recommended foot gear for our off road walks, such as the hike for the Bristle-thighed Curlew. Barrow Extension participants should bring rubber boots or waterproof boots that extend to knee height for walking off-road on the wet tundra.

ALCOHOL: At the time of this writing, Barrow was a dry community—the alcohol laws there have changed back and forth over the years.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc.). As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag.

OTHER ITEMS: We recommend that you bring insect repellent, an alarm clock, sunglasses, sunscreen, and water bottle. Your leader will have a spotting scope and reference books, but you may wish to bring your own. You may also wish to bring seasickness medication for our boat trip to Kenai Fjords.

MISC & LAUNDRY: Most mornings, breakfast will be about 6 a.m. A few mornings will be earlier, a few later. Self-serve laundry is available at the Aurora Inn in Nome. The Coast International Inn in Anchorage has both self-service and send-out laundry service.

HEALTH: If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline bag-

gage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (877) FYI-TRIP. You can check the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

SUGGESTED READING: Our website at www.ventbird.com offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from the store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You might also want to visit such other online stores as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print and hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com or www.buteobooks.com, which specializes in ornithology books. Also see the note about the Alaska Geographic Society at the end of the reading list.

Field Guides—Birds:

- Armstrong, Robert H. *Guide to the Birds of Alaska*. 4th edition. Bothwell, WA: Alaska Northwest Books, 1995.
- Dunn, Jon. *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Fifth edition. Washington, D. C.: National Geographic Society, 2006. The recommended field guide.
- Peterson, Roger Tory. *A Field Guide to Western Birds*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1998.
- Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. New York: Alfred a. Knopf, 2000.
- Wild Bird Society of Japan. *A Field Guide to the Birds of Japan*. Japan: Kodansha International, 1991. Offers additional illustrations of the Asian strays. Difficult book to find, however!

Reference—Birds:

- Gabrielson, I. N. & F. E. Lincoln. *The Birds of Alaska*. Harrisburg PA: Stackpole, 1959. Outdated now, but has a lot of information on the life histories of Alaskan birds. Try www.abebooks.com.
- Grant, Peter J. *Gulls: A Guide to Identification*. Academic Press, 1997.
- Harrison, Peter. *Seabirds: An Identification Guide*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1991 (reprint).
- Hayman, Peter, John Marchant & Tony Prater. *Shorebirds: An Identification Guide to the Waders of the World*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1991 (reprint).
- Kessel, Brina. *Birds of the Seward Peninsula, Alaska: Their Biogeography, Seasonality and Natural History*. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1996.
- Kessel, Brina & Daniel D. Gibson. *Status and Distribution of Alaska Birds*. Studies in Avian Biology No. 1, 1978. Try www.abebooks.com.
- Zimmer, K. J. *Birding in the American West: A Handbook*. Cornell University Press, 2000.

General Background Reading:

- Freuchen, Peter. *Book of the Eskimos*. Fawcett Books, 1981. An easy-to-read classic account of Eskimo life, written in 1931. Out of Print, but appears on www.Amazon.com. Other Freuchen titles are available as well: *Arctic Adventure* (AMS Press, 1995) and *Ivalu, the Eskimo Wife* (AMS Press, 1935).
- Lopez, Barry. *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape*. Vintage Books, 2001.
- McGinniss, Joe. *Going to Extremes*. Plume, 1989 (reissue edition). Raw non-fiction about the people and places of America's last frontier.
- McPhee, John. *Coming into the Country*. Noonday Press, 1991 (reissue). Published in 1976, this chronicles a remarkable journey by kayak into the last frontier.
- Audubon* (May 1988). The entire issue is devoted to Alaska. Especially worthwhile is "Exploring Literature of the Far North," a great bibliography of interesting books on the region.

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National Geographic (October 1982). "A New Day for Alaska's Pribilofs."

Alaska Guidebooks:

Rennick, Penny (ed.) *Mammals of Alaska*. Alaska Geographic Guides. Alaska Geographic Society, 1996.

A variety of books on Alaska are available through the Alaska Geographic Society: (907) 274-0521. Alaska Geographic Online is found at www.akgeo.com. Some of these resources include *Alaskan Native Peoples*, *Mammals of Alaska*, and *National Parks and Monuments of Alaska*. On the tour a number of local guide books and pamphlets can be picked up at local gift shops, including: Louise Potter's *Wild Flowers Along Mt. McKinley Park Road* (Camp Denali Publishers, n.d.). Although out of print, Potter's book is possibly available in Denali National Park; it is also found on www.amazon.com.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, and local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its Agents can accept 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. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved 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. 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 leaders on any tour. When this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on October 8, 2008 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.