

PHILIPPINES
MARCH 2 – 23, 2009*

VISAYAN EXTENSION:
EXOTIC ENDEMICIS OF THE VISAYAN ISLANDS
MARCH 22 – 29, 2009*

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**Please note that tour dates differ slightly from the 2009 tour catalog*

The geographic location and geological history of this amazing country has conspired to create a suite of fascinating endemic species—birds, mammals, reptiles, plants and so on. Wedged between China, Japan, Malaysia and Indonesia and consisting of over 7000 islands, successive invasions from different biogeographic zones and a complex geography have seen an adaptive radiation of a myriad of species. Of the almost 600 bird species in the Philippines, an extraordinary 170 or more species are endemic. Putting it simply, with names such as Great Philippine Eagle, Scale-feathered Malkoha, Steere's Pitta, Blue Fantail and Celestial Monarch, the birds of the Philippines are without doubt some of the most exciting in the world!

This tour provides a unique opportunity to explore and bird all the most important birding areas of this vast archipelago. Each island harbours its own spectacular endemics—some showy, others skulking and shy, but all are very exciting!

We will start near Manila with an excellent introduction to the birds of Luzon at a site that holds over 50 endemics. Philippine Serpent-Eagle, White-eared Brown-dove, Black-chinned Fruit-Dove, Guaiabero, Philippine Hawk-Cuckoo, Luzon Hornbill, Scale-feathered Malkoha, Red-crested Malkoha, Spotted Wood Kingfisher, Philippine Pygmy Woodpecker, Balicassiao, Elegant Tit, Sulphur-billed Nuthatch, Striped-headed Rhabdornis, White-browed Shama, Gray-backed Tailorbird, Lemon-throated Leaf-Warbler, Yellow-bellied Whistler, Coletto, Flaming and Lovely sunbirds, and Buzzing and Striped flowerpeckers can all be found here. Elsewhere on Luzon we will especially be looking for northern Luzon endemics and many other more widespread Philippine endemics. Such birds include Philippine Hawk-Eagle, Philippine Bush-hen, Luzon Bleeding-heart, Rufous Coucal, Philippine Trogon, Luzon Hornbill, Sooty Woodpecker, Whiskered Pitta, Blackish Cuckoo-shrike, Philippine Tailorbird, Furtive Flycatcher, Blue-breasted Flycatcher, Golden-crowned Babbler, Luzon Striped-Babbler, Rabor's Wren-Babbler, White-fronted Tit and White-lored Oriole. At the famed Mount Polis, we will look for Luzon montane endemics such as Luzon Racquet-tail, Flame-breasted Fruit-Dove, Mountain Shrike, Chestnut-faced Babbler, Long-tailed Ground-warbler, Luzon Bush-Warbler, Green-backed Whistler, Metallic-winged Sunbird and Flame-crowned Flowerpecker.

The island of Palawan forms a bridge between the main Philippine islands and Borneo. The St. Paul's National Park is beautifully located between high limestone cliffs and white sandy beaches and is covered by pristine forest. It is the home of the Underground River and a World Heritage site.

We will take a picturesque boat in to the park, which is rich in birds including Tabon Scrubfowl, the stunning and almost tame Palawan Peacock-Pheasant, Blue-naped Parrot, Blue-headed Racquet-tail, Palawan Hornbill, Great Slaty Woodpecker, Hooded Pitta, Yellow-throated Leafbird, Sulphurbellied Bulbul, Palawan Tit, Ashy-headed Babbler, Falcated Ground-Babbler, White-vented Shama, Palawan Blue-Flycatcher, Blue Paradise-Flycatcher, Lovely Sunbird, and Palawan Flowerpecker. In the evening, we will go in search of the Palawan Scops-Owl and the Javan Frogmouth. In Palawan's south, we will take a boat to Rasa Island in search of the increasingly rare Philippine Cockatoo and the very restricted Mantanani Scops-Owl.

The southern island of Mindanao is home to the truly astounding Philippine Eagle and 20 or so Mindanao montane endemics. With names such as Bukidnon Woodcock, Giant Scops-Owl, Philippine Frogmouth, Yellow-breasted Fruit-Dove, Mindanao Racquet-tail, Philippine Hanging-Parrot, Blue-capped Kingfisher, Stripe-breasted Rhabdornis, Bagobo Babbler, Long-tailed Ground-warbler, Black-and-cinnamon Fantail, Buzzing Flowerpecker, Cinnamon Ibon, Red-eared Parrotfinch and White-cheeked Bullfinch, the anticipation will be at fever pitch! In the lowlands we have plenty of birding time in a vast area with many different sites. The area is rich in birds that we hope to see including Philippine Hawk-Eagle; Barred Honey-buzzard; Amethyst Brown-dove; Black-chinned Fruit-Dove; Black-faced Coucal; Silvery and Rufous-ored kingfishers; Rufous, Mindanao and Writhed hornbills; Sooty Woodpecker; Mindanao Wattled Broadbill; Steere's Pitta; Philippine Bluebird; Streaked Ground-Babbler; Pygmy and Rusty-crowned Babblers; Brown Tit-Babbler; Black-headed and Rufous-fronted Tailorbirds; Rufous-tailed Jungle-Flycatcher; Rufous Paradise-Flycatcher; Blue Fantail; Celestial and Short-crested monarchs; Metallic-winged Sunbird; and Naked-faced Spiderhunter. There are several nightbirds in the area including Chocolate and Mindanao Hawk-Owls.

An optional extension will visit the Visayan Islands in the central part of this extraordinary country. Our target birds at our first destination are White-winged Cuckoo-shrike, Flame-templed Tree Babbler, White-vented Whistler, Visayan Flowerpecker, and maybe Blue-headed Fantail. Later we'll travel to beautiful Bohol for Steere's Pitta, Visayan Broadbill, Black-crowned Babbler and Yellow-breasted Tailorbird. Mindanao Bleeding-heart is a very rare resident here and we will look for night-birds such as Philippine Hawk-Owl, Philippine Frogmouth and Philippine Nightjar. In Central Cebu there is still a tiny remaining patch of old-growth forest; it was here that the Cebu Flowerpecker was rediscovered several years back. We shall endeavour to find this very difficult bird. Other target birds are Cebu Shama and Streak-breasted Bulbul, as well as Blue-crowned Racket-tail and White-vented Whistler.

March 2-3, Days 1-2: Arrive in Manila. Most flights from the United States arrive in Manila late in the evening or in the very early morning hours. Please plan to arrive on March 3rd. Upon arrival at the airport, you will be met by a representative of our ground agent and escorted to our hotel. We recommend flying in a day early due to misconnects and weather related flight delays this time of year. **The group will assemble at 7 p.m. on the evening of the 3rd for a get-acquainted dinner.**

NIGHT: Heritage Hotel, Manila

March 4, Day 3: Candaba Marsh. At about 7:00 a.m., we will drive north to Candaba Marsh where we'll find a large variety of wetland birds including Philippine Duck, Purple Swampphen, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, White-browed Crane, plus a large variety of egrets, herons, bitterns, migratory waterfowl and many others. We will have an early picnic lunch, after which we will transfer to Subic in the mid afternoon. We will spend the afternoon in search of our first endemics, particularly Green Racquet-tail and Rufous Coucal.

NIGHT: Mountain Woods Resort Hotel, Subic

March 5, Day 4: Subic Naval Base. We will spend the day birding in the old Subic Naval Magazine and forests adjacent to the Naval Magazine. Our initial foray will be along the trail to Hill 394. Here we can expect to see a variety of endemics such as White-eared Brown-dove, Yellow-breasted Fruit-Dove, Guaiabero, Red-crested Malkoha, Luzon Hornbill, Blackish Cuckoo-shrike, Black-and-white Triller, Sooty Woodpecker, Philippine Pygmy Woodpecker, Coletto, White-lored Oriole, White-fronted Tit and many others.

NIGHT: Mountain Woods Resort Hotel, Subic

March 6, Day 5: Morning at Subic; Afternoon Banaue. We have time for some early morning birding in Subic before we depart, proceeding north to Banaue and the Cordillera mountains in Northern Luzon. Along the way, we will stop to look for such endemic birds as the Indigo-banded Kingfisher. Arriving in the early evening, we will check into the comfortable Banaue Hotel.

NIGHT: Banaue Hotel, Banaue

March 7, Day 6: Mount Polis. We have all day on Mt. Polis, so during the morning we will walk the road seeking various Luzon montane endemics such as Luzon Racquet-tail, Flame-breasted Fruit-Dove, Mountain Shrike, Chestnut-faced Babbler, Long-tailed Ground-warbler, Luzon Bush-Warbler, Green-backed Whistler, Metallic-winged Sunbird and Flame-crowned Flowerpecker. At midday, we will drive to Bay-Yo and look for the range restricted, endemic Luzon Water Redstart on the river.

NIGHT: Banaue Hotel, Banaue

March 8, Day 7: Mount Polis. We will return to Polis in the morning to look for those birds we may have missed the previous day, including a try for the Luzon Scops-Owl. We will then proceed back to Manila.

NIGHT: Heritage, Manila

March 9, Day 8: Mount Kitanglad. Early this morning we fly to Cagayan de Oro, in northern Mindanao. We will be met by our driver and after stopping for breakfast, we then proceed to Dalwangan in Bukidnon at the foothills of the Kitanglad Mountains. First we will pay our respects to the village elders and attend a small ceremony to allow us to visit the mountain. We then drive a little further up the mountain to Damitan, where we will be met by our guides and horses for luggage. We then walk up to the lodge where we will be staying. The walk is not difficult and takes around 75 minutes or longer if we stop for birding. We should arrive in time for lunch. The lodge comprises a large room upstairs where you sleep dormitory style. All bedding is provided and large tents and toilet facilities are also available. There are bathing and western-style toilet facilities. We are very well looked after by a delightful local family who cook and cater for us. We should have time for a full afternoon of birding.

NIGHT: Basic Lodge or Tents

March 10-11, Days 9-10: Mount Kitanglad We have two full days birding in search of the Philippine Eagle and twenty or so Mindanao montane endemics. The walking is not difficult and much of area is open and under cultivation. The camp is situated at around 1350 metres and at least on one day, you will walk up to 1800 metres in search of such birds as the Apo Sunbird and Apo Mynah. Our target bird will be the Philippine Eagle and we have a good chance of finding the bird here. Other birds to be found in this area include Bukidnon Woodcock; Giant Scops-Owl; Philippine Frogmouth; Philippine Swiftlet; Yellow-breasted Fruit-Dove; Mindanao Racquet-tail; Philippine Hanging-Parrot; Philippine Nightjar; Blue-capped Kingfisher; McGregor's Cuckoo-shrike; Stripe-breasted Rhabdornis; Bagobo Babbler; Rufous-headed Tailorbird; Long-tailed Ground-warbler; Black-and-Cinnamon Fantail; Mountain Shrike; Gray-hooded Sunbird; Olive-capped, Flame-crowned and Buzzing flowerpeckers; Black-masked White-eye; Cinnamon Ibon; Red-eared Parrotfinch, and White-cheeked Bullfinch.

NIGHT: Basic Lodge or Tents

March 12, Day 11: Mount Kitanglad. We depart camp promptly at 6.30a.m. and return to Damitan where the vans will be waiting for our drive today along the north coast of Mindanao to Bislig in Surigao del Sur. We plan to have lunch at Butuan City. The drive will take around nine hours, including the lunch stop. We should arrive around 5.00p.m. We will spend three days at Picop, a large logging concession. Although the forest is disappearing, it is still rich in birds and has some excellent species. We will stay in the Paper Country Inn, a small but comfortable and friendly little hotel. Upon arrival our guide, Zardo Goring, will meet us.

NIGHT: Paper Country Inn, Bislig

March 13-15, Days 12-14: Picop. We have three whole days birding in the Picop logging concession, which is vast with many different sites. We will be traveling around in a jeepney, which is able to navigate these rough roads. It will probably take 40 minutes to one and one-half hours to get to the birding sites in the morning and the vehicles will stay with us all day. The area is rich in species and birds that we hope to see include Philippine Hawk-Eagle; Barred Honey-buzzard; Amethyst Brown-dove; Black-chinned Fruit-Dove; Pink-bellied and Spotted Imperial-Pigeons; Blue-crowned Racquet-tail; Blue-backed Parrot; Black-faced Coucal; Philippine Drongo-Cuckoo; Philippine Needletail; Silvery and Rufous-ored kingfishers; Rufous, Mindanao and Writhed hornbills; Sooty Woodpecker; Mindanao Wattled Broadbill; Steere's and Red-bellied pitas; Black-bibbed Cuckoo-shrike; Philippine Leafbird; Philippine Bluebird; Yellowish Bulbul; Yellow-wattled Bulbul; Philippine Oriole; Streaked Ground-Babbler; Pygmy and Rusty-crowned babblers; Brown Tit-Babbler; Philippine Leaf-Warbler; Black-headed and Rufous-fronted tailorbirds; Rufous-tailed Jungle-Flycatcher; Rufous Paradise-Flycatcher; Little Slaty-Flycatcher; Blue Fantail; Celestial and Short-crested monarchs; Metallic-winged Sunbird; Naked-faced Spiderhunter; and Olive-backed Flowerpecker. There are several nightbirds in the area including Chocolate and Mindanao hawk-owls. One afternoon, we will return to Bislig a little earlier and visit the airport where many wetland birds can be found including Philippine Mallard, Wandering Whistling-Duck, Philippine Swamphen, Watercock, Black Bittern and Australasian Grass-Owl.

NIGHTS: Paper Country Inn, Bislig

March 16, Day 15: Fly to Manila. We have time for an early morning's birding at Picop before we have to depart for Davao Airport and take the flight for Manila.

NIGHT: Heritage, Manila

March 17, Day 16: Puerto Princesa & St. Paul's National Park. This morning we will catch a Philippine Airlines flight to Puerto Princesa in Palawan. Before setting off to St Paul's National Park, we will go to some nearby coastal areas for shorebirds and other waterbirds. Later in the morning, we proceed to Sabang and St Paul's National Park. The drive in for the last 20 miles is good for birds and we will take our time, arriving at Sabang in the late afternoon. In the evening, we will go in search of the Palawan Scops-Owl and the Javan Frogmouth.

NIGHT: Last Frontier Resort, Sabang

March 18, Day 17: St. Paul's National Park. Today we have all day in St Paul's National Park and the surrounding area around Sabang. The park is beautifully located between high limestone cliffs and white sandy beaches and is covered by pristine forest. It is home to the Underground River and a World Heritage site. To save time, we will take a picturesque boat directly to the park headquarters. Later in the morning, we will take the boat to another location, after which we'll bird back to Sabang. The area is rich in birds and we have a good chance of seeing Tabon Scrubfowl, Palawan Peacock-Pheasant, Blue-naped Parrot, Blue-headed Racquet-tail, Chestnut-breasted Malkoha, Palawan Swiftlet, Stork-billed and Ruddy kingfishers, Palawan Hornbill, Great Slaty Woodpecker, Hooded Pitta, Yellow-throated Leafbird, Sulphur-bellied Bulbul, Palawan Tit, Ashy-headed Babbler, Falcated Ground-Babbler, White-vented Shama, Palawan Blue-Flycatcher, Blue Paradise-Flycatcher,

Common Hill Mynah, Lovely Sunbird, and Palawan Flowerpecker. Later this afternoon, we will return to Puerto Princesa.

NIGHT: Legend Hotel, Puerto Princesa

March 19, Day 18: Iwahig & Rasa Island. This morning we visit the Iwahig penal colony, arriving before dawn to look for nightbirds such as Palawan Scops-Owl. Our target birds here will include Melodious Babbler and Palawan Flycatcher. At around midday, we will proceed to Narra in the south of the island. From here, we will take a boat to Rasa Island in search of the increasingly rare Philippine Cockatoo. We will land on the island in our search for Mantanani Scops-Owl.

NIGHT: La Vista Lodge, Narra

March 20, Day 19: Los Banos. Today we depart the resort early to drive back to Puerto Princesa Airport. En route, we will stop at a forested area to look for any birds we might still need. We take our flight to Manila in the late morning, then transfer to Los Banos a short drive away. Upon arrival, we will bird on the lower slopes, the Botanic Gardens and the university campus. In particular we are looking for Red-keeled and Pygmy Flowerpeckers, Indigo-banded Kingfisher, Lowland White-eye and Spotted Button-quail. Later, we proceed to the City of Springs resort for a two night stay.

NIGHT: City of Springs Resort, Los Banos

March 21, Day 20: Travel to Mount Makiling. Today we'll spend all day on Mt Makiling, which holds a great selection of Luzon birds and over 50 different endemics. Such birds include Philippine Serpent-Eagle, White-eared Brown-dove, Luzon Bleeding-heart, Black-chinned Fruit-Dove, Guaiabero, Philippine Hawk-Cuckoo, Luzon Hornbill, Scale-feathered Malkoha, Red-crested Malkoha, Philippine Hawk-Owl, Pygmy Swiftlet, Spotted Wood Kingfisher, Philippine Pygmy Woodpecker, Philippine Bulbul, Balicassiao, Elegant Tit, Sulphur-billed Nuthatch, Striped-headed Rhabdornis, White-browed Shama, Gray-backed Tailorbird, Yellow-bellied Whistler, Coletto, Flaming and Lovely sunbirds, and Buzzing and Striped flowerpeckers.

NIGHT: City of Springs Resort, Los Banos

March 22, Day 21: Mount Makiling. This morning we return to Mt Makiling, taking a vehicle up the road in order to bird the higher slopes. Birds we'll be looking for include Ashy Thrush, Blue-headed Fantail, Black-crowned Tree-Babbler, Yellowish White-eye and Lemon-throated Leaf-Warbler. Late afternoon, we return to our hotel in Manila.

NIGHT: Heritage, Manila

March 23, Day 22: Main Tour Ends. Our main tour concludes this morning. For those participants not continuing on the Visayan Extension, you may schedule your flight home from Manila airport any time today. For those participants continuing on the Visayan Extension, you will have the rest of today at leisure until dinner tonight.

VISAYAN EXTENSION: EXOTIC ENDEMICIS OF THE VISAYAN ISLANDS

March 22 – MARCH 29, 2009

March 22-23, Days 1-2: Manila to Bacolod. For those just joining us for the Visayan Extension, please plan to arrive in Manila in time for our get acquainted dinner at 7:00 p.m. on March 23rd.

NIGHT: Heritage, Manila

March 24, Day 3: Mount Kanloan. This morning, we will depart early for a flight to Bacolod, then make our way by vehicle to Mambucal, our starting point for Mt Kanloan. We start around 400m and climb slowly up to 900m, birding along the way. Our target birds are White-winged Cuckoo-shrike, Flame-templed Tree Babbler, White-vented Whistler and Visayan Flowerpecker, plus two others that will likely be split, the local races of White-browed Shama and Blue-headed Fantail. Late afternoon, we return to the hotel.

NIGHT: El Fisher, Bacolod

March 25, Day 4: Travel to Cebu; Transfer to Bohol. This morning we fly to Cebu at 8:40a.m., arriving at 9:15a.m. (subject to change). Next we transfer from the airport to the Supercat Ferry terminal, where we will board the next ferry to Tagbilaran, Bohol. We will be met by our driver, who will take us first to the Chocolate Hills Guesthouse and then to the Raja Sikatuna National Park for some late afternoon birding.

NIGHT: Chocolate Hills Guesthouse

March 26, Day 5: Rajah Sikatuna National Park, Bohol. Our vans will collect us early this morning and take us to the Rajah Sikatuna National Park (RSNP) where we will spend all day. Lunch will be brought to us from the hotel. Our target birds are Steere's Pitta, Visayan Broadbill, Black-crowned Babbler, and Yellow-breasted Tailorbird. Other birds to look for are Black-chinned Fruit-Dove, Rufous-lore Kingfisher, Streaked Ground Babbler, Black-faced Coucal, Blue Fantail, Rufous-tailed Jungle Flycatcher and Philippine Leaf-Warbler. Mindanao Bleeding-heart is a very rare resident. Either in the morning or evening, we will look for night-birds such as Philippine Hawk-Owl, Philippine Frogmouth and Philippine Nightjar.

NIGHT: Chocolate Hills Guesthouse.

March 27, Day 6: Morning in Rajah Sikatuna National Park; Afternoon Travel to Cebu. After checking out of our hotel, we'll return to RSNP for more birding in the park. Leaving around lunchtime, we proceed to the Ocean Ferry terminal to take the ferry back to Cebu.

NIGHT: Marco Polo Hotel

March 28, Day 7: Tabunan, Central Cebu. We will spend today at Tabunan in Central Cebu, where there is still a tiny remaining patch of old-growth forest. It was here that the Cebu Flowerpecker was rediscovered several years back and we shall endeavour to find this very difficult bird. Other target birds are Cebu Shama and Streak-breasted Bulbul as well as Blue-crowned Racket-tail and White-vented Whistler. We will depart late afternoon and return to our hotel in Cebu.

NIGHT: Marco Polo Hotel

March 29, Day 8: Fly from Cebu to Manila for Onward Connection to International flights. Please plan to depart from Manila no earlier than 1:00 pm today.

TOUR SIZE: Each tour part will be limited to 8 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Susan Myers

Susan Myers absolutely loves birding and traveling in Asia. As she says, “The combination of incredible and diverse wildlife, ancient and fascinating cultures, and the best food in the world is unique to this amazing continent.” For more than 15 years Susan has led tours throughout the Orient, including several tours and expeditions in the Indian subcontinent, ten tours to Vietnam, countless trips to the Malay Peninsula and Borneo, plus many other tours in India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, Taiwan, Cambodia, and the Philippines, as well as Madagascar, Irian Jaya, the Pacific islands and, of course, Australia. Susan was born in Melbourne of convict ancestry dating back to the establishment of the city, when her shoe-stealing forebear was released from Port Arthur in Tasmania and came to Melbourne to start a new life. She has been a birder and passionate naturalist since early childhood, running around barefoot in the bush chasing birds, lizards, and aquatic insects. Susan has been studying the fauna of Australia and Asia for over 20 years. Her experiences in Asia started at an early age when a short trip to Singapore cast a spell on her, never to be broken. That first sighting of a sunbird in the tropical rainforest led to the purchase of the first edition of *The Birds of South East Asia*, which she memorized before the age of thirteen! After her university studies in biological sciences, she moved to Japan where she lived for four years, learning the language and studying the natural history and culture; she has traveled there regularly ever since. A few years in Japan and extended travel and birding all over the region further strengthened her deep love of the wildlife and culture of Asia. Once a qualified nursing practitioner, Susan has also worked as a scuba dive instructor on Australia’s Great Barrier Reef in Queensland, showing international visitors this marine marvel. She loves to explore new areas, and has recently undertaken scouting trips to Myanmar, Cambodia, Taiwan, Sumatra, and Halmahera. She has published many papers and articles on ornithology and general ecology in a variety of respected magazines and scientific journals. Susan’s deep affection for and appreciation of Asia and its wildlife, her special language skills, and her understanding of the different cultures of this region ensure an extra dimension to your tour.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the Philippines tour is **\$6795** based on double occupancy from Manila. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 22, lodging as stated in the itinerary, all ground, and air or water transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leader. The fee does not include airfare from your home to Manila and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, telephone calls, laundry or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small party supplement may have to be charged.

The fee for the **Visayan Extension** is **\$2595** per person in double occupancy and includes all meals beginning with dinner on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 8, lodging, all ground, and air or water transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leader. The fee does not include airfare from your home to Manila and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, telephone calls, laundry or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for the Philippines tour is **\$680**. The single supplement for the **Visayan Extension** is **\$315**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodation, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you. **Please note singles may not be available at all locations. This has been taken into consideration in our costing.**

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 a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While VENT will do everything possible to maintain the original price of the cruise or tour, if fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to implement a fuel surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In most cases, these additional fuel costs are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers who reserve the right, in their agreements to provide services for VENT, to raise their prices due to significant changes in fuel costs.

Exchange Rate Surcharges: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person per tour part. 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: Refunds are made according to the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, the deposit less \$125 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 \$125.
Fewer than 120 days before departure date	No refund available.

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. **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. **All requests for travel assistance (air tickets and /or additional hotel nights) must be received no later than 90 days prior to departure date. Within 90 days, arrangements must be made on your own.**

CLIMATE: The Philippines is hot and humid year-round. The weather pattern across the archipelago is complex, but can be roughly divided into the dry season (September to May) and the wet season (June to September). There is little seasonal variation in most places with average highs and lows of around 31°C (87°F) and 24°C (76°F) respectively. Between December and May slightly cooler and drier conditions prevail.

CLOTHING: Bring light-weight and predominantly cotton field clothing. **Bright colors are best avoided (remember – browns, tans and greens are less likely to startle birds and mammals).** Bring a warm sweater; a hat with a good brim to keep the sun off; a waterproof poncho, jacket or the like; a small collapsible umbrella is **essential**; and comfortable boots with rugged soles – even flat trails can become slippery when wet. You should also have relatively thick socks to cushion your feet during long walks. A dressier outfit such as a sport coat, dress or pant suit may be useful at the city hotels.

Laundry service will be available at most of the hotels where we stay in the Philippines. A small fold up umbrella is strongly recommended rather than a rain jacket.

SPECIAL NOTE: Leeches can at times be a nuisance, especially in the lowlands. While spraying your socks and trousers with bug-juice is some help, a pair of leech-socks is much more effective. A website that sells anti-leech socks is www.mosquitohammock.com. They are based in Philadelphia.

CURRENCY: Participants are also advised to carry sufficient funds in low denomination American Express US dollar travelers' checks and/or US dollar cash - the latter can be very useful in an emergency.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure is required for United States citizens to enter the Philippines. U.S. citizens are not required to have a visa for stays of less than 90 days. Non-United States citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

EQUIPMENT: Please bring along a pair of binoculars in good condition. Your tour leader will be carrying a spotting scope if circumstances provide that we might need it. You should bring all the camera equipment that you will need, as there will be many excellent photographic opportunities.

A small day pack (either waterproofed or with a strong plastic bag inside) is useful for carrying excess clothing, camera equipment, toiletries, food, and water. However, we will have regular access to our transport, which will be attended by a driver. Water bottles are important if you like to carry a regular supply of water. Drinks may be purchased from automatic dispensing machines virtually anywhere.

Other useful items include:

1. Handy wipes and paper tissues are especially useful. All participants should carry sufficient for their personal needs for the entire tour.
2. Spare glasses or contact lenses.
3. A large handkerchief for use at bathrooms as paper towels are often not provided.
4. Umbrella - the collapsible type is easy to carry and useful both against rain and sun.

LUGGAGE: When traveling within the Philippines, officially one piece of checked luggage weighing no more than 44 pounds is allowed free of charge. In addition you are allowed one piece of carry-on luggage and whatever you carry over your arm or in your hands (i.e. coat, book, purse, umbrella etc.).

MISC: Departure Tax – included in the cost of your air ticket

Electricity – the Philippines uses 220 volts, 60 Hz, AC. European and Japanese style plugs are used.

Language – Tagalog and English are the official national languages.

Time – the Philippines is 15 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time.

Snacks- it is advisable to bring granola-type bars, dried fruit or other snacks. Convenience stores are not common but they stock many snacks and other products that you will be familiar with (and some not so familiar).

Flashlight or headlamp – for night walking or blackouts.

HEALTH: In smaller towns and rural areas, assume the water is unsafe and stick with bottled or boiled drinks. Sanitation throughout the Philippines is relatively very good compared to most tropical areas of the world. Most hot, freshly cooked food should be safe, but peel fresh fruit and raw vegetables before eating, make sure meat is cooked thoroughly, and avoid local dairy products. Be sure to bring all necessary prescription drugs, as well as aspirin, antacids, and a supply of antihistamines should you develop a cold.

No vaccinations are required; however cholera, typhoid and tetanus should be current. Gamma globulin may be taken to prevent hepatitis. Malaria is present, including the chloroquine-resistant strain. In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 877-FYI-TRIP (394-8747) or you can check their 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).

Insects such as mosquitoes, sand-flies and leeches can be a problem. This is best dealt with by wearing long-sleeved shirts of sufficient thickness and density of weave that the "bugs" cannot bite through, and long trousers tucked into long socks. We also recommend CUTTER'S LOTION in the squeeze bottle or pump-style OFF. 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 baggage 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.

All participants should bring a good quantity of all their medical/pharmaceutical supplies, as these will be very difficult to obtain anywhere on the tour.

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. We also recommend Andrew Isles bookstore for the Asia-Pacific region at <http://www.andrewisles.com/AndrewIsles/>. Andrew can also often obtain difficult to find and out of print books.

* **A Guide to the Birds of the Philippines** by Robert Kennedy, Pedro C Gonzales, Edward Dickinson, Hector Miranda and T Fisher. 2000. Oxford University Press – this is the best bird field guide for the area.

Philippine Birds by JE DuPont. 1971. Delaware Museum of Natural History – not surprisingly, a little out of date.

A Photographic Guide to the Birds of Southeast Asia including the Philippines and Borneo by Morton Strange. 2003. Christopher Helm – a good reference but photographs have their limitations.

For a more exhaustive bibliography see selections in the Apa and Lonely Planet Guides.

If participants have difficulty obtaining any titles they may wish to contact the Natural History Book Service which has one of the most comprehensive collections of books on natural history: 2 Wills Road, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 5XN U.K. Phone: 011-44-1803865913, Fax: 011-44-1803865280.

MAPS: Philippines - 1:1,500,000, Nelles series

* Recommended to bring on tour.

TIPPING: As noted in our itineraries, 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.

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