

SUMMER ARIZONA

JULY 26 – AUGUST 2, 2009*

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Please note that tour dates differ slightly from the 2009 catalog

In the birding world, Southeast Arizona and hummingbirds are nearly synonymous! An incredible fifteen species are possible in late summer in this small corner of the state and many of them can be found nowhere else in the United States. Often a row of feeders are buzzing with so many individuals that it is hard to decide where to look first. For eastern birders accustomed to one species of hummingbird, it can be a mind-boggling experience, and even most western states are home to only two or three varieties. In Southeast Arizona, however, due to a proximity to both the northern end of the Sierra Madre Occidental and the southern end of the Rocky Mountain chain, there is a diversity of hummingbirds unmatched anywhere else in the country.

At least eight hummingbird species found here are regular breeders: Black-chinned, Costa's, Broad-tailed, Anna's, Broad-billed, Violet-crowned, Blue-throated, and Magnificent. Three others occur, mainly as late summer/early fall migrants: Rufous, Allen's (rare), and Calliope. The remaining four—Lucifer, Berylline, White-eared, and Plain-capped Starthroat—occur as post-breeding vagrants from Mexico or very local nesters. Of these four, all but the starthroat typically occur on an annual basis, and late July/early August is the prime time to search for these rarities. Arizona is truly a mecca for first-hand study of hummingbird identification, ecology, range, and other related topics.

In addition to the hummingbirds, there are other rich birding rewards to be found on this tour. We will spend time searching for most of the specialty birds of southeastern Arizona including Elegant Trogon; Whiskered Screech-Owl; Arizona Woodpecker; Greater Pewee; Buff-breasted, Dusky-capped, and Sulphur-bellied flycatchers; Tropical and Thick-billed kingbirds; Mexican Chickadee; Bridled Titmouse; Olive and Red-faced warblers; Painted Redstart; Rufous-winged Sparrow; Yellow-eyed Junco; Varied Bunting; and many more. We will be working our way through the best of Southeast Arizona's birding hotspots, and, although we won't have time to search out all of the regional specialties (like some of the longer Arizona tours can), we invariably find a high proportion of them. North American rarities are a good possibility too, and examples from recent tours include Flame-colored Tanager (2004, 2006-2008), Rufous-capped Warbler (2006), Aztec Thrush (2006), Black-capped Gnatcatcher (2004-2007), Rose-throated Becard (2005), and Short-tailed Hawk (2002-2004) – all very rare birds.

Other more widespread birds of the Southwest that we have a chance to encounter include Zone-tailed and Gray hawks; Montezuma and Scaled quail; Common Ground-Dove; Greater Roadrunner; Burrowing Owl; Lesser Nighthawk; White-throated Swift; Gila and Ladder-backed woodpeckers; Gilded Flicker; Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet; Cordilleran Flycatcher; Vermilion Flycatcher; Ash-throated and Brown-crested flycatchers; Cassin's and Western kingbirds; Bell's, Plumbeous and Hutton's vireos; Western Scrub-Jay; Mexican Jay; Chihuahuan Raven; Juniper Titmouse; Verdin; Pygmy Nuthatch; Cactus, Rock and Canyon wrens; Black-tailed Gnatcatcher; Bendire's

and Crissal thrashers; Phainopepla; Lucy's, Black-throated Gray, and Grace's warblers; Western and Hepatic tanagers; Canyon and Abert's towhees; Cassin's, Botteri's, Rufous-crowned, Black-chinned, and Black-throated sparrows; Pyrrhuloxia; Bronzed Cowbird; Hooded and Scott's orioles; and Lesser Goldfinch.

July 26, Day 1: Arrival in Tucson; Sonoran Desert Museum. Participants should plan to arrive in Tucson today no later than 1:00 p.m. Upon arrival you may call the hotel for complimentary transportation from the airport to the hotel, where a room will be reserved in your name. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 2:00 p.m. for an afternoon excursion to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. Supported entirely by a private foundation, this living museum has an excellent collection of native plants and animals of the southwestern deserts—including two walk-through bird aviaries that feature many of the birds that we will be seeking on this tour.

In addition, the grounds of the museum attract a variety of common desert species that we might encounter including Gambel's Quail, Gila Woodpecker, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Verdin, Curve-billed Thrasher, Cactus Wren, Hooded Oriole, and a saguaro cactus nesting form of Purple Martin. Plantings of native flowers outside the hummingbird exhibit often draw wild hummers as well, with the most likely being Black-chinned, Rufous, or a lingering Costa's. Late afternoon birding nearby will emphasize such desert species as Gilded Flicker, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, and Pyrrhuloxia.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn Airport, Tucson

July 27, Day 2: Madera Canyon. We depart Tucson this morning, heading toward the Santa Rita Mountains. We'll be making a stop or two along the way in the lower-elevation grasslands and scrub—including some good habitat for Botteri's, Cassin's, and Rufous-winged sparrows; Varied Bunting; Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet; Ash-throated Flycatcher; Bell's Vireo; Blue Grosbeak; and others. Eventually we'll reach the famous Madera Canyon. Feeders hanging outside the Santa Rita Lodge and other canyon lodges often bustle with bird activity; Broad-billed, Black-chinned, and the incredible Magnificent hummingbirds are common breeding species in the canyon, while migrant Rufous, Anna's, and Broad-tailed hummingbirds are likely as well. In addition to hummingbirds, we'll likely find a variety of other species in the vicinity of the feeders. Regular visitors include Acorn Woodpecker, Mexican Jay, Bridled Titmouse, and Black-headed Grosbeak, while Brown-crested and Sulphur-bellied flycatchers nest in the adjacent sycamores and oak-juniper woods. As the day progresses, we will explore other parts of Madera Canyon and adjacent habitats. Depending on the day's events, we may bird higher in the canyon, return to the scrub and grasslands, or even strike out after some nearby rarity if one is reported. Some of the many exciting bird possibilities include Band-tailed Pigeon, Elegant Trogon, Arizona Woodpecker, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Painted Redstart, Black-throated Gray Warbler, and Hepatic Tanager.

NIGHT: Quality Inn, Green Valley

July 28, Day 3: Nogales and Patagonia to Sierra Vista. Today takes us south and east along the Santa Cruz River drainage toward the Nogales area. Then we'll visit Patagonia and vicinity, where the spectacular Violet-crowned Hummingbird is a reliable sight. Each summer, the sycamore and cottonwood-lined banks of Sonoita Creek are host to a few nesting pairs of this species (the rarest of the annually nesting hummingbirds). In addition to the Violet-crowned, the Patagonia feeders are often swarming with birds, including an abundance of Black-chinned, Anna's, Rufous, and possibly Costa's, Calliope, and others. We will also be on the lookout today for a number of other specialty birds and migrants including Gray Hawk, Vermilion Flycatcher, Black Phoebe, Rose-throated Becard (rare), Lucy's Warbler, Tropical and Thick-billed kingbirds, Varied Bunting, Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Black Vulture, Phainopepla, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Canyon Wren, White-throated Swift, and Yellow-breasted Chat.

After lunch we will head eastward to the Huachuca Mountains. The canyons here—particularly Miller, Ash, and Ramsey—are now considered the best hummingbird sites of the region. In addition to hummingbirds, endangered plants and reptiles are found here on the steep, oak-clad slopes. The late afternoon will be spent watching the feeders at one or another of these spots, where Broad-billed, Blue-throated, Magnificent, Black-chinned,

Anna's, Rufous, and Broad-tailed should all be in evidence. In recent years, three very rare U.S. nesters, White-eared, Berylline, and Lucifer hummingbirds, have graced these feeders with some regularity. Although it is impossible to predict their occurrence in a given year, this will be our most likely area to find them.

NIGHT: Best Western Mission Inn, Sierra Vista

July 29, Day 4: Huachuca Mountains and Canyons. We have two nights in Sierra Vista to do justice to the many potential birding spots in the Huachuca Mountains and canyons. Today offers a number of options, depending on our success to this point. We may spend more time at the feeders in Miller or other canyons in search of other hummer species or we may attempt to turn up some of the other Southeast Arizona specialties in the Huachucas by venturing to nearby Garden, Sawmill, or Carr canyons. Our efforts in these areas might turn up Elegant Trogon; Arizona Woodpecker; Montezuma Quail; Buff-breasted Flycatcher; Greater Pewee; Olive, Grace's or Red-faced warblers; and Hepatic Tanager. Time permitting, we will likely do some evening owling in a nearby canyon, primarily to look for Western and Whiskered screech-owls.

NOTE: the latest policy for entry into Fort Huachuca requires each person in the group to show some sort of legal photo identification. In addition, they have made entry into the Fort for non-US citizens all but impossible. While this policy may change before the start of the tour, it should be noted that citizens of countries outside the United States may not be able to enter the Fort should we choose to bird there.

NIGHT: Best Western Mission Inn, Sierra Vista

July 30, Day 5: Sierra Vista to Chiricahua Mountains. Today we leave the Huachucas and head for the majestic Chiricahua Mountains. One route we might choose would take us east through Tombstone, birding across the desert and grassland country en route to the forested Chiricahuas. Open country species may include Scaled Quail, Bendire's or Crissal thrashers, Say's Phoebe, sparrows, orioles, flycatchers, hawks, and others. As the road begins to ascend Pinery Canyon in the Chiricahuas, a new range of potential species arises for the day, from Montezuma Quail to Red-faced and Olive warblers and from Hepatic Tanager and Mexican Chickadee to Zone-tailed Hawk. This is an area we will return to in the ensuing days. When we arrive in Portal at our lodging for the next two nights, we are again in the midst of some of the best hummingbird watching Arizona has to offer.

NIGHTS: Portal Peak Lodge, Portal

July 31-August 1, Days 6-7: Portal and the Chiricahua Mountains; Return to Tucson. We will have two full days to enjoy this incredible area. Unmatched in either birds or scenery, Cave Creek Canyon will provide a fitting conclusion to our tour. Cave Creek is home to many highly-sought species, including the incomparable Elegant Trogon, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Hutton's and Plumbeous vireos, and Painted Redstart. The juniper habitat at mid-elevation hosts Black-chinned and Lark sparrows, Rock Wren, Juniper Titmouse, Western Scrub-Jay, and other species. Returning to higher elevations, we will again be in search of Mexican Chickadee; Olive, Grace's, and Red-faced warblers; Greater Pewee; and others. An optional night drive could produce a Common Poorwill, owls, or some interesting mammals or reptiles.

By mid-afternoon on Day 7, we will head toward Tucson, stopping en route at Willcox to check for migrant shorebirds (possibilities include American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Baird's Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, and more). A pond in the middle of the desert is a magnet for migrant birds and there's no telling what rarity might drop in. In 2006 a Red Knot was a pleasant surprise, and quite rare in this part of the world. At tonight's farewell dinner, we will recap a superb week of birding amid Arizona's natural wonders

NIGHTS: Portal Peak Lodge, Portal (July 31) Hampton Inn Tucson Airport (August 1)

August 2, Day 8: Departure for Home. Tour participants may plan to depart for home at any time today.

TOUR LEADER: Brennan Mulrooney

Brennan Mulrooney was born and raised in San Diego, California. Growing up, his heart and mind were captured by the ocean. He split his summer days between helping out behind the scenes at southern California's leading aquarium and working on sport fishing vessels off the coast. As a wildlife and fisheries biology major at UC Davis, he developed his fascination with birds and love of birding while taking a required ornithology course. Since graduating from UC Davis, Brennan has traveled throughout the United States working on widespread ornithological field studies. His work has taken him from the mountains of northern California to the Salton Sea in southern California, and from Cape May, New Jersey to Key Largo, Florida. Currently Brennan lives in San Diego with his wife Brynne and their son Declan. Participants often comment that Brennan's sharp eyes, sharper wit, and easygoing attitude make it a pleasure to bird with him.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 7 participants.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$2250** per person in double occupancy. The fee includes all food from dinner on Day 1 to dinner on Day 7, all lodging for seven nights during the tour, ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. The tour fee does not include airfare from your home to Tucson and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$350**. 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.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$300** per person. 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 **\$150** per person is refundable. If cancellation is made between 120 and 90 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 90 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 \$150.
Between 120 and 90 days before departure	No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance will be refunded.
Fewer than 90 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. **Waivers for pre-existing conditions are 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.

WEATHER: Summer is the “monsoon” season in Southeastern Arizona. Frequent afternoon and evening thundershowers considerably ameliorate the desert heat and bring about a resurgence of intense biological activity. This is the famous “second spring” in Arizona when many birds are in full song and breeding activity is visible at every hand. The tour begins and ends at relatively low elevations in Tucson, but most of the trip is spent in the mountain canyons at medium elevations. Expect daytime temperatures in the high 90s to low 100s in Tucson and in the low 80s in the mountains. We will get an early start as a rule, and when possible take a break in the heat of the afternoon. If the monsoon is late in developing it can be very dry, so skin lotion and lip balm are very useful. We will be spending a lot of time above 5000 feet in elevation, getting as high as 8500 feet. If storms hit at these high elevations it will cool off dramatically and may get down into the 60s or lower.

CLOTHING: The temperate climate of Arizona’s mountains promises warm days and cool nights. Lightweight clothing, hat, and sunscreen are recommended for mid-day, but long-sleeved shirts and sweaters are appropriate for mountain evenings. Shorts will be okay for some outings, but long pants might be better for some brushy areas. Light hiking boots are highly recommended, and one should be prepared for rain showers with a raincoat or travel umbrella. Informal dress is the rule throughout.

LAUNDRY STOPS: Quality Inn Green Valley and Best Western in Sierra Vista.

INSECT PROTECTION: The rains will bring a few mosquitoes and chiggers. A small container of any good repellent should suffice. Another effective method is to treat your clothing with permethrin (such as Sawyer’s brand) or buy pretreated clothing (such as Buzz Off from Ex Officio).

A Note About Chiggers: This tour visits areas where chiggers are known to occur. Chiggers are tiny parasitic mites found in most warm weather areas of the southern United States and the world’s tropics. They are especially numerous in grassy areas, where, in the immature stage, they attach themselves to other animals or humans who make contact with the grass as they pass by. Chiggers do not suck blood and the majority of the world’s species do not carry disease. They do feed on bodily fluids, however, through a process in which a digestive enzyme is produced by the chigger which essentially liquefies the skin around the area where the chigger is attached. The chigger is not usually attached to the skin for more than a few hours before it either falls off or is knocked off. Our bodies respond by producing a hardened area as a defense against the chigger’s digestive enzyme. Though the chigger may be long gone, it is the presence of the hardened area, and the body’s natural process of reabsorbing it that typically causes intense itching, often lasting for a week or more. Chiggers like to attach themselves to areas of thin skin, like around the ankles, beltline, undergarment lines, knees, and elbows.

Chiggers can be avoided by following these procedures:

- Avoid walking, or standing in particular, in areas dominated by grass. These areas are where one is most likely to encounter chiggers.
- Tuck your pants into your socks to avoid direct skin-to-grass contact. Chiggers can find their way through clothing, but this is a standard and effective prevention technique commonly employed by many.

- Apply a cream-style insect repellent, such as “Cutters” to your body from the waist down BEFORE putting on your clothing.
- Spray your pants and socks with a spray repellent such as “Cutters” or “Off.” Repellants with high concentrations of DEET (70-100%) are most effective. You do not need to apply these to your skin, only to clothing. (Be careful as DEET will damage plastics and lens coatings). Repel Permanone is an odorless aerosol insecticide that offers perhaps the best defense against chiggers. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online. It should only be applied to clothes and allowed to dry before you dress. Never apply Permanone directly to the skin. Permethrin is known to be a highly toxic chemical to insects. It is the active ingredient in Permanone, but is present in a small amount (0.5%).
- Powdered sulfur applied to waist, bottoms of pants, sock and boots is also effective at repelling chiggers. However, be warned that clothes will retain the sulfur odor for several washings.
- Shower at the end of each day in the field. Use a washcloth to vigorously rub your legs, feet, and ankles.

By following these methods, you should be able to avoid all chigger bites, as well as tick bites. If, however, you are bitten by chiggers anyway, you can reduce or eliminate the symptoms by applying benzocaine or hydrocortisone creams, calamine lotion, After Bite, or any number of anti-itch products.

BAGGAGE: You should limit your luggage to one medium-sized soft-sided bag and one carry-on bag per person. Please avoid large hard suitcases if possible, as van space is limited.

EXTRAS: Every person should bring an alarm clock, as there may be no wake-up service at some of the places where we’ll be staying. We also recommend a small canteen or water bottle for carrying water in the field. A small flashlight or headlamp will be useful for optional night outings. Your tour leaders will have a spotting scope with them. If you have one and would like to bring it, please feel free to do so. **A picture ID is necessary for admittance into Fort Huachuca.**

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 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.

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).

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 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.

Please note: Once in Arizona, many regional references on the fauna and flora of the region are available at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum gift shop (www.desertmuseum.org) and the Mile Hi Bookstore in Ramsey Canyon (www.tncarizona.org).

BIRD FIELD GUIDES:

Howell, Steve N.G. *Hummingbirds of North America: The Photographic Guide*. New York: Natural World/Academic Press, 2002. The best single guide to North American hummingbirds.

Kaufman, Kenn. *Advanced Birding*. Peterson Field Guide Series. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999.

Kaufman, Kenn. *Kaufman Field Guide to Birds of North America*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005. The best available *photographic* field guide to the birds of North America.

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Guide to Western Birds*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000.

National Geographic. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Fifth Edition. Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society, 2006.

Williamson, Sheri L. *A Field Guide to Hummingbirds of North America*. Peterson Field Guide Series. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002. Another excellent resource for hummer ID.

OTHER BIRDING:

Blake, Clark (editor). *Finding Birds in Southeast Arizona*. Tucson: Tucson Audubon Society, 2007. This is an excellent, up-to-date resource for status and distribution of birds in Southeast Arizona as well as where to find them.

Ehrlich, Paul R. Et al. *The Birder's Handbook: A Field Guide to the Natural History of North American Birds*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988.

Mlodinow, Steven G. and Michael O'Brien. *America's 100 Most Wanted Birds*. Helena, Montana: Falcon, 1996.

Peterson, Roger T. and James Fisher. *Wild America: The Record of a 30,000 Mile Journey*. Mariner Books, 1997 (originally published in 1975). See especially the chapter "Chiricahuas: Islands in the Sky."

Zimmer, Kevin J. *Birding in the American West: A Handbook*. Ithaca: Comstock/Cornell University Press, 2000. Teaches you how to sort out the tough species identification comparisons.

OTHER NATURAL HISTORY:

Bowers, Bowers, and Kaufman. *Mammals of North America*. Kaufman Focus Guides. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004.

Brock, Jim P. and Kenn Kaufman. *Field Guide to Butterflies of North America*. Houghton Mifflin Co, 2006.

Epple, Anne Orth and Lewis E. Epple. *A Field Guide to the Plants of Arizona*. Helena, Montana: Falcon, 1997 (reprint ed.).

Kricher, John C. and Gordon Morrison. *A Field Guide to the Ecology of Western Forests* (Peterson Field Guides). Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993.

Olin, George. *House in the Sun: A Natural History of the Sonoran Desert*. Tucson: Southwest Parks and Monuments Association, 2000 (2nd ed.).

Petrides, George A. and Olivia. *Western Trees*. Second Edition. Peterson Field Guide Series. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

Stebbins, Robert C. *Western Reptiles and Amphibians*. (Peterson Field Guides). Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003 (3rd reprint ed.).

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.

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 9, 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.