

BELIZE: RELAXED AND EASY

MARCH 21-28, 2010

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This tour offers an exciting introduction to natural history exploration in the Neotropics. The two elements of this tour are very different and together sample much of this charming country's diverse habitats. In both areas, our accommodations are very comfortable and our schedule flexible enough to accommodate those who wish to take time away from the group. Our "Relaxed & Easy" style is appropriate for participants who want a slower paced experience, with lighter physical activity and more ample siesta time than other tours.

The first element of our tour will explore the lagoons, pine forest, and savannah that dominate much of northeastern Belize. We'll begin at Crooked Tree, where a boat ride through the lagoon may produce such exciting birds as Boat-billed and Agami herons, Jabiru, Black-collared Hawk, Gray-necked Wood-Rail, and American Pygmy-Kingfisher. Nearby pine forest and cashew orchards host a long list of birds, including the stunning Yucatan Jay, along with Yellow-lored Parrot, Canivet's Emerald, Red-vented Woodpecker, and Yucatan Flycatcher. We'll also tour the magnificent Maya ruins of Altun Ha, best known for the large jade head discovered there.

A scenic drive through Mennonite farm country will take us to Lamanai Outpost Lodge, situated on a bluff above the tranquil New River Lagoon, and adjacent to another spectacular Maya ruin. Here we will experience some of the finest forest birding in Belize. The diversity of birds here is fabulous, with almost 400 species recorded within a three-mile radius of the lodge. We should have regular encounters with such interesting and dazzling species as Violaceous and Slaty-tailed trogons, White-whiskered Puffbird, Keel-billed Toucan, Ivory-billed Woodcreeper, and Barred Antshrike. We'll also seek such specialties as Tody Motmot and Black-throated Shrike-Tanager. A night excursion to look for owls and nightjars will add an exciting dimension to our experience here.

March 21, Day 1: Arrivals in Belize City. Because travel delays are frequent in March and this is a busy time of year for travel, we suggest that those of you with flexible schedules consider arriving in Belize City a day early. Upon arrival in Belize City, you will be met by our ground operator or one of our leaders and transferred to our comfortable hotel. The trip begins with a get-acquainted meeting at 5:30 p.m. this evening in the center courtyard of the Biltmore Plaza Hotel. Dinner will follow.

NIGHT: Best Western Biltmore Plaza Hotel

March 22, Day 2: Altun Ha to Crooked Tree. We'll spend our first day exploring the towering Maya ruins of Altun Ha, occupied from around 10,000 B.C. to 900 A.D. In addition to touring the ruins, we'll scan the sky for soaring King Vultures and watch the treetops for a variety of interesting birds such as Olive-throated Parakeet, Boat-billed Flycatcher, Masked Tityra, Red-legged Honeycreeper, and Black-cowled Oriole. Our relaxing lunch at nearby Mayan Wells will feature authentic Belezan cuisine in a birdy environment. In the afternoon we'll make our way to Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. Established in 1984 with the cooperation of the Belize Audubon Society, the government and local villagers, the sanctuary is a 16,000-acre network of lagoons, swamps, pine-savanna, and mango and cashew orchards surrounding the village of Crooked Tree. From our

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lodge overlooking Crooked Tree Lagoon, we should see a wide spectrum of birds including Limpkin, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Snail Kite, Great Black-Hawk, and Northern Jacana.

NIGHT: Bird's Eye View Lodge

March 23, Day 3: Crooked Tree. We'll spend today at Crooked Tree, looking especially for some Yucatan specialties such as Black-throated Bobwhite, Yellow-lored Parrot, Yucatan Woodpecker, Yucatan Flycatcher, and Yucatan Jay. In this birdy area, we should expect to be constantly entertained by various parrots, flycatchers, warblers, tanagers, and other species. After lunch we'll take a relaxing boat ride through forest-edged lagoons in search of Jabiru, Agami and Boat-billed herons, Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Black-collared Hawk, Sungrebe, and American Pygmy-Kingfisher. Water levels in Crooked Tree Lagoon are highly variable, but we try to time our visit to coincide with the reduced water levels that tend to concentrate shorebirds, herons, kingfishers, and other species.

NIGHT: Bird's Eye View Lodge

March 24, Day 4: Crooked Tree to Lamanai. After a final morning at Crooked Tree, we'll travel to Lamanai (meaning "submerged crocodile"), another fabulous Mayan ruin situated above New River Lagoon. En route, we'll pass through Mennonite farm country where we may find species such as Aplomado Falcon, White-tailed Kite, Plain-breasted Ground-Dove, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, and Eastern Meadowlark.

NIGHT: Lamanai Outpost Lodge

March 25-27, Days 5-7: Lamanai. We'll spend the next three days exploring the trails, clearings, and ruins at Lamanai. Here, we'll experience some of the finest tropical forest birding in Belize. A stroll through forest trails here may produce Blue Ground-Dove; Long-billed and Stripe-throated hermits; Black-headed, Violaceous, Collared, and Slaty-tailed Trogons; White-whiskered Puffbird; Keel-billed Toucan; Chestnut-colored Woodpecker; Tawny-winged and Ivory-billed woodcreepers; Barred Antshrike; Northern Bentbill; a long list of wintering and migrant warblers; Black-throated Shrike-Tanager; Red-crowned Ant-Tanager; and Yellow-throated and Olive-backed euphonias. Beyond birds, there are always other interesting creatures here such as howler monkeys, agoutis, coatis, lizards, and a host of dazzling butterflies. For those who wish, one evening we'll do a night walk, or possibly a night pontoon cruise, to search for interesting nocturnal species. This gives us the opportunity to see some night birds such as Northern Potoo, Yucatan Nightjar, Common Pauraque, and Mottled Owl, and is also the best chance we'll have to see other secretive creatures, like Morelet's crocodile, or even a jaguar.

Our days will usually be broken up into a series of short outings with a midday or afternoon siesta. For those who wish to have more time away from the group, there will be ample opportunity to take a longer siesta, walk a trail on your own, or go canoeing or fishing with a local guide.

NIGHTS: Lamanai Outpost Lodge

March 28, Day 8: Lamanai to Belize City; Departures Home. After a final early morning at Lamanai, we'll transfer back to Belize City, where the tour concludes with departures home. Please do not schedule a departure flight for earlier than 1:00 p.m. Upon arrival at the Belize airport, you will have sufficient time to check in for your return flights to the U.S.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least **four months** prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 8 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Michael O'Brien

Michael O'Brien is a freelance artist, author, and environmental consultant living in Cape May, New Jersey. He has traveled extensively throughout North and Central America and has a passionate interest in migration, bird vocalizations, and field identification. At home in Cape May, Michael serves as an Associate Naturalist with Cape May Bird Observatory for whom he conducts numerous workshops, writes a monthly ID column and photo quiz (see www.birdcapemay.org), and, for many years, conducted a fall songbird migration count. He is co-author of *The Shorebird Guide*, *Flight Calls of Migratory Birds*, and *America's 100 Most Wanted Birds*. His illustrations have been widely published in books and field guides, including the *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America* and the new *Peterson Field Guide to Birds of North America*. Michael also has an intense interest in butterflies and leads several "Birds & Butterflies" tours with his wife, Louise Zemaitis.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for Belize: Relaxed & Easy is **\$3,195** per person in double occupancy from Belize City. This includes all meals beginning with dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8, lodging, ground transportation during the tour and guide services provided by the tour leaders. Quoted fees do not include airfare from your home to Belize City and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone 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 Belize: Relaxed & Easy tour is **\$475**. 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 **\$500** 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.

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.

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 & MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE: A brochure and application form 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 as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. VENT recommends Travel Insured International as our preferred insurance provider.** 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.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. **Contact Travel Insured International prior to registration for details.** Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than Travel Insured International, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Please read your itinerary carefully to see whether or not your tour/cruise requires MANDATORY Medical Insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation/repatriation during the trip. This coverage is included in the Worldwide Trip Protector plan offered by Travel Insured International. If you do not choose to purchase the insurance through Travel Insured International, you will need to do so through another insurance provider. A good website for information and acquisition of Emergency Evacuation/repatriation insurance is: www.insuremytrip.com.

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.

RELAXED AND EASY TOUR INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS: Relaxed & Easy (R&E) tours are similar to “regular” VENT tours, but set to a slower pace, with somewhat fewer hours in the field and lighter physical activity. They are ideal for participants who prefer a somewhat later start in the morning, a little lengthier afternoon break, and a shorter afternoon outing. Walking is limited to short walks of usually not more than a half mile one-way, avoiding difficult terrain.

Designed as a Relaxed & Easy tour, this trip will require a low level of physical activity from participants, with most birding being in open area situations and on level ground. A typical day will begin with breakfast at approximately 7:00 a.m., followed by birding until about noon. We will attempt to have lunch every day between 12:00 and 1:00, followed by an afternoon break. Be advised that an afternoon break may not be possible every day. We will resume birding for a couple of hours in the late afternoon. On most days we will attempt to provide forty-five minutes to an hour of down time before dinner. Such trips will similarly not require any lengthy walks. Most walks will be for short distances, usually less than a quarter mile, and avoid difficult terrain.

Relaxed & Easy (R&E) refers only to the slower pace of a tour, not to a participant’s birding skills or ability. Accordingly, birders of all levels of ability are welcome, as they are on typical VENT tours; R&E tours should not be mistaken as tours for beginning birders.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours. We will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements for you.

CLIMATE: We are often asked about the weather in Belize and how it differs throughout the year. The dry season runs from December through May, but showers can happen anytime in this region of lush, tropical moist forest. The average temperatures from December through March run from 70 degrees to the low 80s. The midday weather is often hot and humid (80-90 degrees), with slightly cooler evenings (each cabaña has a ceiling fan). The March trip is usually very dry and averages warmer temperatures than earlier trips. Highest rainfall is usually in June.

OTHER CONDITIONS: There will be several leisurely bird walks at Lamanai, where the paths are wide and usually flat. None of the walking will be particularly strenuous. Elevation changes will vary from sea level to less than 1,000 feet elevation.

CLOTHING: Light field clothing and casual attire are suitable for this tour. Bring several pairs of long pants and comfortable shirts. Long-sleeved shirts are useful for protection from the sun and occasional biting insects. Pre-treating field pants and socks with repellent can provide extra protection from chiggers. A good hat or cap, plus rain gear and/or an umbrella are essential. Be sure to have a pair of comfortable walking shoes or hiking boots, plus a second pair of footwear such as tennis shoes or calf-high rubber boots (if it rains the trails can be muddy, especially from June through January). A light sweater and/or jacket are also nice for the occasional cool, damp mornings, evenings and overcast days. Laundry service is available on a charge-per-item basis at Lamanai. Items dropped off in the morning at the front desk are usually returned late the same afternoon. If you plan to wash your clothes in your room, please be aware of the fact that drip-drying (even of quick drying nylon items) may take a couple of days with the frequently high humidity.

CURRENCY: \$1USD equals \$2 Belizean Dollars. The exchange rate is subject to change, but has been constant for some years. Both currencies have identical denominations. So if you plan to spend any money in Belize, make sure you understand whether the price is being quoted in Belizean or USD. It is not necessary to exchange currency for this tour, since US dollars are accepted everywhere.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Belize is required. Visas are not required for entry by United States citizens; however, a tourist card will be issued on your flight. Non-United States citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions. If your passport is stamped by the immigration officials upon entry, you must be sure to get an exit stamp before returning to the United States.

ELECTRICITY: Electricity is available at both Lamanai and Crooked Tree 24 hours a day. Wall outlets are provided in each cabaña and electrical appliances may therefore be used at any time day or night. No adapter is needed.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good condition, along with a belt pack or day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film or digital storage media, 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. Your leader will have a spotting scope; but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. You should also bring sunglasses and sunscreen, a small flashlight or headlamp, a small folding stool, battery-operated alarm clock, water bottle, camera, film or digital storage media and spare batteries, small daypack, and your favorite snacks. We highly recommend that you bring a collapsible umbrella, and also carry it with you on longer walks. Personal items like film or digital media, sun lotion, batteries, etc., can be very expensive anywhere in Belize. Bring sufficient supplies with you.

HEALTH: A routine anti-malarial regimen is recommended; please consult your physician. Mosquitoes, black flies and other small, biting insects can sometimes be a nuisance in Belize, especially in the forested areas. Chiggers are found in most of the grassy areas. We suggest a stick-type repellent for your face and hands, plus at least one pump-style container of repellent for your clothing. Purified or bottled water is available at both Crooked Tree and Lamanai. As for foods, all salads, dairy products and home-cooked meals at both lodges are perfectly safe to eat, plus they are tasty and satisfying.

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.

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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).

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." Repellents 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.

LUGGAGE: We request you try to limit your luggage to one medium-sized lockable suitcase and one carry-on bag. It's a good idea to pack a change of clothes, your binoculars, medications, toiletries, walking shoes, and travel documents in the carry-on.

MISC:

Departure Tax - \$32 USD
Electricity - 110/220 volts
Language - English
Time - Central Standard Time

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. The online bookstore can be found by following the link on our homepage. 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.

- DeVries, Philip J. 1987. *The Butterflies of Costa Rica and their Natural History, Volume I: Papilionidae, Pieridae, Nymphalidae*. Princeton University Press.
- DeVries, Philip J. 1997. *The Butterflies of Costa Rica and their Natural History, Volume II: Riodinidae*. Princeton University Press. Though not true field guides, both volumes are very useful for their high-quality color plates of specimens and in-depth natural history information.
- Garwood, Kim & Richard Lehman. 2005. *Butterflies of Northeastern Mexico, A Photographic Checklist, 2nd Edition*. Eye Scry Publishing, McAllen, Texas.
- Glassberg, Jeffrey. 2007. *A Swift Guide to the Butterflies of Mexico and Central America*. Sunstreak Books. A groundbreaking new book that covers most species we are likely to see in Belize.
- Glassman, Paul. *Belize Guide*. Moscow, Vermont: Passport Press, 1989.
- Hilty, Steven. *Birds of Tropical America*. Shelburne, VT: Chapters Publishing Ltd., 1994. Subtitle: "A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity."
- Howell, Steve N.G. and Sophie Webb. *A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- H. Lee Jones. 2003. *Birds of Belize*. University of Texas Press, Austin. Covers all species known to occur in Belize, including North American Migrants, though generally not as useful as Howell & Webb.
- H. Lee Jones and A. C. Valley. 2000. *Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Belize*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, Spain. The most authoritative status and distribution information on Belize. Unfortunately, this publication is not widely available but it is for sale at Chan Chich.
- Peterson, Roger T. and Edward L. Chalif. *A Field Guide to Mexican Birds*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973.
- Sibley, David Allen. 2000. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. Arguably the best North American field guide.
- Wood, D. Scott, Robert C. Leberman & Dora Weyer. "Checklist of the Birds of Belize" (booklet). Pittsburgh: Special Publication #12, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, 1986.

SUGGESTED RECORDINGS: These will be helpful in learning the vocalizations of some of the region's birds. *Bird Songs of Belize, Guatemala and Mexico* by Dale Delaney. Library of Natural Sounds, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 1992.

A Bird Walk at Chan Chich by John V. Moore. San Jose, California: Astral Sounds Recording, 1992. Proceeds aid the local library in Gallon Jug, Belize.

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, motor coach, 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

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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 July 16, 2009 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.