

AMAZON RIVER CRUISE
A BIRDING AND NATURAL HISTORY ODYSSEY
ABOARD *LA ESTRELLA AMAZONICA*
FEBRUARY 19 – MARCH 1, 2015

MACHU PICCHU PRE-TRIP:
BIRDS, RUINS AND HISTORY
FEBRUARY 14-19, 2015

CLOUD FORESTS OF NORTHERN PERU POST-TRIP:
OWLETS, SPATULETAILS AND TANAGERS
FEBRUARY 28 – MARCH 7, 2015

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The Amazon region conjures many images, but it is, above all, a realm of superlatives. The centerpiece of this vast region is the Amazon River itself, the largest river in the world. In fact, many of its tributaries rival or exceed the size of other great rivers of the world. The Amazonian region also boasts the highest diversity of both birds and plants anywhere in the world. The very word “Amazon” brings to mind images of broad, sinuous rivers, tree-lined banks, strange animals, bright butterflies, torrential rains, and glorious sunsets. Along the rivers one may see macaws and parrots and oropendolas flying overhead, ponderous Horned Screamers rising from stream banks and exotic wildlife that includes Hoatzins, Umbrellabirds, sloths, fresh-water dolphins, and monkeys coexisting in this untamed area.

We offer this relatively short excursion to the Amazon for those who want a full Amazonian rainforest and river experience without sacrificing comfort. We believe, in fact, that the classically-styled, triple-deck riverboat we’re using offers visitors the utmost in comfort, security and safety while still permitting us to visit remote and relatively unspoiled regions in Amazonia. The ship’s spacious cabins are individually climate-controlled, air-conditioned, and include private tiled bathrooms, hot-water showers, free laundry service, and bottled water available at all times. Visitors can also be assured of having waterproof ponchos, walking sticks, and extra thick boat cushions as needed for off-boat excursions. The ship features excellent food and an open-air upper deck for great wildlife viewing by day and stargazing by night. The list of amenities offered by the ship and its attendant crew is impressive. Additionally, stable, flat-bottomed boats powered by exceptionally quiet engines permit intimate exploration of small streams and lakes with ease and comfort, and a minimum of noise intrusion.

The mobility of our ship and its excursion boats will allow us to explore different habitats and streams each morning and afternoon, and provide exceptional opportunities to see birds and wildlife. Some birds will be common, widespread Amazonian species such as Black-collared Hawk, Black-fronted Nunbird, Oriole Blackbird, Yellow-rumped Cacique, and Russet-backed Oropendola. Others will be more local species such as Hoatzin, Short-tailed Parrot, and perhaps some river island and river bank specialties such as Red-and-white Spinetail and Black-and-white Antbird. During the course of the trip we'll explore small wooded streams, lakes, seasonally flooded forest (várzea), and flooded river islands. Toward the latter part of the trip, we'll spend some time walking in tall, high ground forest. Here or nearby we may find a fruiting tree frequented by colorful Araçaries, tanagers, and honeycreepers, or an army ant swarm with its attendant antbirds and woodcreepers.

A brilliant blue Plum-throated Cotinga perched in a treetop, a pair of Blue-and-yellow Macaws winging overhead, a swirling group of White-winged Parakeets along the river, or a White-eared Jacamar in the morning sun—it is hard to predict which of these or many other experiences will delight you the most. We'll also fill some spare shipboard time with discussions and explanations of Amazonian natural history, as well as recaps of daily excursions in the evenings. We are confident that at the end of this extraordinary cruise you will have a greater appreciation and understanding of the Amazon region and the myriad creatures that make it the most complex ecosystem anywhere on earth.

Finally, many people harbor misgivings about visiting the Amazon, fearing excessive heat and humidity, torrential rain, hordes of mosquitoes or other insects. While it is indeed possible to experience such things, most visitors are pleasantly surprised at how comfortable travel can be even in the heart of Amazonia. The airy, breezy ship and air-conditioned cabins mitigate the effects of even the hottest days, and visitors soon discover that insects and mosquitoes, far from being the torment they are imagined, are little or no problem at all. This trip, which is based aboard a relatively small river boat, La Estrella Amazonica, offers perhaps the most comfortable and luxurious way possible to explore the Amazon while still retaining the ability to visit remote regions. Visitors can be assured of a shipboard staff and crew that will respond to your every need, exciting exploratory trips mornings, afternoons, and evenings, and some of the best birding and wildlife viewing in the Amazon.

Those interested in maximizing their time in Peru are encouraged to join our optional pre- and post-cruise extensions. Our Machu Picchu Pre-trip visits the incomparable ancient capital of the Inca in addition to seeking many of the special birds of the Peruvian Andes in the regions of Cuzco and the Urubamba River Valley. Our Cloud Forests of Northern Peru Post-trip offers a rare opportunity to explore a cloud forest preserve in the northern Andes, seeking a range of rarely seen birds, especially the near-mythical Long-whiskered Owlet and Marvelous Spatuletail hummingbird.

February 19, Day 1: Arrive Lima. You should plan your flights to arrive Lima, Peru (Jorge Chávez Lima-Callao International Airport, airport code LIM) any time today. After clearing immigration and customs you will be transferred to your hotel. Most flights from the United States arrive sometime late evening. When making your airline reservations, bear in mind that you may want to arrive as early as possible in the evening as we are offering an optional trip on Day 2 to a wetland near Lima that is sure to have many birds. If time permits, we recommend arriving a day early in order to rest and to allow for flight delays that are sometimes associated with winter weather in your home areas. Please be aware that those participants who are delayed may not be able to

make the Saturday morning flight (Day 3) from Lima to Iquitos and would be at risk of being unable to reach the ship prior to its departure.

NIGHT: Sonesta El Olivar Hotel, Lima

February 20, Day 2: Lima including Pantanos de Villa Marshes and Pucusana Fishing Village. Because persons arriving for the cruise may have arrived late last night we will have a leisurely breakfast at the hotel and depart at 8:00 a.m. for our trip southward toward the picturesque coast of Pucusana. We will have an opportunity to see some fine coastal marshes, a good cross-section of the stark Atacama Desert of western Peru, and many of the seabirds typical of the cold, rich waters of the Humboldt Current just offshore. Today we should see about 50 to 60 species of birds, most of which will not be seen elsewhere on this trip. These may include Humboldt Penguin; White-tufted and Great grebes; Peruvian Pelican; Peruvian Booby; Neotropic and Guanay cormorants; several egrets and herons; Least Bittern (hard to find); Puna Ibis; White-cheeked Pintail; Cinnamon Teal; Harris's and Variable (Red-backed) hawks; Plumbeous Rail; Slate-colored Coot (with several different frontal shield colors); Common Moorhen; Peruvian Thick-knee (now scarce); Band-tailed, Gray-hooded, Kelp, and Gray gulls as well as migrant Franklin's Gull (Oct-March only); Inca Tern; Pacific Dove; Croaking Ground-Dove; Amazilia Hummingbird; Wren-like Rushbird; Surf Cinclodes; Many-colored Rush-Tyrant; Vermilion Flycatcher (black morph in Lima, normal red ones along the coast); Long-tailed Mockingbird; Peruvian Red-breasted Meadowlark; and Grassland Yellow-Finch. We should be back by late afternoon and will dine in the hotel this evening.

NIGHT: Sonesta El Olivar Hotel, Lima

February 21, Day 3: Lima to Iquitos, Peru. Our flight to Iquitos is currently scheduled for a morning departure from Lima and our activities once we reach Iquitos will depend, in large part, upon the amount of time we have available. If our flight is early there may be some time available for birding and/or a short drive through the food market area of Iquitos before lunch. Our afternoon activities will be determined by when the ship is outfitted and when we will be permitted to board, but we are sure to have some time to get settled in and have a little time for a short outing.

At the waterfront at Iquitos we should see many common and more widespread birds along the river. These species should include Coci and Striated herons, Great and Snowy egrets, Turkey and Black vultures, Plumbeous Kite, Roadside Hawk, Yellow-headed Caracara, Large-billed and Yellow-billed terns, and Oriole Blackbird. If time permits, our late afternoon exploration of the Amazon will begin with a short visit to a river island or young river edge vegetation. All of the river islands should be flooded, or mostly so, at this time of year, which makes access to island habitats by boat relatively easy. There are more than twenty species of river island bird specialists here, almost all of which occur in one of four or five island vegetation types: tall grass (*Gynerium* spp.); willow (*Salix*) and *Tessaria*; *Cecropia* and *Heliconia* spp; and mixed *Ficus* trees. Some river island habitat bird species we could see include Short-tailed Parrot; Tui Parakeet; Olive-spotted Hummingbird; Plain-breasted Piculet; Lesser Hornero (sand bars); White-bellied, Parker's and Red-and-white spinetails; Castelnau's Antshrike (mainly older islands); Leaden Antwren; Black-and-white Antbird; Brownish Elaenia; River Tyrannulet; Lesser Wagtail-Tyrant; Riverside Tyrant; and Pearly-breasted Conebill. Other species we could see on or in the vicinity of river islands include Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture; Wattled Jacana; Canary-winged Parakeet; Greater and Smooth-billed anis; Ringed and Amazon kingfishers; Spotted Tody-Flycatcher; Great Kiskadee; Brown-chested and Gray-breasted martins; White-winged and Southern Rough-winged swallows; Orange-headed, Blue-gray, and Silver-beaked tanagers; Grayish Saltator; Red-capped Cardinal; Russet-backed Oropendola; Yellow-rumped Cacique; Yellow-hooded blackbird; Shiny Cowbird; Lesson's, Chestnut-bellied, and Caquetá seedeaters.

NIGHT: *La Estrella Amazonica*, Río Amazon

February 22, Day 4: Early morning birding Amazon tributaries near the junction of the Ríos Marañón and Ucayali. We will be off the ship early for exploration of river island and *várzea* (floodplain) habitat, most likely in the vicinity of the Quebrada Yarapa, which is near the junction of the Ríos Ucayali and Marañón. A

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sampling of birds this morning could include most of the species mentioned yesterday as well as Wood Stork; Gray-headed and Snail kites; Black-collared and Slate-colored hawks; Pale-vented Pigeon; Dusky-headed, White-eyed, and Cobalt-winged parakeets; Greater Ani; Black-tailed Trogon; Green Kingfisher; Black-fronted Nunbird; White-eared Jacamar; Chestnut-eared Araçari; Crimson-crested Woodpecker; Pale-legged Hornero; Striped and Straight-billed woodcreepers; Barred Antshrike; White-headed Marsh-Tyrant; Short-crested Flycatcher; Masked Tityra; Bare-necked Fruitcrow; Black-capped Donacobius; Buff-breasted Wren; Black-billed Thrush; Red-eyed Vireo; Hooded and Turquoise tanagers; Thick-billed and Purple-throated euphonias; Silver-beaked and Masked Crimson tanagers; Yellow-rumped Cacique; and Russet-backed Oropendola. There is also a good possibility of seeing Pink River Dolphins and perhaps even Gray River Dolphins.

We should be back aboard ship late this morning. By mid-day we hope to reach the bifurcation of the Amazon into the Ríos Ucayali and Río Marañon. Upriver on the Río Ucayali we will be traveling along the border of the vast Pacaya-Samiria Reserve. We will continue to watch sand bars and river banks for new species, including such characteristic species as Pied Plover and Drab Water Tyrant. We will make our way up the Ucayali this afternoon, stopping for a late-afternoon excursion. After dinner tonight or tomorrow night we may be off the ship for our first (optional) night excursion by small boat, perhaps on the Quebrada Supay, a tributary of the Río Ucayali, or another nearby tributary. It is difficult to predict what we might see on night excursions, but Boat-billed Herons, Common and Great potoos, and Ladder-tailed Nightjars are all possible, as well as opossums or other mammals and occasionally tree boas.

NIGHT: *La Estrella Amazonica*, Río Ucayali

February 23=24, Days 5-6: Amazon River / Río Ucayali. During these two days we will explore small streams, rivers, riverbanks and maybe even a river island or two as we gradually make our way up the Río Ucayali. Along relatively narrow and heavily forested streams, we should continue to see species typical of *várzea* forest, although the taller forest and narrower channels of some creeks here should give us opportunities to add many new species each day. A sampling could include almost any of the species mentioned previously, as well as Horned Screamer; Black Caracara; Hoatzin; Muscovy Duck; Ruddy Pigeon; Gray-fronted Dove; Mealy and Festive parrots; Sand-colored Nighthawk; Short-tailed Swift; Glittering-throated Emerald; Scarlet-crowned and Lemon-throated barbets; Spotted Puffbird; Cream-colored Woodpecker; Dark-breasted Spinetail; Long-billed Woodcreeper; Great and Black-crested antshrikes; Amazonian Streaked-Antwren; Plumbeous, Band-tailed and/or Black-chinned, and Silvered antbirds; Black-spotted Bare-eye; Plum-throated Cotinga; Greater Schiffornis; Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet; Forest Elaenia; Social Flycatcher; and Velvet-fronted Grackle.

On our second day, as we continue exploring up the Río Ucayali, we will encounter an increasing number of black water rivers and lakes such as Dorado Creek. A small Amerindian village is located at the head of this Creek but it is otherwise an uninhabited region. On past trips we have recorded Wattled Curassow, Crested Eagle, Tiny Hawk, Collared Forest-Falcon and other large birds along this creek and their presence suggests that the wildlife here is not persecuted. Even if we do not find any of these species (all rare) we are sure to find many other interesting birds. During mid-day and early afternoon we will reposition the ship again, moving further upriver, perhaps as far as the mouth of Zapote Creek. A small native community is located a short distance up the Zapote and the area beyond their village is designated as a reserve where they do not hunt. Consequently, this area also is particularly good for primates, raptors and other large birds. If we reach Zapote Creek, we'll depart in our skiffs for a late afternoon excursion up this beautiful stream, with the possibility of remaining out until after dark, before returning for dinner. On these evening excursions we often see Common or Great potoos, and sometimes a Tropical Screech-Owl, or Common Pauraque or Ladder-tailed Nightjar, but there also is the possibility of finding frogs, a small caiman, various kinds of insects, and occasionally even a snake with our spotlights. And, just being out enjoying the many exotic night sounds, and the star-filled sky is sure to be memorable.

NIGHTS: *La Estrella Amazonica*, Río Ucayali

February 25, Day 7: Dorado and/or Zapote Creek. If we were able to anchor near Zapote Creek overnight, we'll likely be out along this stream early this morning, or on another similar tributary of the Ucayali where we will continue to explore the area from small boats. Because the upper part of this river is a particularly wild area, we'll get an early start. This is a good region for waterbirds and waders, as well as parrots and parakeets, and we may see pairs or families of Blue-and-yellow Macaws, and even Scarlet Macaws along the river. In the upper portions of Zapote creek we have had good success with raptors, and have, on past tours, recorded both Harpy Eagle and Crested Eagle here, as well Gray-headed Kite, Hook-billed Kite, Slender-billed Kite, Buckley's Forest-Falcon and commoner species such as Black-collared Hawk and Slate-colored Hawk. A sample of other birds here might include almost any of the species mentioned on days 3 and 4, as well as Capped Heron, Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Green Ibis, Great Black-Hawk, Speckled Chachalaca, Sungrebe, Sunbittern (scarce), Chestnut-fronted Macaw, Black-throated Mango, up to five species of kingfishers, Gilded Barbet, Forest and Yellow-crowned elaenias, Cinnamon and White-eyed attilas, Lesser Kiskadee, and Gray-capped Flycatcher. This also is an excellent area for primates and among the possibilities are Red Howler Monkey, Squirrel Monkey, Saddle-backed Tamarin, Dusky Titi-Monkey, Brown capuchin, and perhaps even the unusual Monk Saki (scarce and retiring).

Late morning will find us back aboard our ship as we prepare to retrace our route back down the Río Ucayali. We will reposition ourselves downriver near the junction of the Marañon and weigh anchor for the evening. Time permitting we will make a short excursion by boat to a nearby river island or stream.

NIGHT: *La Estrella Amazonica*, Río Marañon

February 26, Day 8: Morning exploration of river islands and travel up the Río Marañon for late afternoon birding. We will be spending the morning exploring river islands or, depending upon where our boat is positioned at dawn, perhaps exploring slowly up one of the hundreds of small creeks and tributaries that feed the main Ucayali and Marañon rivers here. Continuing some of the activities that we began our first afternoon in the channel of the Amazon, we will be looking for a number of river island bird specialist species that live almost exclusively in the various early successional stage vegetation on islands. River islands vary enormously in size, in age, and in vegetation structure but all of them harbor interesting arrays of birds that are generally fairly easy to see. Many of the species possible this morning have already been mentioned previously under the list for day two. Because of the ever-changing nature of the islands from one flood season to another one never knows what combinations or birds to expect, or even if a particular island has survived the previous high-water seasons. Typically, on these islands we may expect, from youngest vegetation to oldest: 1) sand bars, often with low colonizing grass; 2) marshes and tall grass; 3) small shrubby trees known as *Tessaria* (Asteraceae family) which attract birds that forage for insects on its leaves; 4) willows (*Salix*); 5) *Cecropia* of various ages; 6) large *Ficus* (figs); 7) on the oldest islands a more advanced and diverse array of trees that resemble second growth habitats on the mainland. Each of the various habitats harbor an array of interesting bird species and a good many of these birds are found nowhere else. We will try to reach several of these habitats by small boat and, of course, there will always be many other more widespread species ranging from herons, egrets, vultures, hawks and caracaras to kingbirds, saltators, orioles and seedeaters on the islands. On any morning visiting river islands, it is possible to see an astonishing variety of species (more actually than in the forest) because of the greater visibility of species in these semi-open habitats.

This afternoon we'll begin moving up the Río Marañon River to position our ship close to our final destination where we plan to spend our last morning. Again, depending upon our schedule, we may be able to disembark en route for another late-afternoon river exploration by small boat.

NIGHT: *La Estrella Amazonica*, Río Marañon

February 27, Day 9: Río Marañon above Nauta. We should be anchored an hour or two above Nauta this morning, in preparation for our morning activities which will be our first land-based birding excursion to *terra firma* or high-ground forest. There also will be a boat trip available for those that do not wish to walk in the forest. However, we encourage everyone to consider visiting the high-ground forest in order to experience a

different forest community. We will have access to trails that access the high ground forest, and perhaps surprising to many, high-ground forest in the Amazon is usually not flat but somewhat hilly. We will spend the morning birding and exploring upland, forest and some forest edge habitats and will almost certainly encounter a rather different, community of birds here that is sure to include more antbirds and furnariids and manakins than is possible during water-based exploration of small streams. However, forest birding activities are typically more difficult and greater patience will be required to see some of these forest dwelling birds.

This region of *terra firme* forest is typically somewhat drier and better-drained than *várzea* forest although it is likely that trails may still be muddy in places. In general *terra firme* forest is biologically the most diverse ecosystem in the Amazon, with a greater diversity of birds per unit area than any other forest ecosystem on the planet. It is also one of the most challenging habitats in which to see birds, requiring our utmost concentration, but the rewards can be high. Obligate army ant-following antbirds occur here, sometimes with as many as a dozen individuals gathering and bickering as they pursue prey fleeing from the ants. Here mixed species flocks also reach their greatest diversity, with flocks forming both in the canopy and in the understory. When both groups join, as they do occasionally, one can experience an astonishing array of birds from the understory to the canopy. Birds that forage in mixed species flocks typically move rapidly through the forest, and they present an exciting if sometimes frustrating experience for human observers trying to see them. With patience and concentration, however, many species can be seen.

A sample of mostly forest-based species that we may see here could include any of the following: Cinereous Tinamou; Gray-fronted Dove; Squirrel and Black-bellied cuckoos; Black-tailed, White-tailed, and Violaceous trogons; White-necked Puffbird, White-fronted Nunbird, Yellow-billed Jacamar; Lemon-throated Barbet; Many-banded Araçari; Chestnut and Red-necked woodpeckers; Rufous-tailed Foliage-gleaner; Plain-brown, Amazonian Barred- and Buff-throated woodcreepers; Plain-winged, Cinereous, and Dusky-throated antshrikes; Plain-throated, White-flanked, Long-winged, and Gray antwrens; Peruvian Warbling-Antbird; Black-faced, Scale-backed, Bicolored, Spot-backed, and White-plumed antbirds; Rusty-belted Tapaculo; White-bearded, Golden-headed, Blue-crowned, and Striped manakins; Dwarf Tyrant Manakin; Thrush-like Schiffornis; Screaming Piha (amazing voice!); Violaceous Jay; Black-billed, Hauxwell's, and White-necked thrushes; Dusky-capped Greenlet; Fulvous Shrike-Tanager; Flame-crested, Green-and-gold, and Paradise tanagers; Buff-throated Saltator; and Slate-colored Grosbeak. Following our morning outing we will return to the ship for lunch and the ship will be making its way back down to Marañon to the Amazon. It is possible that we will reach the bifurcation of the Amazon, where it splits into the Ucayali and Marañon, a little before nightfall. Our ship will then continue toward Iquitos, stopping long enough for us to make one last small boat excursion on a stream before dusk. Later tonight we will tie up close to Iquitos, or at Iquitos, in preparation for our departure tomorrow morning.

NIGHT: *La Estrella Amazonica*, Río Amazon near Iquitos

February 28 – March 1, Days 10-11: Morning departure from *La Estrella Amazonica*; flight from Iquitos to Lima. We will disembark *La Estrella Amazonica* this morning and transfer to the airport in Iquitos in preparation for our flight to Lima. Because flights are sometimes delayed out of Iquitos to Lima, we have not scheduled any afternoon activities in Lima. Depending upon arrival time, part of the afternoon should be available for resting and repacking for international flights. There will be a farewell dinner this evening after which you will be able to walk to the airport prior to your international flight home. Most flights will depart for the USA after 10:30 p.m. on Day 10 (February 28), arriving in the USA early the following morning. Participants wishing to avoid the rigors associated with a lengthy overnight flight should consider spending the final night in Lima and taking an international flight the following morning. Arrangements can be made for overnight accommodations in Lima at an additional charge. Please contact the VENT office to confirm these arrangements.

DAY ROOM (Day 10): Costa del Sol Ramada Airport Hotel, Lima

NIGHT (Day 11): Aboard International Flight

Due to the nature of the expedition, weather conditions or government regulations may require changes to be made to the itinerary and/or the cancellation of certain shore excursions. Every attempt will be made to adhere to the itinerary described, within the limits of safety and time. In the event of changes, passengers have no right to any refund or other compensation. Expedition fees are based on group participation. Should you choose not to take part in any activity or make use of services provided, no refund will be made.

MACHU PICCHU PRE-TRIP: BIRDS, RUINS AND HISTORY FEBRUARY 14-19, 2015

On this optional pre-trip, we'll visit the impressive Inca site of Machu Picchu for a chance to wander among some of world's most remarkable stone ruins. We'll also witness a broad swath of the Andes from the colonial city of Cuzco to the high mountain pass at Abra Malaga. Among the many highlights are opportunities to bird the high plateau marshes and hills outside Cuzco, transiting lengthy stretches of the Urubamba River Valley, experiencing a singular train ride to the famous archaeological site, and exploring the subtropical forests below the ruins. Beautiful Andean scenery, Inca history and culture, and marvelous birding are themes of this trip.

Outside Cuzco, we'll visit Lago Huacarpay where we expect to see many Andean waterbirds, including Puna Ibis, Yellow-billed Pintail, Speckled Teal, and Many-colored Rush-Tyrant, while the surrounding arid hills contain specialty birds such as the spectacular Bearded Mountaineer, and Black-tailed and Green-tailed trainbearers. An early morning departure for a high mountain pass will take us past snow-capped mountains, enormous glacier-filled valleys, golden panoramas of puna grassland, and Inca ruins. At high elevations we may be able to find three Peruvian endemics: White-tufted Sunbeam, Creamy-breasted Spinetail, and Chestnut-breasted Mountain-Finch. Early the following day we will board a train for our Machu Picchu destination, arriving there in time for mid-morning birding. Located on a high ridge, this most famous and spectacular archaeological site is surrounded on three sides by sheer cliffs that fall away to the river far below. We will also bird the subtropical forests in the valley below the ruins, where we may see Torrent Duck, Andean Guan, Plum-crowned Parrot, and a wonderful array of hummingbirds, antshrikes, tyrannulets, warblers, and numerous tanagers. These are but a few of the many experiences to be had on this special Machu Picchu pre-trip.

February 14, Day 1: Arrive Lima. For those arriving for the Machu Picchu Pre-trip portion, you should plan your flights to arrive Lima, Peru (Jorge Chávez Lima-Callao International Airport, airport code LIM) between 9-11:00 PM today. Upon arrival and after clearing immigration, collect your bags from the carousel, pass customs, and then proceed outside the baggage claim area, turn right, exit the building through the large doors, and walk directly across the street. Once on the opposite of the street turn left and walk (no more than 50 yards) along the sidewalk to the entrance of the Costa del Sol Ramada Airport Hotel. Once inside go to the front desk where a room will be reserved in your name. The Costa del Sol Ramada Airport Hotel is located inside the Lima International Airport, and within walking distance (200 yards) of international arrivals. Tomorrow morning when you return to the airport for your morning commercial flight to Cuzco, we suggest you use the hotel's second floor overhead walkway, which leads directly into the airport. Once inside the airport, turn right and a short distance beyond take the elevator down to the first floor to access the check-in counters.

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If time permits, we recommend arriving a day early in order to rest and to allow for flight delays that are sometimes associated with winter weather in your home areas.

NIGHT: Costa del Sol Ramada Airport Hotel, Lima

February 15, Day 2: Lima to Cuzco and visit to Laguna Huacarpay; short afternoon drive to Yucay. Our day will start early with a morning flight from Lima to Cuzco. Upon arrival in Cuzco proceed to the luggage pick-up (bathrooms near luggage pick-up carousal). Once you have your luggage proceed outside where you will be met by our local representative and guide. From there you will transfer to a bus for the 30-40 minute drive to Laguna Huacarpay. Because you will have just come from sea level, and the Cuzco area is situated at about 11,200 feet, we suggest you relax and take your time here. After a couple pleasant hours at this beautiful lake we will make our way by bus down the Urubamba Valley to lower elevation where we'll spend the night.

Birds are usually numerous and relatively easy to see at Laguna Huacarpay (elevation of about 10,500 feet) and in the surrounding arid hills. Among the possibilities are White-tufted and Silvery grebes, Puna Ibis, Speckled and Puna teals, Yellow-billed Pintail, Andean Duck, Aplomado Falcon (scarce), Cinereous Harrier (scarce), Plumbeous Rail, Common Moorhen, Andean Coot, Andean Lapwing, Andean Gull, Spot-winged Pigeon (irregular), Bare-faced Ground-Dove, Andean Flicker, Wren-like Rushbird, Spot-billed and Rufous-naped ground-tyrants, Andean (White-winged) Negrito, White-browed Chat-Tyrant, Yellow-billed Tit-Tyrant, Chiguanco Thrush, Yellow-winged Blackbird, Band-tailed Seedeater, and Greenish Yellow-Finch. This also is an excellent location in which to look for the spectacular Bearded Mountaineer, a hummingbird endemic to Peru. Black-tailed and Green-tailed trainbearers and Sparkling Violetear are seen here occasionally, as well. Later we will continue down the Urubamba Valley, watching for Puna Hawk, Andean Gull (along river), Andean Swift, and Giant Hummingbird and occasionally Brown-bellied Swallows en route.

The drive will take us along the rushing Urubamba River. Our hotel is a charming country inn, and we should arrive in time to relax, rest, or do some birding around the hotel grounds at dusk.

NIGHT: Sonesta Posadas del Inca Sacred Valley, Yucay

February 16, Day 3: Early Morning Departure for the High Abra Malaga Pass in the Vilcanota Mountains. We will depart relatively early today for the approximately one hour drive up into a magnificent side canyon leading to the Abra Malaga Pass. Our route takes a winding but recently paved side road and, if we make it all the way to the top, eventually crosses the mountains at a 14,000 foot high pass. The road is spectacular for its scenery alone, with snow-capped mountains, glacier-filled valleys, golden panoramas of puna grassland, and modern-day descendants of the Incas. We will spend most of the day here, perhaps reaching the pass before turning back. Above about 11,000 feet, we will leave the scrub zone and enter puna grassland. Along this route we should see llama and alpaca tended by Indians who still wear their colorful, traditional dress. Three Peruvian endemics may be found here: White-tufted Sunbeam, Creamy-crested Spinetail, and Chestnut-breasted Mountain-Finch and with any luck we should find all three of them. Additionally, all of the following species have been seen on previous visits here and are possible: Puna Snipe; Andean Ibis; Andean Goose; Andean Condor; Puna (Variable) Hawk; Gray-breasted Seedsnipe; Shining Sunbeam, Great Sapphirewing, Scaled and Tyrian metaltails; Giant Hummingbird; Olivaceous Thornbill; Puna Thistletail; Rufous-fronted, Streak-throated, and Streak-backed canasteros; Cuzco Tapaculo (local); Yellow-billed and Tufted tit-tyrants; Brown-backed, White-browed and Rufous-breasted chat-tyrants; Spot-billed, Rufous-naped, Ochre-naped, Cinereous, and perhaps Puna and White-fronted ground-tyrants; Brown-bellied Swallow; Black-throated Flowerpiercer; Greenish and Bright-rumped yellow-finches; White-winged Diuca-Finch; Peruvian Sierra-Finch; Golden-billed Saltator; Plumbeous Sierra-Finch; and Black-backed Grosbeak. Other less common possibilities include Tawny Tit-Spinetail, and Stripe-headed Antpitta. All birding today will be along the roadside and will not involve strenuous walking, although just moving even short distances at these elevations requires effort. As we walk this road, we should be afforded magnificent views of the mountains.

We usually begin our return to the hotel by about mid-afternoon or slightly later, allowing time to stop briefly in the Inca city of Ollantaytambo on our return. Widely regarded as the most typical Inca city in Peru, it is surrounded by ruins and walls that attest to a long occupation by earlier civilizations. The city itself appears as if lifted from an earlier time, being composed mostly of ancient stone walls, open aqueducts to transport water and a population that adheres to mostly traditional dress.

Later, returning to our hotel, some participants also may enjoy a final walk around our hotel this evening, enjoying the lovely setting, crisp evening air and birds on the grounds. White-bellied Hummingbird, Green-tailed Trainbearer, Blue-and-yellow Tanager, Rusty Flowerpiercer, Black-backed Grosbeak, Chiguanco Thrush, and numerous Rufous-collared Sparrows can usually be seen in trees and shrubs around the hotel while Puna Ibis, Spot-winged Pigeon and American Kestrel may be seen flying up or down the valley.

NIGHT: Sonesta Posadas del Inca Sacred Valley, Yucay

February 17, Day 4: Yucay to Machu Picchu. Following an early breakfast (5:45 a.m.), we will depart for the Ollantaytambo train station, where we may have some time, again, to see this remarkable city, which is one of the most traditional Inca cities remaining in Peru. Once aboard the train, we have about two hours before we reach the Machu Picchu ruins, along a route that follows the bottom of the Urubamba River valley. Torrent Ducks, White-capped Dippers, and more tremendous views of Mt. Veronica are part of this fascinating trip. Upon arrival, we will check into our hotel, and then start up the famous Hiram Bingham road (by bus) to the ruins, some 1,500 feet higher. Usually we take our lunch at the cafeteria near the ruins. Little needs to be said of the incomparable beauty of this place, one of the most famous and most spectacular archaeological ruins in the world. Located on a high ridge, the old city is surrounded on three sides by sheer cliffs that fall away to the river far below. Across the river on all sides are huge mountains covered with cloud forests. In the distance, even higher snow-capped mountain ridges can be seen. We may never know the true origins of this remarkable site, but whether ancient fortress, secret city, or elaborate agricultural project, it humbles us as we stand before such a magnificent panorama.

After the train departs for the afternoon, we will have the site almost to ourselves and enjoy the opportunity of seeing Machu Picchu in that special late-evening light. Our local guide, Doris Valencia, a Cuzco resident, who is an excellent birder and marvelous student of Inca history, will take us on a guided walking tour of the ruins and previous groups have been unanimous in their praise for her ability to bring Inca history to life, to discuss the many mysteries surrounding the ruins, and to answer questions. During her tour we will also keep an eye skyward occasionally for a few birds around the ruins. However, it is the subtropical forests far below, which we will see tomorrow, rather than the scrub vegetation around the perimeter of the ruins that are most interesting for birds. In the vicinity of the ruins, it is possible to see White-collared and White-tipped swifts; Black-tailed Trainbearer; White-winged Black-Tyrant; White-crested, Sierran, and Highland elaenias; White-winged Black-Tyrant; Blue-and-white Swallow; Cinereous Conebill; Slaty and Black-throated flowerpiercers; Inca Wren (endemic); Blue-capped Tanager; Tricolored Brush-Finch and Black-and-white Seedeater. Andean Condors are occasionally seen above the ruins and, of course, Rufous-collared Sparrows are to be seen almost everywhere. Most groups remain at this magnificent site as long as possible, enjoying the setting and history, and often catch the last bus back down the steep hill to the hotel. We will have dinner this evening at the luxurious Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel.

NIGHT: Hotel Machu Picchu Pueblo

February 18, Day 5: Morning birding around the hotel in the Urubamba Valley; afternoon train back to Cuzco. Arrangements can be made for those who wish to return to the ruins this morning (additional charges will apply). However, we will also plan a full morning of birding around the hotel. Because the hotel grounds have many hummingbird feeders and are extensively planted with orchids and other native species, the grounds are perhaps the single best place to spend the morning. A sampling of species we have seen here on previous visits includes: Torrent Duck; Fasciated Tiger-Heron (rare); Andean Guan; White-throated Quail-Dove; Plum-crowned and Red-billed parrots (irregular in occurrence); Mitred Parakeet (also irregular in occurrence); Green and Sparkling violetears; Green-and-white and Speckled hummingbirds; Bronzy and Collared Incas; Chestnut-breasted Coronet; Long-tailed Sylph; White-bellied Woodstar; Andean and White-tipped swifts; Highland

Motmot; Crested and Golden-headed quetzals; Spot-crowned Woodcreeper; Variable Antshrike; Masked Fruiteater; White-winged Black-Tyrant; Dusky-capped Flycatcher; Smoke-colored Pewee; Mottle-cheeked and Sclater's tyrannulets; Ochraceous-breasted, Streaked-necked, and Golden-crowned flycatchers; Torrent Tyrannulet; Glossy-black Thrush; Slate-throated and Spectacled redstarts; Dusky-green Oropendola; Capped Conebill; Rusty Flowerpiercer; Thick-billed and Orange-bellied euphonias; Golden-naped, Saffron-crowned, Beryl-spangled, Silver-backed, Bay-headed, and Black-capped tanagers; Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager; Oleaginous Hemispingus; Silver-beaked Tanager; Pale-legged and Russet-crowned warblers; and Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch. There is also a reasonably good chance that we will see an Andean Cock-of-the-rock perched or flying through the grounds.

After returning to the hotel for a late lunch, we will board the train at 2:45 p.m. for a 3:00 p.m. departure and the approximately five-hour trip back to Cuzco. If attendance is high at the ruins, we may travel only part way by train and then be transferred to a bus for the remainder of the trip.

NIGHT: Novotel Hotel, Cuzco

February 19, Day 6: Cuzco to Lima. This morning there should be time for participants to take a short walk around Cuzco, visit the lovely central plaza or perhaps do some shopping. We will take a late morning flight from Cuzco, arriving Lima around noon or in the early afternoon. The remainder of the afternoon will be free to relax, rest, or perhaps arrange for a short sightseeing tour of Lima or a visit to a museum. In the past, however, we have found that by the time we make our transfer to the hotel and have a late lunch there is only limited time available for other activities.

NIGHT: Sonesta El Olivar Hotel, Lima

CLOUD FORESTS OF NORTHERN PERU POST-TRIP: OWLETS, SPATULETAILS AND TANAGERS FEBRUARY 28 - MARCH 7, 2015

For this post-cruise extension, we'll travel from the lowland city of Iquitos to Tarapoto in northern Peru, gateway to the northern Andes, where we'll spend part of a week exploring a mystical cloud forest reserve and nearby areas. Simply put, many of the birds of this region are found nowhere else in the world and the birding here is as good as it gets anywhere in the Andes. This exciting trip is designed to maximize our birding time based at a single site, the wonderful Owllet Lodge at Abra Patricia, allowing us to not only experience the rich avifauna of the pristine cloud forest, but also to get to know and learn many of the more widespread Andean gems as well.

If you are still wondering, "Why northern Peru?," part of the reason is because of the region's relative isolation from the rest of the country. For it is here, where the low and arid Marañon River Valley bisects the Andes so deeply that it forms a major biogeographical barrier to cloud forest birds living both north and south of this valley, meaning that almost everything we see will be new!

After an initial night in Moyobamba, we'll drive through the arid lowlands before we climb upwards into the lush cloud forest, visiting an easily assessable colony of the famous oilbirds, en route to the small town of Pomacochas, then on to Abra Patricia Pass, a short distance beyond. Our headquarters will be the Owlet Lodge, a comfortable ecotourism lodge that offers a unique opportunity for fabulous birding right from our doorsteps.

Foremost among our targets here is the spectacular Marvelous Spatuletail, an endangered hummingbird so ornate that it has almost become the stuff of legend. Abra Patricia is also justly famous for several regional specialties including the Long-whiskered Owlet as well as Royal Sunangel, Ochre-fronted and Chestnut antpittas, Bar-winged Wood-Wren, Cinnamon-breasted Tody-Tyrant, and Johnson's (Lulu's) Tody-Tyrant (described only in 2001). This itinerary gives us time to search for many of these specialties during our stay here. The lush cloud forests of Cordillera del Colan have many other special mountain birds that can be reached with short drives to lower elevations including two species of quetzals, Torrent Duck, White-faced Nunbird, Versicolored Barbet, Andean Cock-of-the-rock, one or more fruiteaters, and a wonderful selection of more than 30 species of colorful Andean tanagers possible.

With the help of the excellent modern field guide, Birds of Peru, we'll derive great pleasure from sorting through and identifying the tremendous diversity of birds that occur in these rich cloud forests.

February 28, Day 1: Iquitos to Tarapoto (direct flight) followed by drive to town of Moyobamba.

Departing our cruise ship this morning we will fly direct from Iquitos to Tarapoto where we will transfer to a small bus for the drive westward to Moyobamba, which is about two and a half hours away via paved road. Because the once daily flight usually departs in mid-afternoon, it will probably be dark by the time we reach our lodge in Moyobamba. If time permits we will make a short stop at a deep ravine where a small colony of Oilbirds, the world's only nocturnal frugivore, can usually be found.

NIGHT: Waquanki Lodge, Moyobamba

March 1, Day 2: Lodge near Moyobamba in the early morning following by an afternoon drive on to Abra Patricia pass and the Owlet Lodge (7600ft; 2300m).

After an early breakfast we will visit the hummingbird garden here at the lodge. It is a short walk uphill from the parking area and features an observation tower surrounded by flowering bushes and shrubs, as well as multiple feeders. At about 1,000 m elevation, this site attracts a mix of lowland and foothill hummingbird species, with over 25 species of hummingbirds recorded at this site. Some of the species recorded here include Rufous-crested Coquette, Wire-crested Thorntail, Many-spotted Hummingbird, Gray-breasted Sabrewing, Brown Violetear, White-necked Jacobin, Fork-tailed Woodnymph, Black-throated Mango, Sapphire-spangled Emerald, Blue-tailed Emerald, Golden-tailed Sapphire, and White-chinned Sapphire. A high diversity of hermits also visit the feeders or can be found nearby, including Black-chinned Hermit, Long-tailed Hermit, Green Hermit, Rufous-breasted Hermit, Reddish Hermit, and Buff-tailed Sicklebill. Blue-fronted Lancebill occasionally visits the hummingbird garden as well. In addition to the spectacular list of hummingbird, a long list of other birds have been observed in this reserve which includes foothill forest, shade coffee plantations, some open spaces and other woodlands in varying stages of regrowth. Some possibilities include Speckled Chachalaca, Swallow-tailed Kite, White-eyed Parakeet, Masked Trogon, Gilded Barbet, Channel-billed Toucan, Fiery-throated Fruiteater (a much-sought species), Red-billed, and Mishuana Tyrannulet (recently described species), Striped Manakin, Fiery-capped Manakin, Blue-necked Tanager, Black-bellied Tanager, Paradise Tanager, Green Honeycreeper, Swallow Tanager, and Chestnut-bellied Seed-Finch. The recently described Várzea Thrush (a split from Hauxwell's Thrush) has also been reported at this interesting reserve.

The Owlet Lodge is situated in a lush 13,000 hectare cloud forest reserve managed and run by the conservation organization ECOAN (*Asociación Ecosistemas Andinos*) which is adjacent to the 182,000 ha Alto Mayo Forest Reserve. The bird list for this region now totals more than 400 species and the Owlet Lodge makes an exciting base from which to explore this area. The lodge overlooks lovely mountains carpeted in pristine cloud forest. Hummingbird feeders around the lodge attract numerous species including Chestnut-breasted Coronet (common), Collard Inca, Emerald-bellied Puffleg, White-bellied Woodstar and Long-tailed Sylph. At the edge of the small clearing at the lodge, and along forest trails immediately adjacent to the lodge, mixed-species flocks often include the spectacular Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, as well as Emerald Toucanet, Olive-backed Woodcreeper, Variable Antshrike, Barred Becard Green-and-black Fruiteater, Mountain Wren, Russet-crowned Warbler, Spectacled Redstart, Blue-capped Tanager, Grass-green Tanager, Yellow-scarfed Tanager, Saffron-crowned Tanager, Flame-faced Tanager, Blue-and-black Tanager, Beryl-spangled Tanager, and the spectacular White-capped Tanager. Thickets at the edge of the clearing harbor Azara's Spinetail, and the colorful Johnson's (Lulu's) Tody-Tyrant among others species.

NIGHT: Owlet Lodge at Abra Patricia

March 2-5, Days 3-6: Abra Patricia Pass. We will have four full days to enjoy the fabulous montane forests around Abra Patricia (ca. 7,500 ft. elevation 2300 m). This area lies on the east slope of the Andes but on the south side of the Río Marañon watershed and is thus separated from the avifauna at similar elevation on the northern side of the valley. A single paved road now stretches from Tarapoto to the lodge and beyond, and this road has greatly improved the accessibility of the region to birders. However, accessibility also usually brings greater colonization, and in anticipation of this the ECOAN lodge, along with the American Bird Conservancy, has purchased and is protecting this pristine cloud forest reserve. At the lodge there is a good trail system and a canopy tower that offers good birding possibilities and spectacular view of a large portion of this region. At the present time there is extensive pristine forest extending from the pass down to about 3,300 feet, (1000 m) providing a superb transect of middle elevation and foothill humid forest birding. The birding here can be outstanding!

The Abra Patricia region is justly famous in ornithological circles for being the site of discovery of three species new to science in the 1970s and 1980s. Most famous of these is the Long-whiskered Owlet, first encountered in 1976, when a team of scientists from Louisiana State University mist-netted three individuals on a wind-swept ridge east of the pass. Until very recently the species had been seen by very few people. Recently it has been located in a few other nearby sites, including one that is within walking distance of our lodge, although it remains difficult to see. However just being in the vicinity of such a rare species is exciting. Similarly, the little Ochre-fronted Antpitta was discovered here in 1976, the Chestnut Antpitta in 1987, and the endemic Rusty-tinged Antpitta also occurs here! The same elfin forests where these birds were discovered are also home, along ridge tops, to the Royal Sunangel, (endemic) Cinnamon-breasted Tody-Tyrant, and Bar-winged Wood-Wren (endemic); three species with extremely limited ranges. Additionally, the area around the pass itself is an excellent spot for Johnson's (Lulu's) Tody-Tyrant (described in April 2001).

Our trips take place during what are normally relatively dry periods, although this is a very wet area and rain is possible at any time of the year. Temperatures are generally pleasant and cool throughout the year although can warm up considerably for short periods during the day. We plan to visit several elevations within this area including the lodge's pristine cloud forest reserve trail system, the Spatuletail Reserve, and the beautiful montane forests along the roadside below the lodge.

At the lodge we will have a chance to explore the rich cloud forest interior which is festooned with exotic epiphytes, bromeliads, orchids, lichens and moss. Also, we will explore important bird-rich microhabitats such as bamboo, and the large, sturdy metal canopy tower provides a unique opportunity to experience canopy flocks and an array of colorful tanagers at eye level!

Exploring the moss-festooned cloud forest will be a daily thrill. Here we will search for some of the localized species such as the White-faced Nunbird and maybe a few of the numerous ground-dwelling antpittas and tapaculos that occur here. Two large raptors are possible here, namely the Black-and-chestnut Eagle and Solitary Eagle occur here although both are low-density species with large home ranges and we would have to be lucky to see one or both of them. Other species we may find in the vicinity of the lodge include the Wattled Guan (scarce), Andean Guan, Sickle-winged Guan, Scaly-naped Parrot, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Golden-headed quetzal, Masked Trogon, Green (Inca) Jay, White-collared Jay, and stunning Crimson-bellied Woodpecker. There also are numerous forest interior birds that are more challenging to see such as; Rufous Spinetail, Uniform Antshrike, Variable Antshrike, Long-tailed Antbird, Rufous-headed Pygmy-Tyrant. Two wonderful songs we are likely to hear in these cloud forests are those of the Andean Solitaire, and those of the Sharpe's Wren and Chestnut-breasted Wren although the wren, in particular, are often a challenge to see. Most exciting are likely to be the mixed-species flocks, which are usually dominated by tanagers, flowerpiercers, flycatchers and a sprinkling of other species. Mixed species flocks around the lodge will contain a somewhat different assortment of species than those a bit further downslope. Examples of species near the lodge include Green-and-Black Fruiteater, Crested Quetzal, Blue-capped Tanager Yellow-throated Tanager, Yellow-scarfed Tanager, Metallic-green, Tanager Saffron-crowned Tanager or even the exquisite are possible, as well as Pearled Treerunner, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Montane-foilage-gleaner.

Excursions a short distance below the lodge by road, will include a visit to a unique stunted ridge top elfin forest in where several poorly-known endemics occur, among them the Royal Sunangel, and recently described Bar-winged Wood-Wren and Cinnamon-breasted Tody-Tyrant. Other species here and at lower elevations may include Crested and Golden-headed Quetzal, Chestnut-crested Cotinga, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Blue-fronted Lancebill, and Lacrimose Mountain-Tanager, Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager, and Hooded, Mountain-Tanager, as well as Saffron-crowned Tanager, and Yellow-throated Tanager.

Mixed species flocks at still lower elevations (about 4500-6000 feet elevation) below the lodge, are likely to contain more small birds. Here, in a kaleidoscope of fast-moving color we may encounter Versicolored Barbet, Scarlet-breasted and Scaled Fruiteater Lemon-browed and Ornate Flycatcher, Golden-collared and Purple honeycreepers, Black-faced Dacnis, Blue-naped Chlorophonia, Vermilion Tanager, Paradise Tanager, Orange-eared Tanager, Green-and-gold Tanager, Golden, Tanager Blue-browed, Tanager Blue-necked Tanager, Beryl-spangled Tanager, Blue-and-black Tanager, and Red-hooded Tanager. Other species in these mid-elevation flocks could include Yellow-breasted Antwren and Rufous-rumped Antwren, Black-throated Tody-Tyrant and Gray-mantled Wren. A few very locally-distributed species also occur near the lower limit of this wet forest (here at about 3000-5000 feet elevation), including the Ash-throated Antwren, Equatorial Graytail, and yes, even the Andean Cock-of-the-Rock and Amazonian Umbrellabird,

One day we will drive westward from the lodge to the small villages of Pedro Ruiz and Florida to see the Marvelous Spatuletail, a hummingbird that is endemic to a small area in northern Peru, and one that surely ranks as one of the most spectacular hummingbirds in the world. It is severely threatened by deforestation and the loss of its dry-woodland and scrub habitat, but a new reserve operated by ECOAN, the *Centro de Interpretación Biológica Colibrí Maravilloso*, provides good habitat for it. Strategically placed hummingbird feeders now greatly simplify our task of seeing this remarkable hummingbird, and we should be able to see several of them. Other hummingbird possibilities at this small reserve include Sparkling and Green Violetear, Mountain Velvetbreast, White-bellied Hummingbird, Andean Emerald, Bronzy Inca, Green-tailed Trainbearer, and both White-bellied Woodstar and Little Woodstar. On nearby trails we also may see Emerald Toucanet, Speckle-chested Piculet, Variable and Rufous-capped Antshrike and Silver-backed Tanager.

Night birding offers many possibilities here, more in fact than we are likely to have time to pursue, but among the possibilities are Rufous-banded Owl, White-throated Screech-Owl, and Rufous-bellied Nighthawk all three of which often occur in the lodge garden. Other species present in the area include the rare Andean Potoo, the impressive Lyre-tailed Nightjar, Cinnamon Screech-Owl (hard to see) and of course, the rare and endearing Long-whiskered Owllet, which will be one of our main targets although it usually requires great patience and a sighting of this diminutive little owl is never assured.

Finally, it is worth noting that the endangered and endemic Yellow-tailed Woolly Monkey occurs in these beautiful cloud forests although we would have to be quite lucky to see it as well.

NIGHTS: Owlet Lodge at Abra Patricia

March 6-7, Days 7-8: To Lima and Home. After some final birding this morning, we will return to Tarapoto for a flight (either late morning or early to mid afternoon) to Lima. Upon arrival we will walk over to the hotel for our final dinner prior to your international flight home later tonight, which typically depart for the USA after 10:30 p.m. on Day 7 (March 6), arriving in the USA early the following morning. For participants not wishing the rigors of this long overnight flight may wish to consider spending your final night in Lima and taking an international flight the following morning. Arrangements can be made for overnight accommodations in Lima at an additional charge. Please contact the VENT office to confirm these arrangements.

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT: All participants will be **required** to purchase a medical evacuation policy for this tour and will be asked to sign and return to the VENT office a waiver stating that this has been done. Such a policy should be available from any insurance company which provides trip cancellation coverage.

TOUR SIZE: The Amazon River Cruise will be limited to 28 participants; the Machu Picchu Pre-trip will be limited to 14 participants; and the Cloud Forests of Northern Peru Extension will be limited to 8 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: **David Ascanio** and **Andrew Whittaker** will lead the Amazon River Cruise; **Doris Valencia** and a **second leader TBA** will lead Machu Picchu Pre-trip (note that a second leader will be added with a minimum group size of 10); **Andrew Whittaker** will lead the Cloud Forests of Northern Peru Extension.

David Ascanio, a Venezuelan birder and naturalist, has spent the last 30 years guiding birding tours throughout his native country, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, the Amazon River, Guyana, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, the Lesser Antilles, Cuba, the Orinoco River, Costa Rica, Chile, and Panama. He is especially interested in bird vocalizations, and has a private library containing sounds of more than 70% of all the birds of Venezuela. David combines superb birding skills with an astonishing command of bird vocalizations. He has published a book for children about the songs of the birds of Venezuela, and has coauthored the descriptions of two new species, the River Island Spinetail and the Delta Amacuro Softtail. David has also published various manuscripts about the birds of the *llanos* (plains), the Orinoco River island species, and the pan-tepui endemic species for which he has become an authority. He is currently writing the species accounts for a new *Field Guide to the Birds of Venezuela*. David is an excellent communicator, has a great sense of humor, and is tireless in helping others find birds and wildlife. These traits have made him one of the most popular naturalists/guides in the Neotropics.

Andrew Whittaker was born in England but considers himself to be Brazilian, having moved to this biodiverse country in 1987 to work for the Smithsonian Institution, banding and studying Amazonian rainforest birds in Manaus. His passion for birding and all aspects of natural history began in the UK at the early age of seven, thanks to his father. Andy has worked around the world studying (through banding) bird migration at observatories in Israel, Borneo, Canada, and the UK. As a senior leader for Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, he has led tours throughout most of South and Central America, Europe, and the Antarctic. With almost three decades of experience, Andy is one of Brazil's most experienced tour leaders, and is well-known for his intimate knowledge of bird voices which has enabled him to discover and describe several species new to science (such as the Cryptic Forest-Falcon in 2003) and rediscover others thought to be extinct. Andy's special interest is bird vocalizations and, along with colleagues, in 2010 he produced a DVD-ROM of songs, calls, and photos of 1,250 species of Brazilian birds. Andy immensely enjoys sharing his fascination and knowledge of Neotropical birds, animals, and their conservation, and has become one of the most popular bird guides in the country. Andy was a consultant for the prestigious *Life of Birds* series by Sir David Attenborough, and is considered an authority on Amazonian birds, having authored numerous technical publications on the region's avifauna. At present Andy is working with Kevin Zimmer on a comprehensive field guide to the birds of Brazil to be published by Princeton

University Press. Andy is a member of the Brazilian Records Committee, an associate researcher at the Museum Emilio Goeldi from Para, and is an active conservationist living with his partner Jaqueline in southern Brazil, close to a main migratory bird route.

Doris Valencia, a naturalist born in Cuzco, Peru, began her study of the Manu wilderness at a young age. She has served as a volunteer park ranger in Manu National Park, and has been working as a naturalist tour guide for about twelve years. She is an avid student of the flora and fauna of Manu and has a special interest in birds. Doris is an excellent birder and leads birding groups throughout Peru including Paracas National Marine Reserve, Bajauha-Sonene National Park, Tambopata-Candamo National Reserve, Pampas del Heath, Machu Picchu Historical Sanctuary, and Manu Biosphere Reserve. Doris is also an avid student of Peruvian history and of the history of Machu Picchu. Her lectures on the history of Machu Picchu are superb.

CRUISE INFORMATION

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the **Amazon River Cruise** is **\$6295** per person in double occupancy from Lima. The cruise fee includes breakfast on day 2 through dinner on day 10; hotel and ship accommodations as stated in the itinerary; internal Peru flights (Lima-Iquitos-Lima)*; domestic departure tax; ground transportation during the tour; group transfers and baggage handling between airport, ship, and hotel; shore excursions and river cruises as described; gratuities to the crew and staff including the Naturalists and Expedition Leader of *La Estrella Amazonica*; and the services of on-board leaders and lecturers.

Not included in your cruise fee is roundtrip airfare from your home to Lima and return; alcoholic beverages; phone calls; laundry; excess baggage charges; international departure taxes; passport or visa fees (if applicable); accommodations, meals, and transfers prior to joining/after tour; personal and baggage insurance; and all 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.

Share Policy: We will be limiting guaranteed single accommodation while on *La Estrella Amazonica* to two cabins with a single supplement of **\$3700**. After these two cabins have been reserved, single travelers will have cabin mates assigned and will only be charged the double occupancy rate. When pairing roommates, we will always pair participants of the same sex and all shared accommodations are nonsmoking. If it is not possible to pair you with a roommate, you may be asked to pay a single supplement for the land portion only, **\$275**.

***Please Note: Domestic airfare Lima-Iquitos-Lima is included in the tour fee above. At the time of printing the approximate cost of these air segments is approximately \$430 but is subject to change without notice until the time of ticketing. Victor Emanuel Nature Tours reserves the right to assess a surcharge for this air ticket should costs increase before ticketing.**

MACHU PICCHU PRE-TRIP INFORMATION

The fee for the **Machu Picchu Pre-trip** is **\$3995** in double occupancy from Lima. The single supplement is **\$545**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share, but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

The tour fee includes all meals beginning with breakfast on day 2 through dinner on day 6; internal Peru flights (Lima-Cuzco-Lima)*; domestic departure tax; lodging as stated in the itinerary; ground transportation during the tour; one entrance into Machu Picchu; domestic departure taxes; and guide services provided by the tour leader.

Not included in your tour fee is roundtrip airfare from your home to Lima and return; a second entrance fee and bus transport for Machu Picchu on Day 5; international departure taxes; alcoholic beverages; special gratuities; phone calls; laundry; passport or visa fees (if applicable); accommodations, meals, and transfers prior to

joining/after tour; personal and baggage insurance; 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.

***Please Note: Domestic airfare Lima-Cuzco-Lima is included in the tour fee. At the time of printing the approximate cost of these air segments is approximately \$495 but is subject to change without notice until the time of ticketing. Victor Emanuel Nature Tours reserves the right to assess a surcharge for this air ticket should costs increase before ticketing.**

NORTHERN PERU POST-TRIP INFORMATION

The fee for the **Cloud Forests of Northern Peru Post-trip** is **\$3195** in double occupancy from Iquitos. The single supplement is **\$775**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share, but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

The tour fee includes all meals beginning with breakfast on day 2 through dinner on day 7; internal Peru flights (Iquitos-Tarapoto-Lima)*; domestic departure tax; lodging as stated in the itinerary; ground transportation during the tour; domestic departure taxes; gratuities; and guide services provided by the tour leader.

Not included in your tour fee is roundtrip airfare from your home to Iquitos with return from Lima; international departure taxes; alcoholic beverages; special gratuities; phone calls; laundry; passport or visa fees (if applicable); accommodations, meals, and transfers prior to joining/after tour; personal and baggage insurance; 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.

***Please Note: Domestic airfare Iquitos-Tarapoto-Lima is included in the tour fee. At the time of printing the approximate cost of these air segments is \$265 but is subject to change without notice until the time of ticketing. Victor Emanuel Nature Tours reserves the right to assess a surcharge for this air ticket should costs increase before ticketing.**

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT:

Cruise: To register for the **Amazon River Cruise**, please complete the registration form and return it with a deposit of **\$2000** per person.

Pre-trip: The deposit for the **Machu Picchu Pre-trip** is **\$500** per person.

Post-trip: The deposit for the **Cloud Forests of Northern Peru Post-trip** is **\$500** per person.

If you would like to pay your initial deposit(s) by check, money order, or bank transfer, 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 the initial deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard, Visa or American Express at the time of registration. The VENT registration form (available through our office or our website: www.ventbird.com) should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

This Amazon River Cruise is designed for persons in reasonably good health. By forwarding the expedition deposit, you certify that you do not have a physical condition or disability which would create a hazard to you or other passengers. VENT reserves the right to decline to accept or retain you or other passengers should your health, actions, or general deportment impede the operations of the expedition or the rights, welfare, or enjoyment of other passengers.

PAYMENTS: Initial tour deposits may be made by MasterCard, Visa, American Express, check, money order, or bank transfer. All other tour payments, including second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc., must be made by check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

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 voyage. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of brochure printing. 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.

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:

Amazon River Cruise: \$500 of your initial deposit of \$2000 is entirely non-refundable. Cancellations occurring between 119 and 90 days prior to sailing are subject to a cancellation fee of \$2000. Cancellations occurring within 89 days prior to sailing are 100% non-refundable whether previously paid or not. Any refunds will be reduced by applicable airline cancellation penalties. No refunds will be made in the event of “no shows” or cancellations made on the day of sailing. *We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.*

Machu Picchu Pre-trip: Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 120 days or more before 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. *We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.*

Cloud Forests of Northern Peru Post-trip: Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 120 days or more before 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. *We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.*

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two 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.

TRIP INSURANCE: A brochure and application form regarding 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.

Medical insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation/repatriation during the trip is required for this tour. 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.

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, additional hotels, etc.) must be received no later than 60 days prior to departure date. Requests made within 60 days may not be available.**

CONDITIONS:

The Program – This **Amazon River Cruise** is an all-around natural history expedition as well as a birding trip. While seeing as many birds and other wildlife is of high importance, an overarching goal is to experience the many habitats that comprise the region we call “Amazonia,” one of the world’s most dynamic ecosystems. Travel on the river will be aboard a new and very comfortable riverboat. Off the boat, we will explore back channels and tributary rivers aboard stable motorized skiffs. In most years, the program includes a morning in “terre firme” habitat where we’ll have the opportunity to walk a forest trail on higher ground. Physical demands for this trip are light.

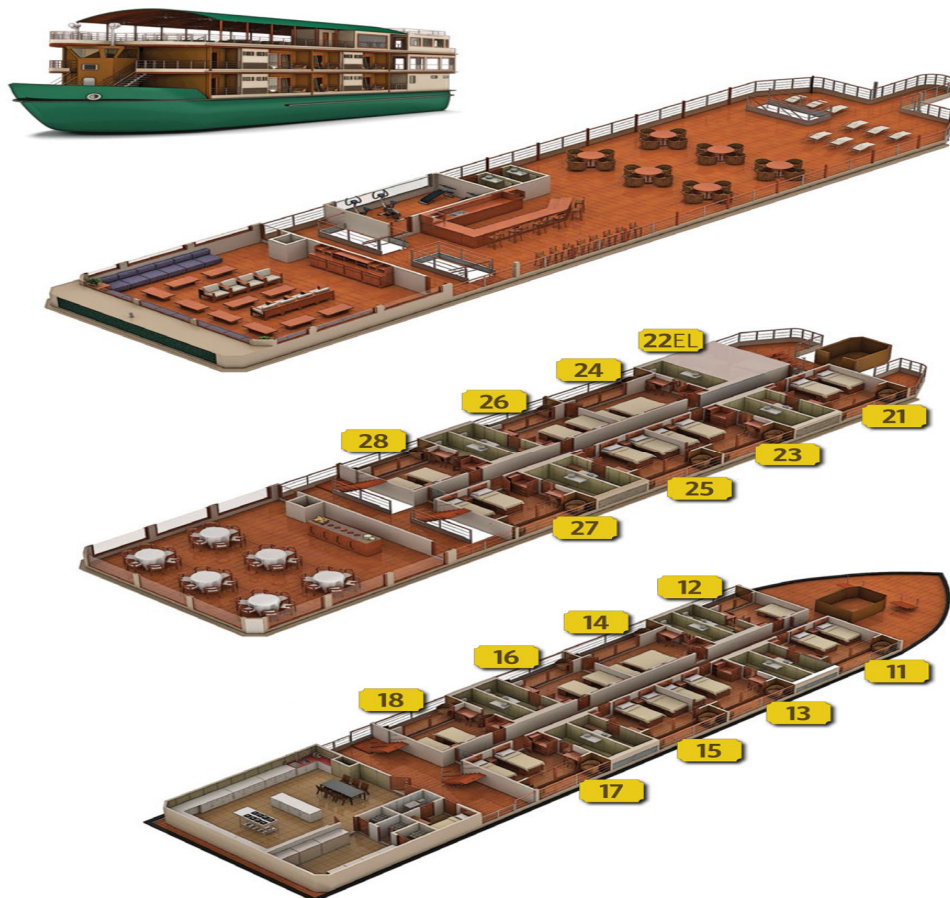
Our routine for most days will involve an early morning breakfast (usually about 0530 hrs) followed by a skiff expedition lasting from approximately 0610 to 0930 hrs. Thereafter, we will return to the boat for a 15-20 minute break followed by a second late morning excursion (optional) lasting from about 10:00 to 11:45. After a noon lunch we’ll enjoy some personal time, or down time, until about 3-4:00 p.m., at which point there will be a late-afternoon skiff trip exploring a new location. Dinner will usually be at 7:00 p.m. most nights and this will usually be followed immediately by a checklist and recap session in the lecture room. We also will offer two or three 20-30n minute lectures prior to our afternoon outings. An optional nighttime outing to search for night birds, frogs, and insects may be offered on one night. The schedule is always subject to amending based on discretion of your tour leaders or the boat’s expedition leader and the ship captains. Occasionally we may enjoy breakfast in the field.

The **Machu Picchu Pre-trip** is a birding trip with a strong slant on Inca history and regional culture. We’ll travel to Peru’s southern Andes and the old colonial city of Cuzco, jumping off point for the Urubamba River Valley and Machu Picchu. This trip will spend time at considerable high elevation, and with considerable daily elevational changes, so participants with any health problems or concerns should take this into account before registering. We will spend part of a day around Cuzco (approximately 11,000 feet) and another day birding the Andes up to 14,000 feet at Abra Malaga Pass. At Machu Picchu the ruins are at approximately 7700-8,000 feet but our hotel is at about 6000 feet elevation. We’ll travel aboard buses for most of the tour; however, the trip to Machu Picchu and return involves an exciting three-hour train ride through the Urubamba River Valley. At Machu Picchu we will participate in a guided walking tour of the archaeological site. Physical demands for this trip are generally light-moderate but with any visit to Machu Picchu there is a certain amount of physical exertion involved in walking and especially in climbing up and down the many uneven rock steps at the ruins and at significant elevation.

For the **Cloud Forests of Northern Peru Post-trip**, we’ll travel to the northern Andes seeking a range of regional specialty special birds. We’ll spend one night at a lodge near Moyobamba and the remainder of the trip at the Owllet Lodge at Abra Patricia. Accommodations are fairly good at both lodges. Rooms are comfortable

and the food good at the lodge near Moyobamba and the elevation here is low (3300 feet). The trail to the hummingbird garden is fairly short but steep and can be slippery after a rain. However, at the garden itself, there is an elevated lookout with bench seats. The longer trail into the upper forest is well maintained initially but once inside the forest some sections are steep and less well-maintained. Persons in reasonably good physical condition, however, should not experience problems. The Owllet Lodge at Abra Patricia is located at 7600 feet elevation (2300 m) and the climate here is decidedly cooler, and damp and foggy conditions (especially at night) are frequent. Rooms are comfortable but unheated and can be cool to chilly some nights. From the parking lot there is an approximately 125 yard uphill trail leading to the main lodge and dining area and an additional 75 yard walk beyond to the rooms, which are located in three buildings. All lodging consists of private two-room suits, each suite with a shared bathroom and an entry room. There are six two-room suits at present (a total of twelve rooms with six bathrooms). Physical demands range from light to light-strenuous. Forest trails at the Owllet Lodge are generally wide and well-maintained but involve considerable walking both uphill and downhill because the terrain is hilly. Expeditions to see owls here generally require considerable physical exertion. Most birding is done along the main highway, or on short trails. At the Spatulatail Reserve, an hour drive away, both sets of hummingbird feeders are accessed by fairly short and well-maintained, but moderately steep, trails.

About La Estrella Amazonica



Technical Information

- Length: 141 feet; Width: 29.5 feet
- Built: 2013
- Registry: Peru
- Passenger Capacity: 31; Staff and Crew: 14

Dining – The riverboat’s spacious window-lined dining room accommodates all passengers in a single seating with tables unassigned. All meals are served buffet-style using fresh local ingredients when possible. The chefs prepare a range of culinary options to accommodate everyone’s tastes, including vegetarians. Participants with special dietary needs should inform our office at the time of registration.

While on the boat – While cruising the river, you’ll have options to join your leaders on the viewing decks for birding and wildlife viewing, or relax in your room, on deck, or in the Lecture Room. The January-March period is generally a time of high water on the Amazon River, but cruising conditions should be smooth throughout the voyage.

While on land – The nature of this program precludes walking on land; however, we will make at least one effort to go ashore in “terre firme” habitat for birding in the drier, more heavily forested uplands. This type of excursion will involve a short-to-moderate length walk on a forest trail. Please be forewarned that the trail could be muddy if it has recently rained. Please see the notes on FOOTWEAR below. For the **Machu Picchu Pre-trip** and **Cloud Forests of Northern Peru Extension**, all walking will be on established roads and trails.

Motorized skiffs – *La Estrella Amazonica* is equipped with two motorized skiffs for exploring back channels and tributary rivers—places where the larger vessel cannot travel. Each skiff is of metal construction and features a flat bottom for better access to shallow water. This design also ensures a stable and comfortable excursion. Twin outboard motors of four-stroke design provide plenty of power while yielding a remarkably quiet ride.

CLIMATE & WEATHER: In Amazonian Peru, temperatures will be warm, but they will rarely exceed 90° F and often are 85° or less at this time of year. However, because of high rainfall and humidity, it may feel somewhat uncomfortable at times. The climate, of course, is warm and humid. Along the main course of the Amazon River, which is close to the equator, there is no pronounced dry season. In almost any month, rains may vary from brief afternoon showers to more extended periods of heavy rain.

Participants on the **Machu Picchu Pre-trip** should be prepared for the possibility of rain, mainly in the vicinity of Machu Picchu itself, even though this trip is scheduled for the dry season. Bring an umbrella and/or a lightweight poncho. The Urubamba Valley can be quite chilly in the early mornings, and a sweater and/or fleece and jacket combination (layers) will be necessary for the first few hours. You also should bring gloves and a warm hat. Bear in mind, however, that although mornings can be chilly (upper 30s to upper 40s) temperatures warm rapidly by mid-morning, and mid-day is quite pleasant. Around Machu Picchu (about 6,500 to 7,500 feet), mornings are generally fairly warm and pleasant (70s or higher), and a light jacket or fleece should be sufficient. Mid-day temperatures can sometimes be quite warm and sunny but one should always be prepared for the possibility of a rain shower. The train is heated, so very warm clothing for the return train trip is not necessary. Participants should have long pants and long shirts to protect against a few black-flies that may be present around Machu Picchu.

For **Northern Peru’s Cloud Forest Post-trip**, weather conditions can be extremely variable. The lowland is likely to be warm-to-hot with temperatures in the 90s. The driest months are June through October. Conversely, time spent in the mountains (Abra Patricia) will see cool temperatures at night and in the mornings (low 50s) warming quickly on sunny days. Visitors here should be prepared for rain and foggy conditions any month of the year although it is generally drier (rains less) during the June through October period. Temperatures also can be quite variable. During a visit we may see almost no rain, or conversely, there can be extended periods of drizzle and rain. We should point out, however, that birding is generally best during misty conditions, or periods with intermittent light rain, and worst on hot sunny days.

BAGGAGE: The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. **Please consult your pre-departure materials and airline to find out specific weight restrictions.**

Baggage limits for our domestic flights within Peru are 20 kg (44 pounds) total for checked luggage (maximum of 2 pieces of luggage) and all luggage is weighed at check-in. Persons with luggage in excess of this amount will be required to pay overweight charges. Therefore, we request participants limit their baggage to one medium-sized suitcase of no more than 44 pounds and one carry-on, as space in vehicles and on the riverboat may be limited.

Participants on the Machu Picchu Pre-trip should travel with only a small to medium-sized backpack and perhaps another hand or shoulder bag, which can be carried easily. You will be able to leave any extra luggage at the hotel in Lima. This will greatly facilitate disembarking the train at the Hotel Machu Picchu Pueblo, checking in to the hotel, and re-boarding the train for the return trip to Cuzco. The train has very limited space for luggage; also, travelers will have to board a bus for the last 30-40 minute portion of the return trip to Cuzco, where, again, having less luggage will be more convenient. With this in mind, all travelers will be much happier with a minimum of luggage for this portion of the trip (**please do not bring any suitcases or large duffels for this portion of the trip**).

As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve security, we recommend that you check the website of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for information pertaining to permissible carry-on items:

<http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

CLOTHING: We ask that participants bring hats and clothing of mostly subdued colors (i.e. khakis, tans or shades of dull blue, green or brown) which serve to reduce the conspicuousness of our movements. White T-shirts or white shirts are suitable in boats but please do not wear them in the forest. We do not recommend wearing obviously military-style clothing.

- **Pants and Shorts:** A couple pairs of pants and shorts each are recommended. Many people prefer loose-fitting pants made of cotton or other material. Shorts or other comfortable lightweight clothing will be desirable for warmer times of day while onboard the riverboat.
- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI carry field clothing that many birders find appealing. Pants and shirts made of lightweight, yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular and more reasonably priced than in the past.
- **Shirts:** Several shirts, (long and short-sleeved), in addition to other comfortable styles suitable for warm weather.
- **Lightweight Poncho:** Quite useful on boat outings in the event of rain.
- **Hat:** A good hat for protection from the sun and rain is essential.

For the **Machu Picchu Pre-trip**, please be aware that we stay only one night at the ruins area (very elegant hotel), and that space for luggage is quite limited on the train. Train stations also are very crowded. Therefore, when we depart the city of Urubamba for Machu Picchu, your large luggage will be sent back to Cuzco by bus and will be waiting for you on our return. We recommend that participants bring only one or two small packs (e.g. back pack and a hand carry bag) for the overnight at Machu Picchu. This will make it much easier to board and disembark the train, and check in and out of hotel at Machu Picchu. When we arrive at Machu Picchu we will not immediately have the use of our rooms (usually not until our return to the hotel in the evening as the staff needs time to clean rooms) so luggage must be stored at the hotel upon arrival. Therefore, it is important that participants have either a sturdy plastic bag or (preferably) a second light weight back pack that you can use for your day trip to the ruins as you will be leaving toiletries and your change of clothes in a bag or pack, checked at the hotel for the day. The following morning, however, we will not have to check out of our rooms until 11 a.m. so we will be able to spend the morning birding, then return and check out before lunch. The hotel at Machu Picchu supplies bottled water, shower thongs, robe (for room use); also a small oil heater is present in each room in case temperatures get cool.

Clothing and equipment for the overnight ruins trip:

- Sturdy walking shoes (or hiking boots if you prefer)
- Walking Stick may be useful (optional)
- One change of clothes including long-sleeved shirt and long pants
- Light jacket or fleece (it will not be cold at Machu Picchu)
- Umbrella
- Broad brim hat and sunscreen (sun very intense at ruins)
- Binoculars, camera, field checklist of birds (supplied by VENT)
- Book: Birds of Peru
- Passport and air tickets (keep with you at all times)
- Toiletries, medicines, personal items such as small pocket notebook, etc.

FOOTWEAR: A lightweight hiking boot or trail shoe with good traction is strongly recommended throughout the durations of the **Machu Picchu Pre-trip** and the **Cloud Forests of Northern Peru Post-trip**. Heavy duty hiking boots are not necessary for this trip. You may also prefer sandals and/or tennis shoes for time on the boat. A pair of light-weight tennis shoes and a pair of sturdy walking/hiking shoes (we recommend that at least one pair be gore-tex or waterproof).

Rubber Boots (optional): Rubber boots are recommended during high water periods of March to June, and in September and October, but some areas can be muddy at any season of the year; rubber boots also provide protection against chiggers at any season. Please be aware, however, that the majority of our outings will be in boats and we will not be doing extensive hiking.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is provided by the ship staff for an extra charge. Please check with the staff upon embarkation for procedures and turnaround time.

EQUIPMENT: One of the most important aspects of having an enjoyable travel experience is being prepared with proper equipment. The following items will come in handy during your trip to Peru:

- **Strong Sunscreen**
- **Insect Repellent (and some Permethrin-treated clothes)**
- **Reliable Flashlight:** A flashlight, or at least a small L.E.D. –type headlamp or SMA light is essential. These can be used in rooms and for doing checklists and writing in the evenings (even though the boat will have electricity on a 24-hr. basis)
- **Umbrella and Light weight, Waterproof Poncho:** We recommend you bring both, which are especially useful on the small boats. Ponchos are especially useful on the small excursion boats.
- **Plastic Bags or “Dry Bags”:** Rain showers are unpredictable and often appear suddenly in the Amazon. Those with larger camera and optical equipment should consider bringing plenty of plastic bags or a “dry bag” to protect equipment against moisture intrusion.
- **Other Plastic Bags:** Other plastic bags of various sizes, including a couple larger, heavier bags for protecting duffels and luggage from rain during transport to and from lodges; bring enough medium-sized plastic bags to fully pack all your clothes inside of them for waterproofing during boat and lodge transfers
- **Shower Thongs for Showers** (and for walking to and from them)
- **All personal medications and toiletries:** There will be no opportunity to restock once we leave Iquitos
- **Small Backpack or Over-the-shoulder Bag:** For carrying items in the field; a pack that is completely or partially waterproof, or sheds water and dries quickly, is most useful
- **Binoculars** – We strongly recommend good binoculars of at least 7x35, 8x42, 10x40, or 10x42 magnification. Please do NOT bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. Trying to find a bird in your binoculars using “minis” is like trying to read a book through a keyhole. You will be very frustrated, and even if you do manage to get the bird in your binoculars

before it flies, you will have a poor view. You will find that 7x35 or 8x42 binoculars are compact and light enough.

- **Spotting Scopes** – Since most wildlife viewing will take place on a moving ship or skiff, or among the birds and animals at very close range, you do not need to bring a spotting scope. Your tour leaders will have one available for group use on the occasions where it is necessary to have one. For the pre-trip and extension, we also recommend you refrain from bringing your scope as it adds to the size and weight of your luggage.

OPTIONAL ITEMS:

- A very lightweight, thin mesh head net (in case insects are a problem on the elevated walkway)
- A small canteen and some packaged snacks. Bottled water is provided in abundance by the ship.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:

PASSPORTS - A valid passport is required for entry into Peru. Please check the expiration date on your passport. **If it is not valid for at least six months after your trip return date, you will need to get it renewed.** You will also want to make sure that you have at least two blank pages in your passport for stamps.

If you need a passport, you should get it well in advance of your trip departure date. For additional fees, a passport can be issued on an expedited basis. In the United States this can be done at the nearest passport office, most post offices, or the county clerk's office. You may also visit www.state.gov/travel/ for information on how to get or renew a passport.

As a safety measure, photocopy the first two pages of your passport. Keep the photocopies in a safe place, so if your passport is lost you will have proof of identification. Your passport should be signed and easily available at all times. You will need it for check-in at the airport on your first day of departure, so **do not pack it in your checked luggage.** On board ship, it is often customary for the purser to hold all passports for clearance with port authorities. Your passport may be collected upon embarkation, and returned upon disembarkation.

VISAS – American citizen visitors to Peru do not need a visa if they are traveling as a tourist with a valid U.S. passport. You will be issued a tourist card upon entry, which is valid for up to 90 days. Rules and regulations pertaining to non-U.S. citizens may vary; please check with the immigration office, consulate, or embassy of Peru for information on entry requirements. Visa requirements can change without notice, and you should check the latest entry requirements as far in advance as possible in order to allow time to obtain a visa in your home country should that be necessary.

CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS: Your trip to Peru includes all necessary expenses, including all meals and accommodations aboard *La Estrella Amazonica*. While U.S. dollars might be accepted in large cities and shops, it is always convenient to have a supply of local currency for such items as taxi rides, gifts, non-meal-time and off-ship refreshments, laundry tips, meals on your own, extra gratuities, and personal items. It is best to acquire local currency before leaving the U.S., although U.S. dollars can be exchanged in Lima at banks and major hotels. Small denominations of cash are always best as it is easier for individuals and businesses to provide change. It is not recommended to exchange money from street vendors.

Upon embarkation, a shipboard account will be opened for your convenience. The U.S. dollar is the official currency aboard the ship. Credit cards, Visa and MasterCard (not American Express or Discover) are accepted for expenses on board that may be paid and settled at the end of the cruise. Note that it may not always be possible to make change for travelers' checks and cash in large denominations; the ship staff would appreciate the use of U.S. dollars, if paying by cash in smaller denominations for settlement of your shipboard account.

There is no facility on board for exchanging U.S. dollars into local currency. Should you extend your vacation in Peru beyond what is offered in the cruise program, you should strongly consider obtaining local currency. ATM machines can be found in large cities and in some towns; you shouldn't have any problems using major cards in hotels, restaurants, and some shops. Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

The official currency of Peru is the Peruvian Nuevo Sol (PEN). As of May 14, 2013 the conversion rate is: 1 US Dollar = 2.600 PEN; 1 PEN = 0.38461 USD. You can check the latest currency conversion rate by visiting "XE-The World's Favorite Currency Site" at: <http://www.xe.com/>.

ELECTRICITY: Power in Peru is 220V, with use of outlet types "A" and "C" most prevalent. The "A" type outlet accommodates a flat two-bladed plug while the "C" type outlet, also known as the European-style outlet, accommodates a plug with two round pins. To ensure that use of American standard 110V equipment with the flat-pronged plugs will work, you should bring an all purpose transformer to convert the current for 110V use, in addition to proper plug adapters. Power aboard ship is supplied through 110/220 volt outlets, which can accommodate American style plugs.

LANGUAGE: Spanish is the primary language spoken in Peru; English is spoken by our local guides and agents in addition to the boat's expedition staff.

TIME: The time zone of Peru is Peru Time (PET) and is standard all year. For Amazon River cruises departing in January, PET is the same as Eastern Standard Time (EST). Trips departing after March 10 will be one hour ahead of Eastern Daylight Time (EDT).

HEALTH: Those passenger who are not fit for a cruise, including those with physical disabilities that affect mobility and balance, heart or immune deficiencies, or other conditions associated with poor health, are advised not to join the cruise. A serious health emergency may result in an air evacuation, which will come at considerable expense to you. **Comprehensive optional insurance, including coverage for medical evacuation (REQUIRED), is available through Travel Insured International and can be purchased with your trip cancellation policy. Please consult your insurance agent or existing policy, if in effect, for the terms and limitations of your existing coverage. Please refer to the section on Trip Cancellation Insurance.**

As of this writing (May 2013), no major shots or inoculations are required for entry into Peru; however, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination or prophylaxis against a variety of preventable diseases, including: **1) Routine Vaccinations / 2) Yellow Fever / 3) Malaria**

- 1) Routine Vaccinations** (if you are not up-to-date), which are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine; diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine; and poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers who have received a primary series with either inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) or oral polio vaccine (OPV); they should receive another dose of IPV before departure). You should also be up-to-date with your **Hepatitis A**, or Immune Globulin (IG), **Hepatitis B** and **Typhoid** vaccinations. Note that a combined hepatitis A/B vaccination is now available.
- 2) Yellow Fever** is a viral disease transmitted between humans by a mosquito. It is a very rare cause of illness in travelers, in part because of the precautions taken by affected countries. In Peru it is recommended for all travelers visiting lowland/jungle areas east of the Andes, or travelers arriving from any country where Yellow Fever is endemic. It is not recommended for those whose travels will be limited to Lima on the coast or highland areas such as Cuzco and Machu Picchu. The yellow fever vaccine is a live virus vaccine which has been in use for several decades. A single dose confers immunity for ten years or more if you are not continually exposed. Adults and children over nine months can take this vaccine. The vaccine is not recommended for certain types of travelers, including pregnant women, persons hypersensitive to eggs, or persons suffering from a condition related to HIV/AIDS. Your doctor can help you make the best decision about the vaccine.

- 3) **Malaria** is a protozoan transmitted between humans by a mosquito. Malaria has been confirmed in Peru including the chloroquine-resistant strain in rural areas. Travelers to most places in Peru lying below 6,600 feet, except the Lima area, are advised to take anti-malarial medication. To reduce the risk of contracting this disease, travelers are strongly urged to take one of the following antimalarial drugs (brand names in parentheses): mefloquine (Lariam), doxycycline, or atovaquone/proguanil (Malarone). Some travelers may experience serious side effects from antimalarial drugs; consult with your physician to determine the best preventative medication. These medications are available by prescription only. Please consult your physician or local travel clinic for recommendations. Please see the **Biting Insects** section below regarding bite prevention.

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the expedition 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.

Sun Exposure – The sun’s ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes). Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. Severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors and be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

Biting Insects – Mosquitoes occur along the Amazon River and can be numerous, particularly around the forest. To protect you from being bitten, we recommend wearing long-sleeved shirts, pants, and a hat when in the field, particularly between the late afternoon and cooler morning hours. Keep windows closed while you sleep, and make sure that your insect repellent contains DEET (spray and stick). Repellent can be applied to exposed skin and/or clothing. Clothing (two sets) sprayed with Permethrin is another option (pre-treated or you can treat yourself).

A Note About Chiggers: This tour visits a couple of areas where chiggers are known to occur, mainly around villages and settlements along the Amazon. 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.

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 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) 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).

DEPARTURE TAX: At present, the international departure tax is about \$35. For travelers who purchased their air tickets from major U.S. carriers, the tax should be included in the cost of the ticket. We recommend that you keep some extra cash handy when checking in for your flight.

SUGGESTED READING: Our website, 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 this store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You may also visit such other online stores such as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print or hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com or www.buteobooks.com which specializes in ornithology books.

AMAZON CRUISE

BIRDS – ESSENTIAL:

Hilty, Steven, and William L. Brown. *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia*. Princeton University Press, 1986. op. Now a classic handbook on the birds of Colombia and surrounding areas; contains excellent plates depicting virtually every species likely to be seen on this trip.

Hilty, Steven. *Birds of Tropical America: a watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity*. University of Texas Press. 2005. A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity. Recommended for anyone interested in the natural history of bird communities (and how things work) in New World tropical latitudes.

Schulenberg, T. S., D. F. Stotz, D. F. Lane, J. P. O'Neill, & T. A. Parker III. *Birds of Peru*. 2007. Princeton University Press. Long in preparation this new and up-to-date guide is now the essential field guide for all birders visiting Peru. Relatively compact (but remember, there are almost 1800 species in this book) although not as small or lightweight as field guides to North America and Europe.

GENERAL TOPICS:

Forsyth, Adrian & Miyata, Ken. *Tropical Nature: Life and Death in the Rain Forests of Central and South America*. Touchstone (Simon & Schuster), 1995. Easy to read, perceptive account of the chain of life in the rain forest. Seventeen lively, extremely well-written essays introduce habitats, ecology, plants, animals, and insects of the Amazonian region.

Goulding, Michael, et al. *Floods of Fortune. Ecology and Economy Along the Amazon*. Columbia University Press, 1996. The book, on the present status of the river, enables the reader to grasp the issues and understand the immense devastation the Amazon Region has undergone—and the global implications of that destruction. Beautiful photographs. Highly recommended.

- Kricher, John. *Neotropical Companion*. Princeton University Press. An introduction to the animals, plants and ecosystems of the New World Tropics. Recommended as a general, broad-based introduction to plants and animals of Amazonia.
- Insight Guide. *Amazon Wildlife*. (Geoffrey, E. ed.). APA Publications, 2002. An illustrated guide to the region and its wildlife. Covers biogeography, habitats, animal groups, and conservation.
- Pearson, David L., L. Beletsky, and P. Barrett. *Peru: The Traveler's Wildlife Guide*. (Paperback; 1st American ed.) Interlink Books, 2004. Covers a wide range of topics from ecotourism in Amazonia to geography, habitats, parks, reserves, ecology, and natural history. Nice introductory sections (well-illustrated) on amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, insects, and other arthropods. Excellent introductory book on Amazonian with especially good illustrations of more common wildlife.

FURTHER READING ON BIRDS, MAMMALS, REPTILES, & AMPHIBIANS:

- Bartlett, R. D., and P. Bartlett. *Reptiles and Amphibians of the Amazon*. 2003. Guide to 250 more commonly found snakes, lizards, turtles, frogs, and salamanders of the Amazon basin.
- Castner, J. L., S. L. Timme, and J. A. Duke. *A Field Guide to Medicinal and Useful Plants of the Upper Amazon*. 1998. A photographic guide to identification of commoner plants with practical uses in the upper Amazonian basin forest.
- Emmons, Louise and François Feer. *Neotropical Rainforest Mammals: A Field Guide*. University of Chicago Press, 1990. A color-illustrated field guide to the mammals of the Neotropics.
- Gentry, Al. *A Field Guide to the Families and Genera of Woody Plants of Northwest South America*. University of Chicago Press, 1996. A keyed reference to the plant genera of Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Illustrated with black-and-white sketches. The only book of its kind on plant identification of the region, but not always easy to use.
- Henderson, Andrew et al. *Field Guide to the Palms of the Americas*. Princeton University Press, 1995.
- Ridgely, Robert S., and P. Greenfield. *The Birds of Ecuador, Vol. II: Field Guide*. Cornell University Press, 2001. Also useful for this trip. Newer taxonomy than Colombia book but lacks a number of Amazonian river island birds which do not reach Ecuador.
- Valqui, T. 2004. Where to Watch Birds in Peru. www.granperu.com/birdwatchingbook. A very helpful book for birders interesting in exploring Peru. Published in Peru.

MACHU PICCHU

BIRDS:

- Schulenberg, T. S., D. F. Stotz, D. F. Lane, J. P. O'Neill, & T. A. Parker III. *Birds of Peru*. 2007. Princeton University Press. Long in preparation this new and up-to-date guide is and an essential reference for birders visiting Peru. Relatively compact (there are approximately 1800 species in this book) but not as small or lightweight as field guides to North America and Europe. Also excellent for Machu Picchu; perhaps more difficult to use than the Walker book listed below because it contains so many more birds, but this book has better illustrations and does have fine maps and a concise text.
- Walker, B. *A Field Guide to the Birds of Machu Picchu*. 2001. Peruvian National Trust for Parks and Protected Areas (PROFONANPE). Lima, Peru. This is the recommended book for the Machu Picchu area but it may be difficult to find in the US. Advantageous because of its relatively small size and the fact that it covers only the subset of birds found in the Machu Picchu area (a big advantage given the enormous avifauna in Peru). It illustrates all of the birds we will see on our pre trip and has a useful text.

GENERAL: (this is but a sample of the many books available on the Machu Picchu area and Inca History)

- Beech, C. *Lonely Planet Peru*. Fifth Edition. 2004.
- Bingham, Hiram. *The Lost City of the Incas*. Sterling Publications, 2002.
- Thomson, H. *The White Rock. An Exploration of the Inca Heartland*. Woodstock, 2001.
- Wright, R. M. and A. V. Zegarra. *The Machu Picchu Guidebook: A Self-Guided Tour*. 2004.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, and local guides) is included on all land portions of this tour, including the pre-trip and extension. Gratuities for the Ship's Naturalists, Expedition Leader, and the crew and staff are also **included** in your cruise fee. If you feel one or all of your VENT leaders or any local guide or

Naturalist has provided exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

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