**Borneo**

**July 11-29, 2017**

*Please note that the tour dates differ slightly from the dates listed in our 2017 catalog.

Borneo—the very name conjures images of teeming jungles and a profusion of strange and little-known plants and creatures. Giant flying squirrels, hairy primates, gliding snakes and flying frogs, orchid-like praying mantis, goggle-eyed tarsiers, the world’s largest flower, weird monkeys, carnivorous pitcher plants, and much more all characterize this fabulous island.

The tropical dipterocarp forests of Borneo are among the world’s oldest, supporting an amazing diversity of animal and plant life, surpassed only by the lowland communities of the Amazon Basin. The sheer number of charismatic species found here, including Bornean Orangutan, Bornean Pygmy Elephant, Proboscis Monkey, Bornean Clouded Leopard, Great Argus, eight species of hornbills and Bornean Bristlehead, endows these forests and their visitors with one of the most exciting tropical rainforest experiences anywhere on our planet. Borneo’s smaller birds are no less exciting, with numerous little-known endemics plus a plethora of tropical Asian pigeons, parakeets, cuckoos, trogons, kingfishers, barbets, woodpeckers, broadbills, pittas, bulbuls, babblers, flowerpeckers, sunbirds and more.

To see some of these wonders of Borneo we will focus on four areas: the magnificent montane forests of Kinabalu National Park, the tropical lowland forest at Sepilok Reserve, the mangrove and swamp forests along the lower Kinabatangan River, and the incomparable primary rainforests of the Danum Valley. Between them they offer the full spectrum of the best of Borneo. Add to this great food and accommodations in a very friendly and pleasant multi-ethnic country and you have all of the makings for a great tour.

Tower over the surrounding landscape, the awe-inspiring granite peak of Kinabalu has long lured travelers and naturalists to explore her lush cloud-enshrouded forests. The highest landmark between New Guinea and the Himalayas, Mt. Kinabalu is virtually an island in the sky, and as such supports a number of extremely local endemic birds. Here we will search among the huge epiphyte-clad sentinels, lush and thick understory, and flowering rhododendrons for such specialties as the Crimson-headed Partridge, Whitehead’s Trogon (rare), Golden-naped and Mountain barbets, the sumptuous Whitehead’s Broadbill, Mountain Wren-Babbler, Bare-headed and Chestnut-hooded laughingthrushes, the diminutive Bornean Stubtail, and Whitehead’s Spiderhunter.

From the mountain we will travel to the Sepilok Reserve, a wonderful introduction to the lowland forests of Borneo, including access to the canopy on a very sturdy walkway and a maze of forest interior trails. Then we transfer to boats for our explorations of the lower reaches of the Kinabatangan River, from the vast complex of mangrove forests at its mouth, upriver to the swamp forests along its banks. Numerous special creatures are found in this region, from Orangutan and Bornean Pygmy
Elephant (if we are lucky) to the comical Proboscis Monkey, endangered Storm’s Stork, a variety of raptors and many large hornbills.

The highlight of the tour will undoubtedly be our visit to the Danum Valley and the thrill of exploring these towering dipterocarp forests cannot be overstated. We will do so from the comfort of perhaps the finest and most beautiful lodge in the whole of Southeast Asia, the Borneo Rainforest Lodge, set in the heart of the Danum Valley amidst some of the most magnificent rainforest remaining on the island of Borneo. With four full days and five nights here, we will have an enviable chance to fully appreciate the richness of this forest haven and observe many of the fascinating birds and animals that live here.

**July 11-13, Days 1-3: Travel to Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Borneo.** Participants should plan to arrive in Kota Kinabalu on or before July 13. Please keep in mind that travel to Borneo from the USA requires crossing the International Dateline, which means the loss of one day in transit. Upon arrival at the airport in Kota Kinabalu (locally known as KK; airport code BKI), you will be met by a representative of our ground agent and escorted to our hotel. Please arrange your departure from home to ensure that you arrive in sufficient time to meet with the group and your leader in the hotel lobby bar area at **6:30 p.m. on July 13**, for a preliminary get together followed by dinner.

**NIGHTS (July 11 & 12): In transit (overnight flight)**

**NIGHT (July 13): Shangri La Tanjung Aru Beach Hotel, Kota Kinabalu**

**July 14, Day 4: AM Kota Belud Area; PM birding around KK.** We must depart early this morning for the drive north to the coastal wetlands of Kota Belud and the Tempasuk Plain. Although largely altered by agriculture, these wetlands, associated scrub, and swamp forests support many species, which we are unlikely to encounter elsewhere: with a bit of luck Cinnamon, Yellow and perhaps Black bitterns; four species of egrets; Purple Heron; possibly Slaty-breasted Rail; White-browed Crane; Watercock; Oriental Pratincole – breeds occasionally; Long-toed Stint; Little and Pink-necked green-pigeons; Lesser Coucal; Asian Palm-Swift; Blue-throated Bee-eater; Sunda Woodpecker; Paddyfield Pipit; Pied Triller; White-breasted Woodswallow; Flyeater; Ashy Tailorbird; Pied Fantail; Striated Grassbird; Mangrove Blue-Flycatcher; Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker; Olive-backed Sunbird; Asian Glossy-Starling; and Dusky and Chestnut munias. With a bit of luck we may find the recently discovered Buff-banded Rail, Grass-Owl or what was once regarded as a vagrant to Borneo, Black-winged Stilt.

As the day heats up, we will make our way back to our lovely hotel on the edge of Kota Kinabalu. The grounds of the hotel are extensive and, in addition to offering the opportunity to rest and relax around a series of very attractive swimming pools, they also host a number of interesting birds, including Green Imperial-Pigeon, the very localized Blue-naped Parrot, Collared Kingfisher, Sunda Pygmy-Woodpecker, Pied Triller, Common Iora, and Chestnut and possibly Dusky munias.

**NIGHT: Shangri La Tanjung Aru Beach Hotel, Kota Kinabalu**

**July 15, Day 5: Crocker Range National Park and Drive to Kinabalu Park.** This morning we will depart for the lovely drive into the Crocker Range National Park. Although access to this large reserve is notably sparse, we should be able to locate a handful of endemics and other specialties that are difficult to find within, or absent from, Kinabalu Park. With a bit of luck we may encounter the diminutive Pygmy White-eye, in addition to Mountain Barbet and the rather uncommon but attractive Bornean Barbet, Bornean Bulbul and the peculiar-sounding Whitehead’s Spiderhunter. Other possibilities might include Mountain Serpent-Eagle (with luck), Mountain Imperial-Pigeon, Ruddy (uncommon) and Little cuckoo-doves, Golden-faced Barbet (a split from Gold-whiskered), Bornean Leafbird, Orange-headed Thrush (uncommon), and the glorious Temminck’s Sunbird. In addition, if we are very lucky, we may also see a Rafflesia in flower. However, this is a rare event and often requires a long and rather steep walk.

**NIGHT: Shangri La Tanjung Aru Beach Hotel, Kota Kinabalu**
After lunch at a local Malay café, we will drive on to a very attractive waterfall set in some glorious forest where several new birds are possible, including White-fronted Falconet, Orange-breasted Trogon and Bornean Whistling-Thrush. From there we will continue on to our accommodations near Kinabalu National Park.

**NIGHT: Hill Lodge, Kinabalu National Park, Sabah**

**July 16-17, Days 6-7: Kinabalu National Park.** Mt. Kinabalu is the highest mountain between the Himalayas and the Snow Mountains of New Guinea. This huge, granite massif rises to over 13,000 feet and totally dominates the surrounding landscape. Functioning as an ecological island, it supports a wealth of biota not found elsewhere, or only shared with one or two nearby Bornean mountains. For example, over half the plants above 3,300 feet elevation are endemic. There are approximately 1,200 species of orchids on the mountain and no less than nine species of pitcher plant (*Nepenthes*), including the world’s largest, reputed to be capable of holding a quart of water! True montane forest commences above ca. 9,000 feet and is characterized by gnarled, stunted trees (including many rhododendrons – 24 species!) encrusted with mosses, lichens, and orchids which are nourished by the frequent mists and high rainfall. Finally, above the tree-line, there is an open, subalpine area of bushes and dwarf shrubs below the formidable crags and gigantic rock buttresses of the summit.

The magnificent Kinabalu National Park encompasses an area of 300 square miles and ranges in altitude from 1,000 to 13,455 feet, although the greater portion of the area lies above 4,000 feet. Approximately 300 species of birds have been recorded from the park, including a number of extremely local endemics. We will bird along forest-lined roads and forest trails in search of these specialties. Be aware that birding here can be extremely slow but rewarding. Although the purpose of most people visiting the park is to climb to the summit, we can see most of the specialties well below the high elevations. Characteristically in the mountains it can suddenly become very chilly and wet, and participants are advised to bring along warm clothes and wet weather gear.

We have two full days to sample some of Kinabalu’s biological diversity, concentrating on mid-montane elevations and above, where we are likely to encounter the greatest degree of endemcity. We can drive up to 6,100 feet and walk down the road in order to see canopy species, but we will also explore narrow forest trails to enjoy the full lushness of these forests and some of the more secretive denizens. One day we will visit the nearby Poring Hot Springs. This intriguing area provides access to an elevation and habitat that is otherwise difficult to explore in Borneo, plus it has a superb canopy walkway. With a bit of luck we may turn up several species unlikely to be encountered elsewhere on the tour.

Birds that we hope to find in the Kinabalu region include Kinabalu Serpent-Eagle; Mountain Imperial-Pigeon; Little Cuckoo-Dove; Mountain Scops-Owl (with luck); Whitehead’s Trogon – lovely but very scarce and elusive; Golden-naped and Mountain barbets; Checker-throated and Maroon woodpeckers; the fabulous Whitehead’s Broadbill; Sunda Cuckoo-shrike; Gray-chinned Minivet; Bornean Whistler; Blyth’s Shrike-Babbler; Black-and-crimson Oriole; Ashy and Hair-crested drongos; White-throated Fantail; Bornean Green-Magpie; Bornean Treepie; “Pale-faced” (Flavescent) Bulbul; Mountain Tailorbird; Sunda Bush-Warbler; Mountain and Yellow-breasted warblers; Chestnut-crested Yuhina; Mountain Black-eye; Black-capped White-eye; Gray-throated Babblers; Mountain Wren-Babbler; Sunda, Chestnut-hooded and Bare-headed laughingthrushes; the endemic Eye-browed Jungle-Flycatcher plus Indigo, Snowy-browed and Little Pied flycatchers; Black-sided Flowerpecker; Temminck’s Sunbird; and Whitehead’s Spiderhunter. With luck we may also find some of Kinabalu’s more elusive species, such as Red-breasted and Crimson-headed partridges, Fruithunter, Everett’s Thrush and Bornean Stubtail. If time permits, we will hike to higher elevations where we may find Island Thrush and Friendly Bush-Warbler. Mt. Kinabalu also harbors a number of interesting, although infrequently seen, mammals including Malay Weasel – a gorgeous orange and white predator; two species of flying squirrels; and Whitehead’s Pygmy Squirrel – with ear-tufts nearly as long as its body, plus a variety of other squirrels and tree-shrews.

**NIGHTS: Hill Lodge, Kinabalu National Park, Sabah**

**July 18, Day 8: AM Birding Kinabalu Park; PM Drive to Sandakan and Sepilok.** After a final morning of birding in Kinabalu Park we will drive east to the Sandakan area. Once the capital of Sabah, Sandakan is a bustling port on
Borneo’s east coast with an imposing harbor. It is still the major commercial center for such forest products as rattan, timber, and bird’s nests (for bird’s nest soup). Our lovely lodge lies not far from the city, but adjacent to the Sepilok Forest Reserve, and we should arrive in time to explore the bird-rich grounds a bit.

**NIGHT: Sepilok Nature Resort, Sandakan, Sabah**

**July 19, Day 9: Sepilok Rainforest Discovery Centre.** Until recently we have shied away from Sepilok because of its very restrictive and overly touristic operation. However, the establishment of the Rainforest Discovery Centre and its superb canopy walkway and fine system of well-established trails has put this once-beloved birding destination firmly back on the map. Undoubtedly this will be a great start to our exploration of Borneo’s magnificent lowland forests. The walkway is built of steel and consequently very stable and thus unusually good for birding and photography. We will work this facility in addition to the trails and forest edge in our search for Borneo’s birds, mammals and other wildlife. This is one of THE sites for the incomparable Bornean Bristlehead—one of the weirdest and most exotic looking of all of Borneo’s endemic birds—and we will make a special effort to find this very elusive species. For those who wish, there will be an opportunity for a forest night-walk during which we may encounter Slow Loris or some other surprising nocturnal mammal; Brown Hawk-Owl; and with patience and luck, at least one species of frogmouth.

**NIGHT: Sepilok Nature Resort, Sandakan, Sabah**

**July 20, Day 10: AM Sandakan; PM Drive to Sukau Rainforest Lodge.** This morning we will revisit the Rainforest Discovery Centre, undoubtedly finding many birds not seen the day before. After lunch we will make our way to Sukau Rainforest Lodge, with an early evening stop at the Gomantong Caves Forest Reserve, where we will watch the swifts go in, the bats emerge, and the raptors hunt them—a spectacular sight!

**NIGHT: Sukau Rainforest Lodge, Sabah**

**July 21-22, Days 11-12: Kinabatangan River Area.** We will have two full days to explore the forests along the river, where we may encounter such specialties as Cinnamon-headed Pigeon and other green-pigeons, Crimson-winged Woodpecker, Malaysian Blue-Flycatcher, and Copper-throated Sunbird, amongst many other birds. Nearby, a very attractive forest-lined oxbow lake may harbor the globally-endangered Storm’s Stork, Purple Heron, perhaps a raptor or two, and the huge and impressive Rhinoceros Hornbill.

We will slip quietly by boat into a forest-lined creek that fringes the Kinabatangan, Sabah’s largest river. Here we will search for such specialties as Lesser Fish-Eagle; the very handsome Black-and-red Broadbill; possibly the uncommon White-crowned Hornbill; Diard’s Trogon; Blue-eared and Stork-billed kingfishers; Wrinkled, Oriental Pied and Black hornbills; Hooded Pitta; and White-breasted Babbler. This is also a superb area for Proboscis Monkeys and two species of macaques, in addition to otters and Bearded Pigs. In addition, we have had some luck in recent years with the near-mythical Bornean Ground-Cuckoo, a huge but very shy bird. As the day heats up and bird activity decreases, we’ll return to our accommodations to relax and siesta.

In the late afternoon we will again work the main river, which can be excellent for hornbills and hopefully bathing herds of Bornean Pygmy Elephants, as well as birds like Bat Hawk, Blue-throated Bee-eater, Dollarbird and many others. On one of our evenings at Sukau we will take a night cruise on the river for a chance to spot some of the nocturnal prowlers, saltwater crocodiles and perhaps even some birds on their night roosts.

**NIGHTS: Sukau Rainforest Lodge, Sabah**

**July 23, Day 13: AM Gomantong Caves; PM Drive to Borneo Rainforest Lodge.** This morning we will pack up and leave Sukau to make a visit to the Gomantong Caves Forest Reserve. Although a relatively small reserve, the paved drive into the reserve and the boardwalk to the caves pass through some very bird-rich secondary and selectively-logged forest. There are many species of interest here, including Scarlet-rumped Trogon, a variety of barbets and woodpeckers, Hooded Pitta, Black-winged Flycatcher-Shrike, Green Iora, and numerous babbler s and
bulbuls. We will also visit the spectacular Gomantong Cave, probably Sabah’s largest cave system. Gomantong penetrates far inside a massive limestone outcrop and is home to literally millions of swiftlets and bats. This cool world of perpetual darkness supports a distinctive ecosystem with components ranging from long-legged centipedes to nesting Black-nest, White-nest and Mossy-nest swiftlets. These swiftlet species can only confidently be identified by their distinctive nests, which we will make an effort to find. From here we travel to the small city of Lahad Datu, our jumping off point for the world famous Danum Valley and lovely Borneo Rainforest Lodge. We should arrive at the lodge in time for a short afternoon introduction to this incredible area after we check in.

NIGHT: Borneo Rainforest Lodge, Sabah

**July 24-27, Days 14-17: Danum Valley.** The Danum Valley is a vast area of rolling lowland rainforest set aside as a reserve by the Sabah Foundation. Some of the forest is old-growth (famed for its towering trees), while along the entry road to the area are selectively-logged and secondary forests. All combine to make an incredible mélange of habitats that protects the full spectrum of Bornean lowland species, including a healthy population of Bornean Orangutans (we have a very good chance of seeing these spectacular primates here). The lodge itself is perhaps the finest in all of Southeast Asia and the setting along the Danum River is undeniably gorgeous. There is an extensive system of trails giving access to the forest interior, a wonderful canopy walkway with observation towers, and lots of activity in general around the lodge and access road. We will bird all of these habitats by day and will also have the chance to make night drives where anything could turn up. Civets and giant flying squirrels are the most likely, but who knows? We may get lucky and encounter Bornean Pygmy Elephants or even the enigmatic Bornean Clouded Leopard (closest living relative to the extinct Saber-toothed Tiger). Around the lodge lights we may find a grazing Sambar Deer or even the impressive Buffy Fish-Owl or Brown Wood-Owl.

We will have four full days in which to explore these magnificent lowland dipterocarp forests. Some of the birds possible include Crested Fireback (a stunning pheasant); Great Argus; Bat Hawk; Crested Goshawk; Pink-necked, Thick-billed, and Little green-pigeons; Moustached (rare at this time of the year) and Malaysian hawk-cuckoos; Violet, Rusty-breasted, and Banded Bay cuckoos; five species of malkohas; Diard’s, Scarlet-rumped and Red-naped trogons – all spectacular but elusive; Rufous-backed Dwarf, Banded and Rufous-collared kingfishers – all deep forest dwellers; Red-bearded Bee-eater; White-crowned (elusive), Wreathed, Black, Rhinoceros and Helmeted hornbills (surely one of the greatest of Oriental birding spectacles); Red-throated, Blue-eared, Yellow-crowned and Brown barbets; Rufous Piculet; Banded, Crimson-winged, Olive-backed (rare), White-bellied, Buff-rumped, Buff-necked, Maroon, and Orange-backed woodpeckers; White-fronted Falconet; Blue-rumped Parrot; Blue-crowned Hanging-Parrot; Blue-headed and Black-headed pittas (two of the most beautiful members of this notoriously difficult family); Banded, Green, Black-and-yellow and Dusky broadbills; Fiery and Scarlet minivets; Spectacled, Hairy-backed, Cream-vented, Buff-vented, Streaked and perhaps Finsch’s bulbuls; Greater Racket-tailed Drongo; Dark-throated Oriole; Black-capped, Short-tailed, White-chested, Ferruginous, Horsfield’s, Moustached, Sooty-capped, Gray-headed, Black-throated and Chestnut-winged babblers; Striped and Black-throated wren-babblers (wonderful songsters that are sometimes remarkably confiding but at other times are the very devil to find and see); Asian Fairy-Bluebird; Crested Jay (shy); Black Magpie; Large-billed and Bornean blue-flycatchers; Gray-breasted Jungle-Flycatcher; Hill Myna; Red-throated and Crimson sunbirds; Little, Streaky-breasted, Gray-breasted, Yellow-eared, Purple-naped, and Long-billed spiderhunters (they rarely eat spiders); Scarlet-backed, Yellow-rumped, Yellow-breasted, and Orange-bellied flowerpeckers; and the endemic Dusky Munia.

We will also make a special effort to find some of Borneo’s most elusive specialties, such as Wallace’s Hawk-Eagle; Chestnut-necklaced Partridge; the spectacular endemic Bornean Ground-Cuckoo; Bay Owl; Large Frogmouth; Giant Pitta (extremely elusive, but nevertheless this is probably THE place to look for this species); Blue-banded Pitta (a tough bird to find, but without a doubt one of the real jewels of the Orient); Bornean Wren-Babbler; and the incomparable Bornean Bristlehead.

NIGHTS: Borneo Rainforest Lodge, Sabah
July 28, Day 18: Fly to Kota Kinabalu. Sadly, this morning we will take our leave of the Borneo Rainforest Lodge and drive and bird our way to the coastal town of Lahad Datu, from whence we will take a late afternoon flight back to Kota Kinabalu for our farewell dinner.

NIGHT: Shangri La Tanjung Aru Beach Hotel, Kota Kinabalu

July 29, Day 19: International Flights for Home. Participants may schedule their flights home from Kota Kinabalu at any time today. Check-out time from the hotel is noon.

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

TOUR LEADER: Machiel Valkenburg with the assistance of local guides

Machiel Valkenburg was born in 1982 in a southern province in the Netherlands where, encouraged by his parents, he began birding at an early age. During his teens he studied landscape ecology and began performing bird surveys with the Dutch Centre for Field Ornithology. During this period he started traveling outside of Holland, first to Greece, Hungary, Romania, Scotland, and Morocco. Later, his birding travels took him extensively outside of Europe into Western Africa and further east to Russia and Kazakhstan. The nature and birds of Central Asia fascinated him so much that he stayed, resulting in the founding of his own bird tour company, Rubythroat Birding Tours. Since 2007 he has resided in Kazakhstan with his lovely wife, Akbota. From Central Asia he ventured further, with Southeast Asia becoming a favorite destination. Machiel has developed an expertise in the natural history of Asia. Along with birds, a good part of his attention is also given to butterflies, dragonflies, and mammals. Machiel speaks four languages, has good people and logistical skills, and is a natural-born bird guide. He loves to explore new destinations and show birds to his fellow birders. He has a keen eye and an excellent ear for bird sounds. Machiel is noted for his calm and respectful social approach, providing a good atmosphere during time in the field.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is $8,595 per person in double occupancy from Kota Kinabalu. This includes all meals beginning with dinner on Day 3 to breakfast on Day 19, lodging during the tour, all internal ground, water and air transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leader/s. The tour fee does not include round trip flights to Kota Kinabalu, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is $1,050. 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. Please note that singles are limited at Borneo Rainforest Lodge. We will do our best to accommodate you, but singles are not guaranteed for these nights. This has been taken into consideration in the costing.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The initial deposit for this tour is $500 per person. If you would like to pay your initial deposit 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 from the VENT office or by download at www.ventbird.com) should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

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.
CANCELLATION POLICY: Cancellation penalties and refunds are based on the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of $250 per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be $100 per person. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions. We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.

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*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be $100 per person.

Upon cancellation of the transportation or travel services, where you, the customer, are not at fault and have not cancelled in violation of the terms and conditions of any of the contract for transportation or travel services, all sums paid to VENT for services not received by you will be promptly refunded by VENT to you unless you otherwise advise VENT in writing.

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.

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

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: Again, in the uncertain, often volatile 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 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 being passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE: 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 (800-243-3174 or www.travelinsured.com) 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.

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 be sure to check with the VENT office
prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be responsible for any air ticket penalties.

**CLIMATE:** Most of our time will be spent in tropical lowland and mid-montane forest. The lowlands are generally hot and humid except during the early morning hours and at night. However, much of our time in the lowlands will be spent in the shade of the forest. Most days we will take a siesta break in the mid-afternoon before going out again. On Mt. Kinabalu it can be quite cool and night-time temperatures can fall below 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Although this is one of the drier months in Sabah, we will almost certainly encounter some rain, especially in the afternoons and at night.

**CLOTHING:** Remember that dark-browns, dark-blues and dark-greens are less likely to startle birds and mammals and are the preferred colors for rainforest birding. **PLEASE, no bright colors or loud, crackling plastics.** Bring light-weight and predominantly cotton or new synthetic field clothing that dries easily; a warm sweater or jacket for our mornings on Kinabalu and perhaps thermal underwear to sleep in; a hat with a good brim to keep the sun off while you are seated in a boat; a waterproof poncho, jacket or the like; a good, strong, dark-colored collapsible **umbrella is ESSENTIAL:** comfortable water-resistant hiking boots or hiking shoes with rugged soles – tennis shoes are NOT sufficient for this trip; and you may consider lugging rubber boots with you, as the trails can be muddy sometimes and they do help to repel leeches. Even flat trails can become slippery when wet. You should also have relatively thick socks to cushion your feet during long walks. It is ideal that you buy them calf-length so that you can tuck the bottoms of your trousers into them as protection against “bugs.” LEECH socks may be useful at the Borneo Rainforest Lodge and Sepilok and can be obtained there or from our ground-agents, Borneo Eco Tours. **BUT, to be quite honest, leech-socks are over-rated – they are not especially comfortable to wear and they make your feet very hot.** With a bit of care and attention (i.e. avoiding brushing up against the forest understory), it is our experience that leeches are not a major problem.

**LAUNDRY:** Laundry services are available on a 24-hour basis at all of the places where we stay more than one night and are generally reliable and fairly inexpensive.

**CURRENCY:** Malaysian Ringgit (MYR). The Ringgit is often referred to as the Malaysian Dollar. Visa, MasterCard, Diners Club and American Express are widely accepted throughout Malaysia.

**DOCUMENTS:** A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure and with at least one blank page for entry stamp is required for United States citizens to enter Malaysia. Visas are not required; a tourist visa will be issued upon arrival. Non-U.S. citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

**EQUIPMENT:** You should pack a pair of binoculars (in your carry-on baggage) that are in good condition along with a belt or day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, camera, etc.). Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so (we encourage you to do so, especially if you wish to digi-scope). Other items to bring should include a flashlight or headlamp, alarm clock, sunglasses and suntan lotion.

**HEALTH:** Kota Kinabalu and other major Malaysian cities are generally free from most diseases associated with the Far East. Tap water from the municipal water systems is considered safe. In smaller towns and rural areas, assume the water is unsafe and stick with bottled or boiled drinks. Bottled water is widely available and we will carry a supply with us in the vehicle. Sanitation throughout Malaysia is very good compared to most tropical areas of the world. Most hot, freshly cooked food is safe, but peel fresh fruit and raw vegetables before eating and make sure meat is cooked thoroughly. Be sure to bring all necessary prescription drugs, as well as aspirin, antacids, and a supply of antihistamines should you develop a cold

No vaccinations are required; however, typhoid and tetanus should be current. Gamma globulin may be taken to prevent hepatitis. Malaria is present but rare, including the chloroquine-resistant strain. There are several options for malaria prophylaxis including mefloquine (lariam), malarone, and doxycycline. These medications are available by prescription only. Please consult your physician or local travel clinic for recommendations. As standard travel
precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against hepatitis types A and B.

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

If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers’ Information Line (800) CDC-INFO (232-4636). You can check the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

**LUGGAGE:** Please limit your luggage to one medium-sized roller duffel or soft-sided suitcase, or two small duffels. Dress is informal throughout and most people find that they have brought too much, especially since laundry can be done at a reasonable cost at all of the lodges at which we spend more than one night. Extra bags not needed on the tour may be stored at the Shangri La Tanjung Aru Resort in Kota Kinabalu. As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars (always), a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag.

**MISCELLANEOUS:**
Electricity - 220 volts, 50 cycles
Language - Malaysian, English, Hindi and Chinese
Time - 12½ to 13 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time

**INTERNET:** Complimentary internet/Wi-fi is available in the rooms at the Shangri La Tanjung Aru Beach Resort. It is also available at Hill Lodge (in the lobby); at Sepilok Nature Resort (in the restaurant); at Sukau Rainforest Lodge (in Gecko and Gomantong Hall) and Borneo Rainforest Lodge (in the main lodge). Please note that service can be inconsistent.

**SUGGESTED READING:** A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

**Bird Field Guides:**

Myers, S. *A Field Guide to the Birds of Borneo: Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei and Kalimantan.* 2009. New Holland Publishers: London. **Perhaps the best choice of field guides, as it is compact and easily carried in the field, plus it has excellent plates (but less text than the next).**

Phillipps, Q & K. *Phillipps’ Field Guide to the Birds of Borneo.* Princeton University Press, 2014 (Third Edition). **Packed with interesting ecological and location information in addition to being a good field guide. A good choice but a bit heavier to carry in the field.**
Field Guides to Other Subjects:


Payne, J. et al. The Mammals of Borneo. Kuala Lumpur: The Sabah Society with the W.W.F., 1985. This is a superb field guide and one we heartily recommend, especially as we typically see 30-35 species of mammals on our Borneo tour.

Additional Reading Material:


Beebe, W. Pheasant Jungles. New York, 1927. A wonderful account of this naturalist’s travels collecting data for this fine book on the pheasants.


Smythies, B.E. and G.W.H. Davison *The Birds of Borneo*. Natural History Publications (Borneo). Kota Kinabalu. 1999. This superb book is really too heavy to carry on tour; however, it is an essential read for anyone with an interest in Bornean birds. This majorly revised edition is a huge improvement over the previous edition and contains a great deal of interesting information.


**TIPPING:** Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that tips are not expected and are entirely optional. Tips should be given directly to your tour leader; they should not be sent to the VENT office.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motor coach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. When this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates on September 29, 2016, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.

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