

VENEZUELA: HATO PIÑERO NEW YEAR

DECEMBER 27, 2008 - JANUARY 4, 2009

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In terms of avifauna, Venezuela is one of the richest countries in South America. You can expect a wealth of tropical birds and some of the easiest and most pleasant birding anywhere. Good accommodations, roads, and Steve Hilty's exceptional field guide combine to assure a superb tour that affords a cross-section of many diverse habitats in the upper Llanos of Venezuela. Except for a hotel stay on the arrival and last nights, the entire tour (five full and two half-days) will be spent at one location. Once you've settled into your comfortable rooms at the ranch, you don't have to repack until the last day. Two birding excursions will be made each day. You may choose to skip any half-day excursion and remain at the ranch grounds to sleep in, bird and/or photograph at your leisure within bird-rich walking distance of the buildings. During the tour, there are many opportunities to view a good portion of the 200-plus species that include such spectacular birds as Yellow-knobbed Curassow, Sunbittern, Agami Heron, both Great and Common potoos, Scarlet Macaw, Jabiru, Gray-necked Wood-Rail, and many others. Evening spotlighting of mammals, night birds, reptiles, and amphibians from the custom-designed observation truck is superb and often considered the highlight of our tour.

December 27, Day 1: Travel to Caracas. Participants arriving in Caracas (Simón Bolívar International Airport) anytime this afternoon or evening will be met and transferred to the Hotel Playa Grande Caribe where a room will be reserved in your name. Jeri Langham will likely be on an evening flight from Miami.

NIGHT: Hotel Playa Grande Caribe, Puerto Viejo

December 28, Day 2: Puerto Viejo to Hato Piñero. Leaving the hotel this morning, we will drive to the Simón Bolívar International Airport and fly to Hato Piñero. Upon arrival, we will settle into delightful guest quarters on the ranch and then gather for a "get-acquainted" walk around the ranch buildings. In addition to the ambience of a working cattle ranch with llaneros or "cowboys" and real western flair, there is a remarkable variety of birds that can be seen easily in the trees and open areas around the ranch buildings. Hummingbirds often visit flowering trees, and there may be Whistling Herons, Buff-necked and Sharp-tailed ibises, Crested and Yellow-headed caracaras, Scarlet Macaws, Yellow-crowned Parrots, Plain Thornbirds, and Red-capped Cardinals, as well as numerous flycatchers and orioles.

Our natural history activities begin in earnest today with a mid-afternoon trip that ends with our first night trip, searching for wildlife by spotlight. The opportunity to see a variety of mammals at night helps make the northern Llanos of Venezuela very unique in South America.

NIGHT: Hato Piñero

December 29-January 2, Days 3-7: Hato Piñero. The ranch will be our headquarters for exploring the northern Venezuelan Llanos, a vast grassland broken by forest-bordered rivers and occasional low-lying, swampy regions. In the rainy season, much of this very flat region floods from a depth of a few inches to a few feet. During the dry season, when pools are drying up, large waders, turtles, and spectacled caimans concentrate

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at the remaining sources of water, often presenting an unforgettable spectacle. For over 60 years, the 80,000 hectare (200,000 acre) Hato Piñero has been owned by the Branger family. Because the owners haven't allowed hunting, it's still possible to see large birds, such as Yellow-knobbed Curassows and Scarlet Macaws that have rapidly disappeared from other settled areas.

Many large mammals are also present on the ranch, and although our chances of actually seeing a jaguar are very slight, it could happen. We should, however, see a remarkable number of other mammals during our stay. Previous trips have seen Brazilian tapir, giant anteater, hog-nosed skunk, crab-eating raccoon, ocelot, puma, tayra, jaguarundi, crab-eating fox, collared peccary, southern tamandua, and tropical cottontail. We have also seen Great and Common potoos; Great Horned, Black-and-white, Mottled, Spectacled, and Striped owls; Tropical Screech-Owl; several nightjar species; and an eerie assemblage of more than 200 spectacled caimans in one pond, their eyes glowing like orange embers in our spotlights.

The Venezuelan Llanos offer one of the truly great spectacles of bird life in South America. Jabirus, Wood Storks, Limpkins, and hundreds of herons, egrets and ibises (seven species are possible) concentrate at lagoons or drying pools. Hato Piñero will produce many Bare-faced, Buff-necked, and Scarlet ibises and a few Sharp-tailed, White, and Glossy ibises. Green Ibis occurs, but is rare. Other noteworthy species include Yellow-chinned Spinetail, Black-capped Donacobius, White-headed Marsh-Tyrant, Pied Water-Tyrant, Red-breasted Blackbird, Venezuelan Troupial, Saffron Finch, flocks of seedeaters, and tanagers such as Glaucous, Burnished-buff, Blue-gray, Hooded, Palm and Silver-beaked. More than 25 species of hawks and close relatives have been seen, including Aplomado, Laughing, Peregrine and Bat falcons.

In the tree-lined lagoons, we may see a dozen Rufescent Tiger-Herons and an occasional Capped Heron or Horned Screamer. In dry forest, one finds Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, Glittering-throated Emerald, Russet-throated Puffbird, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, several woodcreepers, Chestnut-vented Conebill, Ochre-ored and Yellow-olive flatbills, and dozens of other flycatchers. Perhaps we may also see an Orinocan Saltator or Pale-headed Jacamar. Red howler monkeys and wedge-capped capuchins are uncommon, but capybaras (the world's largest rodent) will be seen every day and the ranch has a population of spectacled caiman estimated at 75,000.

One of the best and most exciting ways to observe wildlife in the Llanos is from a boat on the narrow, sluggish, tree-lined Caño San Jeronimo, on which we will spend one or possibly two mornings. In an hour or two, we may see several hundred Hoatzins, several dozen Gray-necked Wood-Rails, several species of raptors, Rusty-backed Spinetail, Red-capped Cardinal, four or five species of kingfishers, many Sunbitterns, and, with a little luck, an Agami Heron. Many birds come down to the edge of the stream in the early morning, and we have an excellent chance of seeing pairs or small groups of Yellow-knobbed Curassows on these river trips. The abundance of wildlife concentrated along streams during the dry season must be seen to be believed. We should have time to do both day and night activities at a relaxed pace during our five full days and two half-days at Hato Piñero.

NIGHTS: Hato Piñero

January 3, Day 8: Hato Piñero to Maiquetia. After a final morning of wildlife viewing, we will return to the coast and spend the night at the elegant Hotel Olé Caribe in the town of Macuto. This evening we'll enjoy our farewell dinner and Top Ten countdown.

NIGHT: Hotel Olé Caribe, Macuto

January 4, Day 9: Departures from Caracas. Participants will be provided with transfers to Simón Bolívar International Airport in time for morning or early afternoon flights home.

Those joining Jeri on our January 5-17, 2009 Panama's Canopy Tower & El Valle tour will likely take COPA Flight 220, which is scheduled to depart at 6:59 a.m. and arrive in Panama City at 8:49 a.m. (subject to change).

TOUR LEADERS: Jeri M. Langham and David Ascanio

Jeri M. Langham has a Ph.D. in plant ecology from Washington State University and has been a professor of biological sciences at California State University in Sacramento since 1970. He received the first Outstanding Teacher Award from the newly formed College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics in 1997; the Outstanding Faculty Award from the Science Educational Equity and Minority Organization of Science Students organizations in 2005; and his University's third annual Lifetime Achievement Award for Community Service in 2006. Jeri has ardently birded all over North America, as well as Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Venezuela, Ecuador, the Galapagos Islands, Peru, Argentina, Kenya, and Australia. Born and raised in Venezuela, he speaks fluent Spanish. Known for his enthusiasm and boundless energy, Jeri thoroughly enjoys searching for birds and sharing them with others. His passion for teaching and his natural teaching abilities soon become apparent as his tour participants enjoy learning more about the biological world around them. Jeri is a former member of the Bausch and Lomb Birding Council and the California Bird Records Committee. He is a Director for the Neotropical Grassland Conservancy, www.conservegrassland.org.

David Ascanio, a Venezuelan birder and naturalist, has spent the last 22 years guiding birding tours throughout his native country, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, Guyana, northern Peru, western Ecuador, 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, including some which are the only ones known to science. David speaks excellent English and combines superb birding skills with an astonishing command of bird vocalizations. He has published several manuscripts about the birds of the *llanos* (plains) and the tepui endemics for which he has become an authority. He 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 the most popular naturalist/guide in his country.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 13 participants.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$3295** per person in double occupancy from Caracas. This includes all food from breakfast on Day 2 to dinner on Day 8, all lodging for 8 nights during the tour, group airport transfers, transportation between Caracas and Hato Piñero, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Caracas and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

Hato Piñero has one VIP room, which is larger than their standard rooms and has air conditioning, satellite television, a refrigerator, a hammock and the only queen-sized bed available. The tour fee, which includes 6 nights in this room plus all of the above services, is **\$3495** per person in double occupancy. This will be reserved on a first-come/first-served basis.

Hato Piñero also has four standard double rooms with air conditioning. These rooms will be reserved on a first-come/first-served basis. The other rooms have large ceiling fans. All rooms other than the VIP room have 2 single beds. There is one room with 4 single beds that is available for a family of 3 or 4 who want to room together.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$240**. 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. Due to the limited number of rooms at Hato Piñero, those requesting singles may be asked to share. If so, you will be credited accordingly.

Fuel Surcharges: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While VENT will do everything possible to maintain the original price of the cruise or tour, if fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to implement a fuel surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In most cases, these additional fuel costs are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers who reserve

the right, in their agreements to provide services for VENT, to raise their prices due to significant changes in fuel costs.

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

TRANSPORTATION BETWEEN MAIQUETIA AND HATO PIÑERO: On December 28 and January 3, these transfers will likely be via charter aircraft. However, due to the high cost of this service and to help avoid charging a small-party supplement, VENT reserves the right to arrange ground transportation one or both ways.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is \$500 per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refunds are made according to the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, the deposit less \$125 per person is refundable. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions, as well as any transfers from one tour to another. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself.***

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$125.
Fewer than 120 days before departure date	No refund available.

TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE: Application forms for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. We **strongly recommend** that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering. Contact the VENT office prior to registration for details.**

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements

CLIMATE AND CLOTHING: The weather will likely be hot and dry during November to March, but cool in the mornings and on evening outings. There is a possibility of rain, so be sure to bring good raingear or an umbrella. Lightweight clothing is the rule; two or more pair of khaki or other field pants should suffice, along with a couple of shirts. Long-sleeved shirts of lightweight material and dark colors are desirable, as they provide additional protection from both the sun and biting insects. **PLEASE DO NOT BRING WHITE, YELLOW, ORANGE, PINK, RED or OTHER BRIGHT CLOTHING TO WEAR WHILE BIRDING.** Primitive

laundry service may be available at Hato Piñero (hand-washing and air-drying), so we suggest you bring clothing that can be washed out, either by their laundry service or by yourself. This service is often **not** available during our holiday-time trip. Good footwear is important. We strongly suggest good hiking boots with ridged soles. A pair of sneakers is also suggested for wear on days when you want to give your boots a chance to dry out. You may want to bring a pair of flip flops for use in the shower.

DOCUMENTS: A current passport and your return air ticket are required for U.S. citizens to enter Venezuela; a visa is not necessary. You will be issued a tourist card when you check in for your flight to Venezuela or you will be supplied with one during the flight to Caracas.

HEALTH PRECAUTIONS: Although no vaccinations are required to enter Venezuela, it is a good idea to have your polio and tetanus protection up to date. Malaria is present in rural areas of Venezuela, including the chloroquine-resistant strain. There have been some recent changes in recommendations for malaria prophylaxis. Mefloquine (Lariam) is now the drug of choice in areas where chloroquine-resistant malaria is found. A single dose per week should be taken starting one week before the tour, continued during the tour, and for six weeks after its conclusion. Mefloquine is available by prescription only and may not be suitable for those using cardiovascular medication. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention strongly recommends yellow fever vaccinations for travelers who go outside of urban areas. Please consult your doctor for your particular needs.

As in most Latin American countries, we recommend drinking only bottled water and using no ice in beverages. However, at Hato Piñero the water and ice are filtered and thus safe. Also avoid milk products that have not been pasteurized and unpeeled fruits and vegetables.

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

As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (877) FYI-TRIP. 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).

ITEMS TO BRING: In addition to the clothing noted above, you will want to pack a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen, a day pack, battery-operated alarm clock, between-meal snacks such as trail mix or nuts, a plastic water bottle or canteen (both for half-day hikes and for brushing your teeth). Plastic zip-lock type bags will protect your camera and binoculars, etc. from rain, humidity, or dust. Don't forget a flashlight or headlamp with spare batteries. Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, feel free to do so. This may, however, be cumbersome due to the charter flight situation. Also, remember to bring any prescription drugs you may need, as we will not be anywhere near a pharmacy, once away from Caracas. When in the tropics, it is always a good idea to bring earplugs.

INSECT PROTECTION: Chiggers, mosquitoes and "no-see-ums" can be a problem in some areas. We recommend the use of Cutter's (or similar) lotion (two plastic squeeze bottles) and a pump-style container of OFF. Topsy gel is useful in reducing irritation from bites and stings, and some cortisone creams are available without prescription.

Chiggers are tiny mites that are found in most warm weather areas of the southern United States and the American tropics. They are so small that they are virtually invisible. The immature stage of this mite attaches itself briefly to humans and sucks bodily fluids as part of its life cycle.

Then it drops off. After the chigger has fed and departed, our bodies respond by producing an inflamed red itchy area where the chigger inserted its feeding tube. This welt can persist for several days or longer producing considerable discomfort.

Fortunately chiggers do not transmit any diseases. They can easily be avoided by following one or more of the following procedures:

1. Prior to walking in areas where chiggers may occur, apply a cream-style insect repellent such as "Cutters" to your body from your waist down. Chiggers especially like to attach themselves around your waist and ankles. After putting on your pants and socks, spray them with an insect repellent such as "Off." Be sure that you are well away from other people when you spray.

You will need to shower as soon as possible once you have returned from the field; use a washcloth to vigorously rub your legs and waist to rub off any chiggers that may be present. If you return to the field later in the day or for an evening walk, you must re-apply repellent to your body and clothes.

Chiggers are especially numerous in grassy areas. When they bite, you do not feel it. You are only aware that you have been bitten after the chigger leaves and your body reacts. Chiggers can crawl through your socks and pants. Thus, although it is a good idea to tuck your pants into your socks to prevent them from touching the grass, this will not prevent any chiggers that get on your clothes from reaching your body.

2. Wearing rubber boots that come up to just below your knee will prevent you from getting chiggers.
3. Instead of applying "Cutters" cream to your body, you can dust yourself in the same area with sulphur. This will prevent you from getting chiggers and ticks. You can also dust your socks and pants with sulphur instead of spraying.

If you carefully follow any of the above methods, you should be able to avoid all chigger or tick bites. If, however, you get such bites or other insect bites, you can reduce or eliminate the symptoms by applying cortisone cream or using an insect sting stick.

BAGGAGE: Most commercial carriers allow you to check two bags and have one carry-on bag. *However*, a charter flight may be used for part of the transportation to and from Hato Piñero, and you ***must limit your luggage on this flight to just one carry-on bag***. As a precaution, pack your binoculars, a change of clothes, walking shoes, medications, toiletries, and travel documents in the carry-on. **All other luggage** will be sent to the ranch in a vehicle that may not arrive before our first afternoon outing.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Electricity: Venezuela uses 110 volts AC, the same as the U.S.; however, some outlets may require an adapter, since none have 3-holes (1 for ground).

Time zone: 30 minutes ahead of Eastern Standard Time. (EST)

Departure tax: Departure and airport tax is approximately \$50 and is included in the cost of your air ticket.

Language: Spanish is the official language of Venezuela.

Currency: Bolivar Fuerte

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS AND WEB ADDRESSES:

HEALTH-Centers for Disease Control & Prevention: 877/FYI-TRIP; www.cdc.gov/travel

WEATHER: 900/WEATHER; www.weather.com

TRAVEL ADVISORIES: 202/647-5225

SUGGESTED READING: Our Web site at www.ventbird.com offers an 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 our store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You might also want to visit such other online stores as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print and hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com, or www.buteobooks.com, which specializes in ornithology books.

Birds:

Hilty, Steven L. *Birds of Venezuela*. Second Edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press. September 2002. A total new generation of *Birds of Venezuela* with up-dated taxonomy and complete field information.

Hilty, Steven L. and W.L. Brown. *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986. This covers most of the birds found in Venezuela and has many of the same plates, but goes further in the most comprehensive accounts of the behavior, song and nests of over half of South America's birds. It also includes useful tips.

Hilty, Steven L. *Birds of Tropical America*. Shelburne, VT: Chapters Publishing Ltd., 1994. Subtitle: "A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity."

Restall, Robin; Rodner, Clemencia and Miguel Lentino. *Birds of Northern South America*. An identification guide. Volume 2: Plates and Maps. Helms Field Guides, 2006.

Ridgely, Robert S., and Guy Tudor. *Birds of South America Volume I, The Oscine Passerines: Jays, Swallows, Wrens, Thrushes and Allies, Vireos, Wood-Warblers, Tanagers, Icterids and Finches*. Austin: The University of Texas, 1989. Very useful reference, with range maps and illustrations of many species not previously illustrated.

Ridgely, Robert S., and Guy Tudor. *Birds of South America Volume II, The Suboscine Passerines: Ovenbirds and Woodcreepers, Antbirds, Gnateaters and Tapaculos, Tyrant Flycatchers, Manakins and Cotingas*. Austin: The University of Texas, 1994. Very useful reference, with range maps and illustrations of many species.

History:

Ayensu, Edward. "Jungles." *Smithsonian*, Volume 19.

Beebe, William. *High Jungle*. New York: Duell, Sloan, Pearce, 1949. In part, relates to Beebe's experiences at the Rancho Grande Biological Station. Out of print. Check your local library.

Moron, Guillermo. *A History of Venezuela*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1964. A not quite-unopinionated history of Venezuela by a Venezuelan, but nevertheless worth reading for an overview of Venezuela's interesting past.

Vigneras, Louis-Andres. *The Discovery of South America and the Andalusian Voyages*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976. An account of the various Spanish voyages of exploration, beginning with the third voyage of Columbus and most of those that centered on the Venezuelan coast.

Mammals:

Eisenberg, J.F. *Mammals of the Neotropics: The Northern Tropics*. Volume I. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

Emmons, L.H. and F. Feer. *Neotropical Rainforest Mammals: A Field Guide*. Second edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Tello, Jaime. *Mamíferos de Venezuela*. Caracas: Fundacion La Salle de Ciencias Naturales, 1979. In Spanish, with photographs; this serves as an interesting, if not entirely accurate, introduction to the mammals of Venezuela.

Reptiles:

Lancini, A.R. *Serpentines de Venezuela*. Caracas: Ernesto Armitano, 1986. In Spanish, with photographs; for those with more than a superficial interest in snakes.

Pritchard, P.C.H. and P. Trebbau. *The Turtles of Venezuela*. Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles, 1984. A major work on neotropical turtles, with incredible details; again, for those with more than a superficial interest in turtles.

Butterflies:

Raymond, Theophile. *Mariposas de Venezuela*. Armitano, 1982.

Ecology:

Forsyth, Adrian and Ken Miyata. *Tropical Nature*. Boston: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1984.

Kricher, J.C. *A Neotropical Companion*. Second edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Newman, Arnold. *Tropical Rainforest*. New York: Facts on File, 1990.

TIPPING: As noted in our itineraries, tipping (restaurants, 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 such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity, which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. When this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on April 30, 2008 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these

tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.