

SPRING GRAND ARIZONA

MAY 10 – 20, 2008

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Southeast Arizona is, without a doubt, one of the richest and most exciting birding areas in the United States. It has a greater variety of nesting landbirds than any other comparable area in the country, many of them Mexican species that only here spill over into the United States. Rising out of the desert floor are a series of spectacular mountain-ranges—the northern extension of the Sierra Madre—which harbor many of these Arizona specialties. Zone-tailed Hawk, Montezuma Quail, Whiskered Screech-Owl, Spotted Owl, Magnificent and Blue-throated hummingbirds, Elegant Trogon, Arizona Woodpecker, Sulphur-bellied and Dusky-capped flycatchers, Virginia's and Black-throated Gray warblers, and Painted Redstarts inhabit the oak/sycamore woodlands of lower canyons. Farther up, amid the firs and pines, Buff-breasted Flycatcher, Mexican Chickadee, Red-faced, Grace's, and Olive warblers, and Yellow-eyed Juncos can be found. Riparian habitat in the vicinity of Patagonia and Nogales is home to such exotics as Gray Hawk, Violet-crowned and Broad-billed hummingbirds, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Vermilion and Brown-crested flycatchers, Thick-billed Kingbird, Lucy's Warbler, and Abert's Towhee. Finally, the beautiful Sonoran desert hosts the tiny Elf Owl, Gila Woodpecker, Gilded Flicker, Bendire's Thrasher, and Rufous-winged Sparrow, to name but a few. In all, up to nine species of owls and eleven species of hummingbirds are possible on this trip!

In addition to its rich variety of regularly occurring species, southeast Arizona is one of the best areas to add an "accidental" to your U.S. list. At least one of these accidentals, the Five-striped Sparrow, has become a regular over the past 15 years. Others, such as Eared Trogon, Berylline Hummingbird, Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Aztec Thrush, Crescent-chested and Fan-tailed warblers, and Flame-colored Tanagers, remain true vagrants. While none of these are at all likely on any given tour, the mere chance that one may show up in a particular year only adds to the excitement. On our 2000 and 2001 tours, we were fortunate enough to see Berylline Hummingbird; in 1993, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007, Flame-colored Tanager; in 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2007, Black-capped Gnatcatcher; and in 1999, Rufous-backed Robin! Who knows what will be next?

May 10, Day 1: Arrival in Tucson. Participants may plan to arrive in Tucson at any time today and transfer to our hotel, where rooms will be reserved in your name. You will meet in the hotel lobby at 6:20 p.m. for a get-acquainted dinner. Those who wish to join our optional trip to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, one of the best "living" museums in the world, should arrive in time to depart from the hotel lobby at 1:30 p.m. The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, supported entirely by a private foundation, has an excellent collection of native animals and plants of the southwestern deserts. In addition, many wild birds occur on the grounds, such as Gambel's Quail, Gila Woodpecker, Curve-billed Thrasher, and Verdin. Our visit to the museum will provide perhaps our best shot at finding the localized Costa's Hummingbird and Black-tailed Gnatcatcher. This should be a good introduction for our tour. We **strongly** encourage everyone to make this option, if possible.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn, Tucson

May 11, Day 2: Northwest Tucson, Aravaipa Canyon, Madera Canyon. This morning we will head toward Aravaipa Canyon, a scenic, riparian desert canyon north of Tucson. En route we may detour to areas of northwest Tucson where the localized Harris's Hawk and Gilded Flicker might be encountered. By mid-morning we should reach Aravaipa, which harbors the only successful and readily accessible nesting population of Common

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Black-Hawks in southeastern Arizona along the cottonwood-lined banks of Aravaipa Creek. Many other species are possible here as well, including the vulture-like Zone-tailed Hawk, Vermilion Flycatcher, and Hooded Oriole. Late in the afternoon, we will head to Madera Canyon for a picnic dinner and our first owling excursion. Elf Owl, Western Screech-Owl, Common Poorwill, and Lesser Nighthawk will all be sought.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn, Tucson

May 12, Day 3: Madera Canyon To Patagonia. The entire morning will be devoted to birding several different life zones in Madera Canyon. An early morning search of the mesquite grasslands below the canyon could produce Black-throated, Rufous-winged, and Botteri's (very uncommon in spring) sparrows. Nearby, the oaks and sycamores of the Proctor Road area may harbor Golden Eagle, Cassin's Kingbird, Bewick's and Canyon wrens, Bell's Vireo, and Lucy's Warbler. If Varied Buntings have returned from their wintering grounds (often not until mid-May or later), this is an excellent place to locate one.

Late morning will be spent in the upper portion of the canyon (including a visit to the feeders at Santa Rita Lodge). Possibilities include Arizona and Acorn woodpeckers, Broad-billed and Magnificent hummingbirds, Bridled Titmouse, Mexican Jay, Hutton's Vireo, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Painted Redstart, and Black-headed Grosbeak.

After lunch we'll continue toward Patagonia via Nogales. Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Black Phoebe, and Vermilion Flycatcher are possible along the way. Late afternoon will likely find us watching hummingbirds at a local residence where Violet-crowned, Broad-billed, Anna's, and Black-chinned hummingbirds are all likely.

NIGHT: Esplendor Resort at Rio Rico, Rio Rico

May 13, Day 4: Sonoita Creek Area. We will be up early for a full day's exploration of the Sonoita Creek area. This is one of the most famous birding spots in the country and a great variety of species may occur here (three of which are all but restricted to this tiny area within the United States). Our prime targets will be the regal Gray Hawk and the localized Thick-billed Kingbird. Our search for these specialties will often be interrupted by the likes of other avian gems such as Costa's Hummingbird, Vermilion Flycatcher, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Phainopepla, Lucy's Warbler, and Yellow-breasted Chat. Zone-tailed Hawks are occasionally seen overhead here as well. Other likely species today include White-throated Swift, up to 14 species of flycatchers (including Ash-throated, Brown-crested, and Dusky-capped), Canyon and Rock wrens, and Summer Tanager. Though very unlikely on any given trip, the rare and irregular Rose-throated Becard is a remote possibility here as well.

NIGHT: Esplendor Resort at Rio Rico, Rio Rico

May 14, Day 5: To California Gulch; Patagonia to Sierra Vista. California Gulch is currently the most reliable location in Arizona for the Five-striped Sparrow. We will leave very early this morning (**4:30-5:00 a.m.**) to travel there in search of this rare bird. It's a lovely, winding drive (though bumpy and dusty as well) through oak woodland, and there's a good chance we may see Montezuma Quail along the roadside. We'll pass the ghost town of Ruby on the way. Although the big silver strikes have mostly played out, many small claims are still being worked in this region. Other birds we may see this morning include Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet and Varied Bunting. In 2007 the road conditions to reach California Gulch were so poor as to be nearly impassable. It is conceivable that future tours may not be able to get to this location.

After lunch we will head east toward Sierra Vista, watching for Pronghorns en route. In the afternoon, we'll visit feeders in the Huachuca Mountains, either Ramsey or Miller Canyon, where we can relax and let the hummingbirds come to us. Blue-throated, Broad-tailed, Magnificent, and Black-chinned appear most regularly; Broad-billed and Anna's are usually present, and sometimes also a Violet-crowned Hummingbird or White-eared (occasional).

NIGHT: Best Western Mission, Sierra Vista

May 15, Day 6: Huachuca Mountains. The entire day will be spent exploring the famed Huachuca Mountains, including a visit to Carr Canyon. Amidst the oak-covered slopes, rocky canyons, and open groves of pines, we will make a special effort to find Arizona Woodpecker, Greater Pewee, and Buff-breasted Flycatcher (the Huachucas are presently the only accessible place in the United States to find this species). Hepatic Tanager and Grace's, Olive, Red-faced, Virginia's, and Black-throated Gray warblers should be in full song throughout the canyons. An evening owling expedition into the lower canyons here will hopefully tally Whiskered Screech-Owl and Common Poorwill.

NIGHT: Best Western Mission, Sierra Vista

May 16, Day 7: To the Chiricahua Mountains. In the cool morning hours today, we will revisit the Huachuca Mountains and Fort Huachuca. Lower Garden Canyon and shady Scheelite Canyon could harbor the magnificent Elegant Trogon and the highly-sought Spotted Owl. Then, reluctantly, we will leave the Huachucas behind and head east to the Chiricahuas—mountain fortress of the Apaches, hideout for outlaws in the Old West, and today a national forest and Arizona's top birding area. We will start owling tonight after dinner, looking especially for the tiny and elusive Flammulated Owl.

NOTE: the latest policy for entry into Fort Huachuca requires each person in the group to show some sort of legal photo identification. In addition, they have made entry into the Fort for non-US citizens all but impossible. While this policy may change before the start of the tour, it should be noted that citizens of countries outside the United States may not be able to enter the Fort the morning we visit. The only bird for which the Fort provides our only chance of seeing is the Spotted Owl. All other species are possible in other areas.

NIGHT: Portal Peak Lodge, Portal

May 17, Day 8: Cave Creek Canyon. The Chiricahua Mountains is a magnificent range of mountains rising out of the desert to almost 10,000 feet. These Arizona Mountains as described by Roger Tory Peterson in *Wild America*:

“There they were, in the crystal morning light, rising like a massive blue island from the sea of the desert. And an island it was, in truth, part of an archipelago composed of a dozen similar ranges. They are as much a true archipelago as the Azores or Hawaii, but no surf washes their talused bases; instead the desert, dry and shimmering, besieges their foothills and sweeps across the flats to the next range, twenty, thirty, or forty miles away.”

Many birders consider the Chiricahuas the best birding area in Arizona and one of the best in the United States. Besides all the birds, this is a great place to study the concept of life zones, biological communities of plants and animals ranging from the Lower Sonoran Desert at the base of the mountains to the Hudsonian Zone at the summit. We will visit each of the major life zones in these mountains.

Today will be spent in the woodlands of Cave Creek Canyon and the lower slopes of the mountains. In this botanically unique area, plants of the Canadian forests meet those of the desert foothills to make for a fascinating mixture of habitats. Birds are abundant, including many species found in few other places in the United States. We expect to find Elegant Trogon, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Whiskered Screech-Owl, Blue-throated Hummingbird, Painted Redstart, Grace's Warbler, Hutton's Vireo, Hepatic Tanager, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, and many others. In the juniper and oak slopes of the lower foothills, we will seek out Western Scrub-Jay, Juniper Titmouse, and the localized and declining Black-chinned Sparrow. Mammals that we may see include white-tailed and mule deer, coyote, javelina, Apache fox squirrel and, with luck, a coatimundi.

NIGHT: Portal Peak Lodge, Portal

May 18, Day 9: Chiricahuas. Today we will visit the higher parts of the Chiricahuas, birding the ponderosa pines and oaks of the Transition Zone and the spruce and firs of the Canadian and Hudsonian Zones. These high forests harbor an assortment of species typical of both the Rocky Mountain chain further north and the Sierra Madre of Mexico to the south. These include Band-tailed Pigeon; Acorn and Hairy woodpeckers; Broad-tailed

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Hummingbird; Cordilleran Flycatcher; Steller's Jay; Mexican Chickadee (found nowhere else in the U.S.); Pygmy Nuthatch; Western Bluebird; Red-faced, Olive, and Virginia's warblers; Red Crossbill (sporadic); and Yellow-eyed Junco. In the evening we will take a final owling expedition. Eight species of owls are possible in different habitats of the area: Western Screech, Whiskered Screech, Elf, Flammulated, Great Horned, Barn, Northern Pygmy, and Spotted. Whip-poor-wills and Common Poorwills are also present, and chances are we will see some interesting mammal with our headlights.

NIGHT: Portal Peak Lodge, Portal

May 19, Day 10: Portal to Tucson. After an early morning trip to the flats below Portal, where Bendire's Thrasher nests and Scaled Quail, Golden Eagle, and Crissal Thrasher sometimes occur, we'll drive back to Tucson. A brief stop at Willcox might reveal a variety of shorebirds at the local playa/sewage pond. American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, and Wilson's Phalarope are all possible. We will take an afternoon break before concluding our tour with a final checklist session and dinner.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn, Tucson

May 20, Day 11: Return Home. Participants may plan to depart for home at any time today.

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.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 14 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: Barry Zimmer and Kevin Zimmer

Barry Zimmer has been birding since the age of eight. His main areas of expertise lie in North and Central America, but his travels have taken him throughout much of the world, including such exotic locales as Japan, Russia, Madagascar, Africa, and New Zealand. Barry is a longtime member of the New Mexico Bird Records Committee, and served on the Texas Bird Records Committee for 12 years. He has co-authored three books: *Birds of the Trans-Pecos*, *A Birder's Guide to the Rio Grande Valley*, and *Birds and Birdfinding in the El Paso Area*. Barry has a keen interest in nature photography, having captured over 1,000 species of birds on film. His other interests include sports (a diehard Red Sox fan), cooking, and movies. He received his degree in psychology at the University of Texas in El Paso. Barry resides in El Paso with his wife, Yvonne, and their daughter, Alexandra.

Kevin Zimmer has authored three books and numerous papers dealing with field identification and bird-finding in North America. His book, *Birding in the American West: A Handbook*, deals with finding and identifying birds in the western United States. Living in Alaska contributed to his affection for the Far North, where he has anchored VENT's tour program since 1986. For the past 17 years he has concentrated his attention on the Neotropics, particularly on Brazil, Costa Rica, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela. He has directed VENT's Brazil program since 1991. Kevin has a PhD in biology (research emphasis in Avian Evolutionary Ecology) from New Mexico State University, and is currently a research associate of Cornell's Library of Natural Sounds and the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. He has authored numerous technical papers on the taxonomy, distribution, and behavior of Neotropical birds, particularly those of the Amazon basin. He recently completed (with co-author Mort Isler) the major chapter on the *Thamnophilidae* (antbirds) for the prestigious *Handbook of Birds of the World* series. He and Andrew Whittaker are currently at work on a comprehensive field guide to the birds of Brazil, to be published by Princeton University Press. Kevin lives in Atascadero, California with his wife Susan. Their daughter Marina is in graduate school at Dominican University in San Rafael, California.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$2545** per person in double occupancy from Tucson, Arizona. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 11, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, entrance fees including Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum on Day 1, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Tucson and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$440**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$300** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 90 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 90 days or more before the tour departure date, the deposit less **\$125** per person is refundable. If cancellation is made between 90 and 70 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 70 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.*

If you cancel:

90 days or more before departure date
Between 90 and 70 days before departure
Fewer than 70 days before departure date

Your refund will be:

Your deposit minus \$125.
No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance will be refunded.
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 are available, however, stipulations apply usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering. Contact the VENT office prior to registration for details.**

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

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

BAGGAGE: We request participants limit their baggage to one medium-sized suitcase and one carry-on, if possible, as space in the vehicle will be limited.

CLIMATE/CLOTHING: The temperate climate of Arizona's mountains promises warm days and cool nights. Daytime highs around Tucson may reach the upper 90s, possibly higher; in the mountains, temperatures will be considerably cooler, with highs in the low to mid 80s. Nighttime lows in some upper elevation areas may dip

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down into the 40s. Lightweight clothing, hats, and sunscreens are recommended for midday; but long-sleeved shirts and sweaters are appropriate for mountain evenings. Also, there may be a few opportunities for swimming, so bring along a bathing suit. Comfortable walking shoes or boots are a must; and you should be prepared for showers, with a raincoat or poncho. Hiking boots would be appropriate for the steep climbs in California Gulch and Scheelite Canyon. Informal dress is the rule throughout the tour. Please bring dark clothing for owling expeditions: bright colors (particularly whites, yellows, etc.) may scare away our nocturnal targets.

CONDITIONS: Virtually all of our hikes will be of 2 miles or less. Some will be over relatively flat ground while others will be in steep canyons. We will have early starts most mornings (sunrise is around 5:20 a.m.) to take advantage of cool morning hours. Breakfast may be as early as 5:00 a.m. some mornings. Several nights of owling will be offered. Elevations on this tour route range from about 2,600 to 8,000 feet.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc.). As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. Insects are generally not a problem, though there might be an occasional mosquito, chigger, or fly. One container of repellent is certainly adequate.

We recommend a canteen or water bottle for carrying water into the field. You will also need a flashlight. Chapstick is useful in this dry climate to protect against chapped lips. **Every person should bring an alarm clock, as there is no wake-up service at one of the lodges where we will be staying.**

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

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

Recommended Field Guides

Dunn, Jon L. *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C., 2002 (4th ed.).

Peterson, Roger Tory. *A Field Guide to Western Birds*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

Miscellaneous

Kricher, John C. and Gordon Morrison. *Ecology of Western Forests*. Peterson Field Guide Series No. 45. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993.

Krutch, Joseph Wood. *The Desert Year*. University of Arizona Press, 1985 (reprint).

Johnsgard, Paul A. *The Hummingbirds of North America*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997.

Lowe, Charles H. *Arizona's Natural Environment: Landscapes and Habitats*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1972.

Monson, Gale and Allan R. Phillips. *Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Arizona*. 2nd edition. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982.

Peterson, Roger Tory and James Fisher. *Wild America: The Record of a 30,000 Mile Journey*. Mariner Books, 1997. See the chapter "Chiricahuas: Islands in the Sky."

- Pettingill, Olin S., Jr. *A Guide to Bird Finding West of the Mississippi*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1953. Good introduction to Arizona.
- Pettingill, Olin S., Jr., editor. *Birdwatcher's America*. New York: Thomas Crowell, 1974. "The Arizona Desert" by Gale Monson and "The Chiricahuas and Guadalupe Canyon" by Dale A. Zimmerman.
- Phillips, Allan, Joe Marshall, and Gale Monson. *The Birds of Arizona*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1964. Out of print: try www.abebooks.com.
- Taylor, Richard C., Harold R. Holt, and James A. Lane. *A Birder's Guide to Southeastern Arizona*. ABA/Lane Birdfinding Guide Series #102. ABA, 1995.
- Tyrrell, Esther and Robert A. Tyrrell. *Hummingbirds, Their Life and Behavior: A Photographic Study*. York: Crown Publishers, 1985. Pictures only; don't look at the text.
- Udvardy, Miklos D. F. and John Farrand. *The National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds: Western Region*. Knopf, 1977.

Recordings

Birding Southeastern Arizona, videotape by Larry and Terrie Gates, 47 Brewer Road, Purvis, MS 39475. Also available from the Tucson Audubon Society, at \$29.95; telephone: 602/629-0510 (www.tucsonaudubon.org/).

TIPPING: 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. Where 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 August 7, 2007 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.