

VENT'S SCOTTISH ISLANDS CRUISE: BIRDS, WILDLIFE, CULTURE, AND HISTORY MAY 27 – JUNE 4, 2008

ABOARD M.V. *Aleksey Maryshev*

VENT is chartering this small (46-passenger) ship for a unique voyage through the Scottish Islands. We've designed our own cruise route to take you, in one journey, through the Shetlands and Orkneys, fantastic St. Kilda, and the Inner and Outer Hebrides via the best birding, historical, and archaeological sites of these magical islands.

Starting in the "Granite City" of Aberdeen, we sail north to Shetland. We'll be able to explore the eerie nocturnal world of European Storm Petrels at their colony, nesting in a fine Iron Age broch, and discover the strong Viking and Norse influences in these northerly outposts with a stroll around the large complex of Jarlshof, occupied since the Bronze Age. Passing many spectacular seabird colonies, we'll have a morning on the lonely Fair Isle, halfway between Shetland and Orkney—famous for its distinctive knitting designs and long-established Bird Observatory. The Orkneys have some of the best-preserved archaeological sites in Europe awaiting us: Maes Howe, the most complete Neolithic tomb in existence; the Ring of Brodgar, the largest Stone Circle in Scotland; and Skara Brae, a finely excavated Neolithic village. Here, too, are more "recent" delights, such as the fine town of Kirkwall itself with its early Norse-influenced cathedral and the World War II battleships of the Churchill Barriers. We'll sail past 1,000-foot sea cliffs and pinnacles of Hoy, where breeding seabirds—including Great Skuas—darken the skies as we continue on to the Outer Hebridean islands of Harris and Lewis. Here we find more rugged scenery and remarkable ancient historical sites, such as the mysterious Standing Stones of Callanish. We can discover what life was like just a few centuries past in the rebuilt villages of blackhouses, the traditional low dwelling places of the Gaelic peoples in the 16-19th centuries. A highlight of the tour should be our visit to the faraway St. Kilda archipelago, only abandoned as Britain's remotest inhabited outpost in 1930. Here is a land of superlatives: largest Northern Gannet colony in the world, largest Northern Fulmar colony in Europe, and the highest sea cliffs in Britain at 1,400 feet. Heading back east we'll arrive at gentler islands of the Inner Hebrides with further great birding opportunities—many northern specialties, breeding shorebirds, loons, and wildfowl to keep us busy. Throughout our sea voyages we'll have seabirds around us constantly (the British Isles are home to globally important numbers of all the North Atlantic species, including Manx Shearwater). The pretty and varied island of Mull and offshore satellites will beckon. Canna and Mull are strongholds of nesting White-tailed Eagles. Staffa, with its columnar basalt cliffs and Fingal's Cave, was an inspiration for Mendehlsson's "Hebrides Overture." We'll visit Iona and its Abbey—where Corncrakes rasp their loud interminable songs in rich flower meadows that have remained the same since the island first became a site of early Christian settlement and pilgrimage by St. Columba 1,400 years ago. The tour will finish on the other side of Scotland, in the charming west coast port of Oban.

May 27, Day 1: Travel from United States. Depending on your flight schedule, you may choose to depart United States on Tuesday, May 27, flying overnight to the UK and arriving into Aberdeen by lunchtime Wednesday in time to join the ship at 4 p.m. If your schedule does not allow this, then you may prefer to depart United States on Monday, May 26, arrive into the UK a day early, and overnight with plenty of time for embarkation on Wednesday.

May 28, Day 2: Join the cruise ship in Aberdeen. Embark on the M.V. *Aleksey Maryshev* at 4 p.m. in Aberdeen, famed as the Granite City and many times a winner of the “Britain in Bloom” competition. After being settled into our cabins, meeting some of the staff, and starting on mandatory safety drills, we will set sail at about 6 p.m. and travel north overnight towards the Shetlands. As we leave harbor, we’ll pass Girdle Ness Lighthouse, designed by the grandfather of Robert Louis Stevenson.

May 29, Day 3: Fair Isle & Mousa. We’ll arrive at Fair Isle early in the morning. Famous for its birds, knitwear, and historic shipwrecks, Fair Isle is a tiny jewel of an island, halfway between Orkney and Shetland and 20 miles or more from anywhere else! Owned by the National Trust for Scotland and just three miles long and two miles wide, the isle boasts impressive cliffs that rise to almost 750 feet. We’ll be greeted by some of the island’s 70 or so residents and first take a short walk to the renowned Fair Isle Bird Observatory. The Observatory has researched bird migration and the immense seabird colonies for over 55 years. Many keen birders visit in spring and fall to witness impressive migrations and great rarities. From April to August, the island is busy with the sound of thousands of Northern Fulmars, Black-legged Kittiwakes, Razorbills, Common Murres, Black Guillemots, Atlantic Puffins, Great Skuas, Parasitic Jaegers, and Arctic Terns. We’ll be able to walk right up to nearby nesting Atlantic Puffins and check to see if any rarities are present after an interesting guided talk around the Observatory building. There will be options for further hiking, or cultural visits. The islanders will transport us at our leisure down the island to their community hall and interesting local museum, where we can see (and buy) various locally-made handicrafts, including the famous Fair Isle knitwear, designed and originated on this tiny isolated island hundreds of years ago.

By early evening we should be off the tiny island of Mousa, just off the mainland coast. We’ll go ashore here by zodiac to explore the finest example of an Iron Age broch—superb circular stone towers. As dusk descends we should witness the arrival and departure of many European Storm Petrels, breeding inside the stone walls of the ancient field system and the open stone structure of the 2,500-year-old broch itself.

May 30, Day 4: South Shetland & Foula. Shetland, known as “Land of the Simmer Dim,” is the most northerly outpost of the British Isles. Here are over a million breeding seabirds around many thousands of miles of coast and hundreds of islands. Sumburgh Head is the most southerly point on the Shetland mainland, and we’ll be anchored here by morning for a visit to Jarlshof Ancient Monument. Jarlshof is one of Shetland’s best-preserved and most complex archaeological sites. The site became exposed in the late 19th century, after a series of severe storms washed away the protective cover of sand. The Old House was all that could be seen on the site before the storms. Built in the 17th century, it was named “Jarlshof” by Sir Walter Scott in his novel *The Pirate*, and the name has stuck with the entire site ever since. Excavations show the site to have been occupied about 4,200 years, from the Bronze Age up through the Iron Age, through the Pictish Age, and on into the Norse and Medieval periods. The site is a thick layer of thousands of years of history, illustrating a complex and ongoing community of farming and fishing people living in a wide range of house styles.

We’ll rejoin the ship in the early afternoon and continue sailing out to the west to Foula—one of Britain’s remotest inhabited islands. Apart from a narrow coastal strip of more fertile croftland, Foula is an expanse of peat and moorland rising steeply to five dramatic peaks with wonderful Norse names: da Noup, the Daal, da Sneug, da Kame, and Soberlie. Some drop sheer to the sea in breathtaking cliffs up to 1,200 feet high. Foula’s natural heritage is exceptionally rich and diverse for such a small area. Designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its flora, fauna, and geology, it is also a National Scenic Area and a Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds. The world’s largest colony of Great Skuas (locally known as Bonxies) competes fiercely with many Parasitic Jaegers for breeding territories. Many small lochs are occupied by nesting Red-throated Loons. Common Murres, Razorbills, European Shags, and Black-legged Kittiwakes perch rowdily on cliff ledges and wheel and huddle in a vast slum of evenly spaced nests—an unforgettable, evocative mixed aroma of guano and salt air! Like Fair Isle, many rare birds have been recorded here during migration, so we’ll be ever hopeful of something unusual for our list!

We’ll sail south in the evening and overnight to our next destination of Orkney. As we sail there are good chances to find Harbor Porpoises, White-beaked and Atlantic White-sided dolphins, orcas, and Minke Whales.

May 31, Day 5: The Orkneys. The Orkney archipelago comprises over 70 widely spread islands. The archaeological and historical sites are some of the richest in Europe. We'll have much of the day on Orkney to explore these riches. Maes Howe, dating from the Stone Age and one of the most famous monuments on the islands, is one of the finest chambered tombs in the world and contains the largest collection of runic writing and engraving outside Scandinavia. Nearby are two standing stone circles, the smaller Stones of Stenness and the larger Ring of Brodgar, built on a raised mound with views across much of the west mainland. A short drive along the coast is Skara Brae. This is the best-preserved Neolithic village site on Orkney. Many artifacts discovered during the excavations of this site are on display in the excellent visitor center, which has a replica house built behind it. Covered in sand for thousands of years, the remains of Skara Brae are a complex village where the houses and their internal structures are remarkably well preserved. The mainland is joined to the Southern Islands by the Churchill Barriers, constructed of boulders and giant blocks of concrete, up to 10 tons in weight, which divide Scapa Flow from the North Sea. Scapa Flow has a long naval history from the Napoleonic Wars through World War II; the barriers played a hugely important part in the naval battles of the First and Second World Wars. Italian prisoners who were based here built from scrap materials the "Italian Chapel" still preserved today. Kirkwall, the capital of Orkney, is the United Kingdom's most northerly city—in reality a quite small, picturesque fishing port. St. Magnus Cathedral dominates the skyline. Building began in 1137 and continued over a period of 500 years. Created from yellow and red sandstone, it is one of the finest ecclesiastical buildings in Britain. Close by are the Earl's and Bishop's palaces, amongst the finest examples of Renaissance architecture in Scotland.

By early evening we'll set sail for the Outer Hebrides, perhaps first passing the westerly Isle of Hoy—the highest point on Orkney. The island is famous for the sea stack, "The Old Man of Hoy," with cliffs towering to over 1,000 feet. We may also pass by the extremely remote sea stacks of Sule Skerry with their immense seabird colonies.

June 1, Day 6: The Outer Hebrides. By morning we'll be at the northernmost Outer Hebridean Isles of Lewis and Harris. Harris and Lewis are actually one island, 60 miles long and 30 miles wide. Steep mountains rise to over 2,500 feet, but much of the interior is dominated by peat bog. Not surprisingly, the population of Lewis is spread around the coast. Harris means "high land," and Lewis means "marshy place." Ruled by the Norse until 1263, they passed to the MacLeods of Harris until the 19th and 20th centuries. Harris and Lewis are famous for tweed cloth. Harris Tweed must be made in the Outer Hebrides from virgin Scottish wool, woven on hand looms in the weaver's own home.

We'll go ashore to visit Gerrannann Blackhouse Village with its reconstructed blackhouses. These were the traditional crofting houses of the Western Isles for centuries; some archaeologists trace their ancestry back to Viking longhouses. These structures were built from local materials to cope with the harsh environment: long, low, rectangular with rounded corners to reduce wind resistance, constructed of hollow drystone walls infilled with earth, topped with a thatched roof held down by netting and rocks. Until last century, most had only a hole in the roof to let out smoke from a central hearth—hence the name "black" house!

Depending on time, tides, and weather, we may visit nearby Callanish Stone Circle—one of the finest Neolithic ritual monuments in the world, dated to c. 3000 B.C. The Standing Stones are a ring of monoliths thought to have been connected to religious ceremonies. There is an excellent visitor center explaining the history of these magnificent stones, and the history of the Hebrides. Alternatively—and, again, weather-dependant—we may travel south to North Uist to set ashore at the Royal Society for the Protection Birds (RSPB) reserve at Balranald. The reserve is mainly croftland (small-scale agricultural land) managed by traditional methods to create a suitable environment for many species of shorebirds. The reserve is well known for nesting Corncrake, Northern Lapwing, Eurasian Curlew, Dunlin, and Eurasian Oystercatcher. There are also extensive areas of Machair—a rich coastal grassland unique to the Western Isles, which, apart from the special bird life, is extremely rich in wildflowers.

We will sail for St. Kilda overnight.

June 2, Day 7: St. Kilda. The volcanic archipelago of St. Kilda, the remotest part of the British Isles, lies 41 miles west of the Outer Hebrides. On the very edge of the ocean, exposed to the full blast of the open Atlantic, St. Kilda was inhabited from the Stone Age 5,000 years ago until 1930, when it was voluntarily evacuated and abandoned by its last tiny population. This geographical remoteness and incredible human history make it a unique and awesome place, one of only 24 sites in the world to be awarded “mixed” World Heritage Status for its natural and cultural significance. The islands, with the highest cliffs and sea stacks in Britain (1,400 feet), form the most important seabird breeding station in Northwest Europe, including the world’s largest colony of Northern Gannets and the largest colony of Northern Fulmars in the British Isles. St. Kilda has its own sub-species of birds, mice, and the hardy, primitive Soay sheep.

St. Kilda has one of the most extensive groups of vernacular building remains in Britain. The layout of the 19th - century village remains to this day, and over 1,400 stone-built cleitean for storing food and fuel are scattered all over the islands. We’ll have plenty of time ashore to take a guided walk through this remarkable and unique piece of history and learn about how the St. Kildans survived and finally succumbed. Seabirds formed a major part of their diet—in 1876 it was said that the islanders took 89,600 puffins for food and feathers.

The British naturalist James Fisher wrote in 1947, “Whatever he studies, the future observer of St. Kilda will be haunted the rest of his life by the place, and tantalised by the impossibility of describing it, to those who have not seen it.”

June 3, Day 8: To the Inner Hebrides. We will have returned overnight to the Hebrides. With long daylight hours, those up on deck in the early morning may see us weave through and past some of the more southerly islands of the Outer Hebrides such as Mingulay, Berneray, and Pabay, to the south of South Uist. The islands have significant historical sites, including the old village on Mingulay, which the last islanders left in 1912. The islanders were fishermen and collected seabirds for meat, feathers, and eggs.

By mid-morning we should be ashore at the famous religious site of Iona—a tiny offshore island where St. Columba first set foot on Scottish soil, bringing Christianity to the Pagan tribes of the north. He established a monastery here in A.D. 563, and there has been a strong religious presence ever since, with many thousands making this a site of Christian pilgrimage. The peace and tranquility is only broken by the noisy rasping calls of nesting Corncrakes! We should keep watch for European Otters here, too.

Later we’ll have time to cruise around several other of the beautiful Inner Hebridean islands. Canna will beckon, one of the “Small Isles” of the Inner Hebrides, with its tiny agricultural and cattle-rearing community complete with Golden and White-tailed eagles soaring along the low cliffs. Atlantic and Harbor seals are seen year-round along this coastline. Staffa is famous for its amazing columnar basalt geology and the dramatic Fingal’s Cave situated below further large Atlantic Puffin colonies.

June 4, Day 9: Disembark in Oban. We disembark by 9 a.m. at Oban, a small and cozy harbor town in west Scotland. There will be a coach transfer provided to return you to Glasgow—either to the airport or city center—by about 1 p.m. The journey will take us through some fine scenery of mountain glens and lochs, particularly the famous Loch Lomond.

Homeward journeys. It should be possible to connect with outbound flights from Glasgow this afternoon to other parts of the UK.

TOUR SIZE: The Scottish Isles Cruise will be limited in size to 43 passengers.

TOUR LEADER: Peter Roberts, Kitty Coley, John Harrison, Andrew Whittaker and Victor Emanuel.

Peter Roberts is based in Britain and has been a keen naturalist since childhood in London. While birds remain his main interest, close contenders include whale-watching, the big game animals of Africa, snorkeling, and the

study of insects. A varied, lifelong career has included conservation and wildlife related work from nature reserve management and teaching wildlife field courses to ornithological survey and research, environmental consulting, and work for the United Kingdom government's Department of the Environment. Wardening the bird-banding station on the Welsh island of Bardsey for seven years, and a year managing the Aldabra Research Station in the Indian Ocean, stimulated a passion for seabirds and islands. His work has taken him to archipelagos worldwide from Antarctica, Falklands, Juan Fernandez, Galapagos, Hawaii, Seychelles, and Sao Tome north to the Shetlands, Pribilofs, and Aleutians, and he now lives on the small Scottish Hebridean island of Islay. Peter has an MSc in woodland invertebrate ecology. He has published research on various subjects from the feeding ecology of fruit bats to bird migration, identification, and behavior to ecology of seabirds and Red-billed Choughs. Tour-leading for over 30 years has now become virtually full-time and resulted in travel to over 75 countries on all seven continents, concentrating in particular on the birds, history, and wildlife of Europe and Africa.

Kitty Coley is a geologist, naturalist, and avid birder who has led natural history tours for the National Geographic Society and Smithsonian Institute for over 10 years. Tour destinations have included Costa Rica, Panama, Mexico, the Galapagos, the Peruvian Amazon and Andes, Chile, Antarctica, Alaska, Newfoundland, Labrador, and Iceland, as well as the western United States and Canada. Other nature travels have taken her to East Africa, Australia, Belize, Honduras, Ecuador, and Bolivia. Her love of nature has led to exploration through scuba diving, backpacking, white-water and sea kayaking, and biking. She serves as a consultant to *National Geographic* magazine for articles related to her expertise. Trained as a geologist, Kitty's knowledge of the earth and her love of nature and ornithology, combined with her interactive and enthusiastic teaching style, make her a highly effective and popular leader. Kitty received her B.A. in geology with a minor in biology, and her M.S. in geology from the University of Texas at Austin. She worked as a geologist for 15 years before becoming involved full-time in nature tourism. Kitty lives in Austin with her husband David.

John Harrison is a travel writer and environmentalist, and a native of Liverpool, England. He took First Class Honors in geography at Cambridge University and a Masters Degree in planning at Liverpool University. For 20 years he worked for the UK government in various local and national capacities on planning and environment matters, and wrote fiction and articles. John's short stories have been broadcast on the BBC and collected in book form. His latest travel book, *Where the Earth Ends*, about South America and Antarctica, was a *Sunday Times* Book of the Week, and has been translated into German. He won first prize in the Alexander Cordell Travel Writing Competition in 2004, and second prize in 2005. John has traveled to 47 countries on six continents, and has extensive cruise experience in Antarctica and the subantarctic, the Arctic, Chilean Fjords, and the British Isles. He has made radio programs for the BBC about Antarctica and Easter Island. His particular interests are the links between real voyages and famous fiction, the remote cultures of southern South America, and the impact of exploration and conquest. In 2002 John walked 700 miles through the Andes for his next book, *A Walk to the Sun*, about the high sierra. He was the first outsider some of those people had ever met. John is a member of the Society of Authors, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, and in 2000 was elected a Fellow of the Welsh Academy. Further details are on his website: www.cloudroad.co.uk.

Andrew Whittaker has been based in Brazil for the last 20 years. His passion for birding and natural history started at the early age of seven in the UK. For the past 25 years Andy has worked with birds, traveling around the world studying bird migration in Canada, Israel, Borneo, and the UK. Working in the Brazilian rainforest for the Smithsonian Institution has made Andy an authority on Amazonian birds and the region's natural history, and he has authored many technical publications on the region. He was a consultant for the prestigious *Life of Birds* series by David Attenborough. At present Andy is working with Kevin Zimmer on a comprehensive field guide to the birds of Brazil. Andy has extensive tour leading experience having led tours throughout South and Central American countries and the Antarctic for the past 18 years. He immensely enjoys sharing his fascination and knowledge of Neotropical birds, animals, and their conservation with others. Andy's special interest is bird vocalizations; his knowledge of Neotropical voices has enabled him to make several important ornithological discoveries and add 16 species to the Brazilian list. Andy lives in Manaus with his wife Nadime, their son Steven, and daughters, Luana and Suzana.

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Victor Emanuel started birding in Texas 59 years ago at the age of eight. His travels have taken him to all the continents, with his areas of concentration being Texas, Arizona, Mexico, Panama, and Peru. He is the founder and compiler for 40 years of the record-breaking Freeport Christmas Bird Count, and served a term as president of the Texas Ornithological Society. Birds and natural history have been a major focus throughout his life. He derives great pleasure from seeing and hearing birds, and sharing with others these avian sights and sounds, both the common ones and the more unusual ones. He initiated the first birding camps for young people, and considers that one of his greatest achievements. Victor holds a B.A. in zoology and botany from the University of Texas and an M.A. in government from Harvard. In 1993, he was the recipient of the Roger Tory Peterson Excellence in Birding Award, given by the Houston Audubon Society in recognition of a lifetime of dedication to careful observation, education, and addition to the body of avian knowledge. In 2004, he received the Roger Tory Peterson Award from the American Birding Association, and the Arthur A. Allen Award from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Victor is a member of the board of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, and the American Bird Conservancy.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: Prices quoted are based on double occupancy. A very limited number of berths in Twin Non Private and Twin Private cabins are available for single accommodation. Those single travelers who wish to share their cabin will be guaranteed the double occupancy fare, whether or not a cabin-mate is available, and will be restricted to Twin Non-private or Twin Private cabins.

	<u>Per Person based on Double Occupancy</u>	<u>Single Occupancy</u>
Twin Non-private Cabins	\$4995	\$8491
Twin Private Cabins	\$5695	\$9681
Superior Cabins	\$5995	N/A

Price includes: 7 nights aboard the *Aleksey Maryshev* per the itinerary; meals beginning with dinner on Day 2 through breakfast on Day 9; all shore excursions and activities throughout the voyage by Zodiac; all port charges and service taxes; transfer between ship and Glasgow airport on Day 9; services of the tour leader, naturalist guides, and Expedition staff; gratuities to naturalist guides, crew, and service personnel of the *Aleksey Maryshev*; and comprehensive pre-departure material.

Not included in the cruise fee is roundtrip airfare from your home to Aberdeen and return from Glasgow; transfer from the airport to the ship in Aberdeen; international departure tax; passport expenses; extensions; baggage, accident or cancellation insurance and items of a personal nature such as alcoholic beverages.

Cabin Descriptions

Twin Non-private Cabins: There are 6 Twin Non-private Cabins on Deck 3 with upper and lower berths, a desk, small washbasin, ample storage and hanging space and portholes. Shared shower and toilet facilities are conveniently located on the same deck.

Twin Private Cabins: There are 6 Twin Private Cabins on Deck 3 and 8 on Deck 4 with private bathroom and shower, washbasin and toilet, upper and lower berths, a desk, ample storage space and windows.

Superior Cabins: There are 3 Superior Cabins on Deck 4 with a double bed and a single sofa-bed. These cabins have a private bathroom with shower, washbasin and toilet. There is also a sitting area with a desk, coffee and tea facilities, refrigerator and windows.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$1,000**. 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 \$400 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 \$200.
Fewer than 120 days before departure date	No refund available.

TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE: *Please Note: Medical Insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation/repatriation during the voyage is MANDATORY for participation on this cruise.* We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible. 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 VENT. Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to assist you in making air arrangements. Airline tickets carry restrictions due to the airfare used. You may find that your ticket cannot be reissued or exchanged for another air carrier or routing. Cancellation penalties and change fees may be assessed for any changes to the ticket. These charges are solely your responsibility. First and business class travel is available on some flights. **All requests for travel assistance (air tickets, additional hotels, etc.) must be received no later than 60 days prior to departure date. Within 60 days, arrangements must be made on your own.**

CLIMATE & CLOTHING: Weather at these northerly latitudes can be very variable, and temperatures and wind will often seem colder and stronger out at sea. Come prepared for everything from cool temperatures (low 50s), rain, and wind through to dry, sunny weather with temperatures in the low 60s. Dress on board is informal and casual. On deck and while in zodiacs, you may need warm, layered clothing and wind- and water-proof outer garments, including rain-pants, gloves, and hats. While ashore it may be fine, warm, and sunny, so light, layered clothing is advised to allow for all eventualities of temperature, wind, and precipitation. While on deck, surfaces can be slippery, so shoes with non-slip soles are useful. In some places we'll be going ashore in zodiacs so waterproof rubber boots are useful—even if you change into walking shoes after landing.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure is required. Visas are not required for Canadian or U.S. citizens. Non-U.S./Canadian citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

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 leaders will have spotting scopes, and there will be fairly limited need for one on this tour. There will be an extensive library of bird, wildlife, and history books available onboard.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS: There are no required immunizations for this tour. Bring an adequate supply of all personally required medications with you as they will not be available on tour once we have set sail. There is

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a high standard of hygiene on board ship and in Britain generally, so we should be safe from stomach upsets. Safe drinking water is provided.

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 United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 877-FYI-TRIP (394-8747) or you can check their website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

MISCELLANEOUS:

Departure Tax: None

Electricity: 220 volts/30 to 50 cycles, AC with European two-round pin

Time: Britain is 6 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time

Language: English is the official language onboard and is spoken by most of the ship's crew

SUGGESTED READING: Our website at www.ventbird.com offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from the store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You might also want to visit such other online stores as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print and hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com or www.buteobooks.com, which specializes in ornithology books. There will also be a fairly extensive library of relevant books on board the ship. There are many adequate field guides to European birds, including the Peterson series. Two considered currently the best are:

Svenson, Mullarney, Zetterstrom, and Grant. *Birds of Europe*. (2000). This is the latest of a huge range of field guides available on European birds. It has masses more up-to-date identification detail and illustrations than other guides and has received excellent/rave reviews. Highly recommended!

Lars Jonsson. *Birds of Europe with North Africa and the Middle East*. 1992. Excellent illustrations and comprehensive. Available in a 1996 paperback edition. Published by Christopher Helm in UK.

TIPPING: Gratuities to naturalist guides, crew, and service personnel of the *Aleksey Maryshev* are included in your cruise fee.

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 September 18, 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.