



TOUR INFORMATION FOR MEXICO: COLIMA AND JALISCO

These notes are designed to help you prepare for your tour. Please read carefully.

ENTERING MEXICO: United Kingdom citizens will need a passport valid for at least six months from the date of departure. Visas are not required. Citizens of other nations should contact the nearest Mexican Embassy for entry requirements. Tourist cards are required and are issued by your entering airline.

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport and air ticket with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get replacements if your originals are lost or stolen. Obviously you should keep the photocopies in a separate bag to the originals.

PICKUP TIMES AT THE MANZANILLO AIRPORT: As our hotel is well outside of Manzanillo and doesn't run a free shuttle service, we will have two pick-up times at the airport in Manzanillo: One at 14:30 and one at 16:30, however if we find that there are several clients arriving around the same time we may modify these pick-up times accordingly. If you arrive later than 16:30 you should plan on taking a taxi to the hotel, which is easily done as you exit the baggage claim area into the area where people are waiting. There is a well-marked official taxi stand there where you can buy your ticket for "Hotel Cabo Blanco, Barra de Navidad, por favor." Further details will appear in the Final Information documents sent out about 3 weeks before departure.

INTRODUCTORY MEETING: The tour will start with an introductory meeting at dinner (about 19.00) on Day 1 of the tour. This informal meeting affords the leader the opportunity to introduce everyone to each other and to let you know generally what to expect on the trip - pace of the tour, daily routine, etc. We strongly recommend you arrange your flights to arrive in the late afternoon so that you can be present at the introductory meeting. If you can't arrive before this, you may want to consider arriving a day early. An early arrival has the added benefit of building in a hedge against flight delays due to bad winter weather.

CURRENCY: The currency in Mexico is the Mexican Peso (MXN). It is always helpful to have some pesos (about £15 worth) with you, and these can be obtained at an ATM in Mexico. Often it is best to change as much as you think you will need at start of the trip. The advent of ATMs means that traveller's cheques are becoming obsolete and cash or an ATM card is the best way to obtain currency.

LANGUAGE: The major language in Mexico is Spanish. English-speakers are seldom encountered except in the larger city hotels. Our leaders' Spanish ranges from functional to fluent and you will have no need to learn the language. However, understanding even a few basic words may add interest to your trip, so you might consider bringing a small English-Spanish dictionary or phrase book.

CLIMATE: Lowland Colima and Jalisco have a hot and variably humid climate. This is the dry season though, so rain would be exceptional except perhaps for locally generated afternoon showers on the volcanoes (which has happened only twice over the years). The early mornings on the volcanoes can be cool enough for a jacket and light gloves (or sometimes near freezing!) but things soon become warm to hot.

MEXICO: Colima and Jalisco: Tour Information...2

ALTITUDE: We reach about 10,000 feet on the slopes of the volcanoes. We'll move slowly at higher elevations.

PACE OF TOUR AND DAILY ROUTINE: As with all tours in the tropics, we'll try to be in the field around dawn which means about 07.00 – remarkably late for a Neotropical tour because of local time zones! But don't worry, birding sites range from 30 minutes' to an hour's drive from our hotels, so you won't need to "sleep in". The pace of each day varies somewhat with this tour: Two breakfasts are at our hotel and the rest are in the field at dawn. Four lunches are at restaurants while three are picnics in the field. All dinners are at restaurants. A late dawn means late sunset, and on a couple of evenings we'll stay out relatively late to look for nightbirds; the unanimous consensus in such cases has been to go directly to dinner, without the usual hour before dinner. On both of these days there is the chance for an afternoon siesta, so we won't be out all day before the late nights. Walking is mostly along roads and wide trails that are level to gently sloping, with the option for some short stretches of steeper gradients. None is more than three hours.

HEALTH: It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the region you are visiting. Please contact your doctor well in advance of your tour's departure as some medication must be initiated weeks before the period of possible exposure.

It is recommended that you are up-to-date on routine vaccinations. These include measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis, varicella (chickenpox), polio, and your yearly flu jab. It is further recommended that most travellers have protection against Hepatitis A and Typhoid.

Evidence of a Yellow Fever vaccination must be shown only if you are arriving from an infected area.

Miscellaneous: Biting insects and arachnids are seldom a major nuisance although chiggers and ticks can be locally numerous. We recommend using insect repellents with a high concentration of DEET. We have found that careful eating habits are important in order to avoid most intestinal problems.

In most of Mexico it is unwise to drink untreated water, although bottled water and soft drinks are reliable and are widely available for purchase in motels, restaurants, and stores. Although we will be carrying water and other drinks, some sort of personal water purification system is suggested in case of emergency. The easiest and safest is a solution of crystalline iodine, available from pharmacies with a doctor's prescription. This super-saturated solution is effective as long as the crystals are present in the bottle, and only a small amount is needed for each quart of water. Other water purification tablets and systems are available from outdoor suppliers and outfitters. Imodium or Pepto Bismol in tablet form can be recommended as the best treatment for occasional traveller's diarrhoea. Electrolyte-replacement drinks in powder form are also worth bringing as they replace the vital salts and minerals lost during a bout of diarrhoea.

Don't forget that the sun in Mexico can be very intense. Please bring adequate protection, including a sun hat and a strong sunscreen of at least 15 SPF rating.

It may be difficult to obtain any special medication during the tour, so bring all you are likely to need.

For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website www.masta-travel-health.com

MEXICO: Colima and Jalisco: Tour Information...3

ACCOMMODATION: The Cabo Blanco Hotel where we start in Barra de Navidad is an allinclusive resort hotel with an adjacent marina, and has all the usual tourist facilities. We stay at the Motel Colón in Ciudad Guzman, which is off the tourist track. The hotel has been renovated recently; rooms are comfortable, with phone and television. The hot water supply has been intermittent in the past but if you wait long enough it usually comes; the outdoor pool can be refreshing. In Colima City we stay at the Motel Los Candiles, a modern Mexican motel with pool and the usual facilities. We end at the relaxing Hotel Marbella in Manzanillo, a modern-style resort hotel with pool, restaurant, and beach-front.

COFFEE: Early morning coffee is often not available so those craving morning coffee should bring a heating coil for making coffee, or a thermos that can be filled the night before.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is available at our hotel in Colima City.

ELECTRICITY: Electrical current is the same as in the US (110v, AC60HZ) and plugs are parallel prong. Power failures occur but not with any regularity. Appliances with especially broad ground prongs may not fit outlets at some hotels. An international travel plug is useful and can be bought in most airport departure lounges. You may find the following website helpful: <http://www.powerplugs-sockets.com>.

FOOD: Food is of good quality with standard “Mexican” fare and some good seafood.

Sunbird tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Many restaurants offer set menus and are unable to accommodate all special requests within a group. Thus, participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs can, regretfully, not be accommodated. Our tours are carefully scheduled to ensure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time, sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to take supplemental food with them.

DRINKS: Bottled water, a soft drink or a beer (or wine if appropriate) are provided at meals, as is coffee or tea. In addition, we keep a supply of bottled water on the tour vehicles. Bottled or filtered water may also be provided in some rooms where we stay.

INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE ACCESS: Wi-Fi is available at all hotels but is often intermittent and, when it does work, not very fast, so it shouldn't be relied upon.

FIELD CLOTHING: Dress is informal throughout. The best approach to the variable climate is to take several layers of clothing that can be added or subtracted according to changes in temperature. The following items are basic:

Sun hat	Light-weight long trousers
Light-weight shoes	Long-sleeved cotton shirts
Cotton socks	Heavier sweater / fleece top
Light-weight sweater	Light-weight gloves
Sturdy walking boots for hikes	Light-weight raincoat
Wind-proof jacket	

MEXICO: Colima and Jalisco: Tour Information...4

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS:

Notebook and pencil	Sunglasses and sunscreen
Small rucksack or day pack	Travel clothesline & laundry soap
Alarm clock	Universal sink plug
Torch & extra batteries	Insect repellent
Woolly hat	Ear plugs (if you are a light sleeper)
Personal medication	

Optional: Telescope & tripod (recommended if you have them), camera, film or memory cards, spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage), field guide, swimwear, small (pint-sized) thermos or heating coil if you wish to have early morning coffee.

Note: The most effective insect repellents are those containing at least 35% of the active ingredient diethyltoluamide (DEET). The higher the percentage, the greater the effectiveness. However, care must be taken to avoid getting the repellent on to optical equipment as it dissolves rubber and plastic and can damage coated lenses. A reasonably effective alternative, which isn't corrosive, is Mosi-guard, produced by MASTA, and we recommend this. It is available in most high street chemist (including those at the airport). New products containing tick- and chigger repelling chemicals are particularly effective. Camping supply stores sell such a product containing permethrin 0.5%, which must be applied directly to clothing in advance of wearing and allowed to dry. This non-staining, odourless chemical is non-toxic to humans and protective on clothing through several launderings. Please make sure you never to spray insect repellent inside the vehicle or when you are standing close to other participants – it may drift on to their optical equipment.

LEADER'S EQUIPMENT

Telescope	Maps
Field library	First Aid Kit
Laser pointer	Play-back equipment

LUGGAGE: Our Final Information document, which will be sent to you approximately three weeks before departure, will give details about baggage weight and size restrictions imposed by the airline used for this tour. If possible, please bring your luggage in soft-sided bags or cases (rather than large hard 'Samsonite'-type suitcases) as these pack more easily into our vehicles during the tour. Please note that on many tours there are no porters to carry your luggage so please ensure that no bag is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself. As a general rule, in addition to using your luggage labels, it is a good idea to fix identification to the inside of each piece of luggage.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Scenery and memory shots will be plentiful and simple to obtain but birds are difficult to photograph. Bring all the memory cards you are likely to need with you. Digiscoping is perfectly compatible with this tour, but please ensure that you bring your own telescope as the leader's telescope will not be available for this activity. Camera equipment should be packed in moisture- and dust-proof bags, as a precaution. There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals and scenery and the leaders will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However, if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

TRANSPORT: We will be travelling by 12-passenger minibus. The leader will arrange a seating rotation. Participants should be able to ride in any seat in tour vehicles.

MEXICO: Colima and Jalisco: Tour Information...5

SMOKING: Smoking is not allowed in the vehicles or when the group is gathered for meals, checklists etc. If you are sharing a room with a non-smoker, please do not smoke in the room. If you smoke in the field, we ask that you do so well away and downwind from the group if possible.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel insurance is essential and we insist that you take out suitable cover as soon as your tour is booked. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are also adequately insured on your home contents policy, as most travel insurance policies do not cover very expensive individual items. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage. Please also ensure that your policy covers you in the event of a medical emergency, cancellation of a trip or severe delays. Medical costs abroad can often be extremely expensive. Please note that Sunbird is not liable for any medical or repatriation costs resulting from injury or illness during a tour or for covering any costs resulting from a flight delay such as extra hotel accommodation.

If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Helen Fisher, Bullerwell Independent Insurance Brokers, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234-866964. Please contact Helen for a quote and she will send the schedule directly to you.

TIPPING: All tour-based tips are included in the tour price. These include tips to local guides, drivers, hotel porters, and waiters and waitresses when we have group meals together in restaurants. You only need to pay tips for personal services such as room service or drinks from the bar.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: There are many general books on travel in Mexico, and reading one of them will certainly enhance your enjoyment of the trip. One of the best is Fodor's Guide to Mexico, published by David McKay and edited by Fisher, Brown et al. Another very pleasant travel book about Mexico is Kate Simon's Mexico: Places and Pleasures, published by Thomas Crowell, 1979. There are several field guides covering Mexican birds and other natural history:

Glassberg, Jeffrey. 2007. *A Swift Guide to the Butterflies of Mexico and Central America*. Sunstreak Books, www.sunstreakbooks.com.

Howell, Steve N.G. and Sophie Webb. 1995. *A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America*. Oxford University Press. **Recommended.**

Dunn, J., and J. Alderfer, eds. 2011. *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. 6th ed. Washington, DC: NGS. One of the two best field guides for North America; includes more species and offers more text than the Sibley guide.

Sibley, David Allen. 2000. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. Arguably the best North American field guide showing all of North America's birds. Although comprehensive, its larger-than-standard-field-guide size makes it difficult to carry into the field.

Sibley, David Allen. 2003. *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. The same concise and accurate illustrations and information as found in the more comprehensive guide though smaller and much easier to carry. More relevant on this tour than the eastern Sibley guide. **Highly recommended**

MEXICO: Colima and Jalisco: Tour Information...6

OBTAINING BOOKS: Most of the field guides and the major ornithological references in print are available by mail order from booksellers specialising in natural history titles.

Natural History Book Service Ltd
Tel: 01803 865913
www.nhbs.co.uk

Subbuteo Books
Tel: 0870 010 9700
www.wildlifebooks.com

WildSounds
Tel: 01263 741100
www.wildsounds.co.uk

MAPS: Maps of the region may be available from:

The Map Shop
Tel: 01684 593146
www.themapshop.co.uk

Stanfords
Tel: 020 7836 1321
www.stanfords.co.uk

FINAL INFORMATION: Final information with instructions for meeting the group, hotel addresses etc., and your air tickets will be sent out about three weeks before the start of the tour. If you have any questions about the trip, please contact us.