



## TOUR INFORMATION FOR ARIZONA in May

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

**ENTERING THE UNITED STATES:** United Kingdom citizens need to have a passport that has a minimum validity of 6 months remaining after the tour has finished. This is an immigration requirement for many countries, including the USA. All nationalities require a machine-readable passport if travelling to the USA under the visa waiver programme (see below).

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has made changes to the immigration requirements. Travellers seeking to travel under the Visa Waiver Program must pre-apply for authorisation using the Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (**ESTA**). **ESTA** must be completed online via their website.

Having an **ESTA** is a mandatory requirement and applications should be made online at least 72 hours before departure via their website <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> as although the majority of responses are immediate, it can take 72 hours for approval in some cases. There is a small fee to pay as a processing charge followed by a small fee when authorisation has been granted.

For further information, or if you don't have access to the internet, please contact the Embassy of the United States in London on 020 3608 6998.

Citizens of other countries should contact their nearest US Embassy for entry requirements.

*Once you've applied for your ESTA please remember to print it out and take a copy of that document onto the aircraft with you.*

All visitors to the USA's first port-of-entry have their index fingerprints taken by an electronic scanner at Passport Control. You will also have your photograph taken at the same time. Although the process itself only takes a few minutes the queue can be quite long if several flights arrive at the same time!

You will then need to reclaim your checked-in luggage, go through security, then hand your luggage back to the airline staff who will be waiting nearby to give assistance. Once your luggage is back with the airline please proceed to the departure gate for your onward flight.

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

**INTRODUCTORY MEETING:** There will be an introductory meeting in the hotel lobby at 18.00 on Day 1 of the tour. This informal meeting gives the leader the chance to expect on the trip - pace of the tour, daily routine, the next day's schedule, etc., and the participants to introduce themselves to one another. After the meeting, we will drive to a nearby restaurant for dinner together.

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Note: For those who arrive early, there will be an optional afternoon Day 1 excursion to Sweetwater Preserve, a wonderful artificial marsh on the northwest side of town. This excursion will depart from the hotel lobby at 15.00 and return to the hotel by 18.00 in time for the introductory meeting and dinner.

We encourage you to arrange your flights so that you can be present at the introductory meeting (and the afternoon excursion too, if desired). If you elect to arrive late in the evening of Day 1, please be aware that the birding day will start early on Day 2 and you may only get a few hours' sleep. If you can't arrive before early evening, you may want to consider arriving a day early.

**TIME DIFFERENCE:** Arizona is 8 hours behind British Summer Time.

**CURRENCY:** The currency of the United States of America is the dollar (USD). Dollars can be obtained from your local bank and from exchange facilities at the airport. As the tour price includes all travel, hotel and main meal costs, you only need bring enough dollars to cover gifts, snacks, or other purchases of a purely nature.

**CLIMATE:** Temperatures rise steadily from March through June with little rain, although rain and cool temperatures are possible. Much of the most interesting late spring birdwatching is in the deep mountain canyons where warm days and cool nights are the rule. At the elevations where we spend most of our time, the day-time highs average in the low 90°F and night-time lows average about 60-65°F, although we do spend some time at lower elevations where it can be 10 degrees warmer. If you have any questions about the climate, please give us a call. Cold fronts and unseasonable temperatures seem to be more common the last few years, so please prepare for some cool evenings in the mountains, with temperatures in the 40's possible during owling excursions.

**ALTITUDE:** Much of our birding is at elevations between 4000 and 9000 feet, and while we normally do not schedule anything strenuous at the higher altitudes, anyone with known cardiac or respiratory problems should consult his or her doctor before scheduling the trip. We do one hike of about 1.5 miles round trip to look for Spotted Owls, starting at an elevation of about 6000 feet and climbing to perhaps 6500 feet but we take it at a very slow pace.

**PACE OF THE TOUR AND DAILY ROUTINE:** Early mornings are always the best time for birding activity, and we will often be out in the field by 07:00, sometimes preceded by a drive of 30 minutes or so. Breakfast will usually be at 06:00 to 06:30. When possible, we will try to schedule a siesta during the hottest portion of the day. Much of the birding will be on roads and wider trails, and on one day, in search for Spotted Owl, we will hike up a rocky trail for about a mile (at above 6000 ft). On some nights, we will have post-dinner outings for owling and night-birding.

**HEALTH:** **It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the regions 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.

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Arizona presents no real hazards to the visiting birdwatcher but certain factors must be considered.

Dehydration: We urge everyone to bring a water bottle or canteen and to drink lots of water during the tour. In the intense sun and low relative humidity of Arizona, it is easy to become dehydrated before you are even aware of it with resultant low grade headaches and loss of energy. Drinking lots of water is the only sure way to avoid this, and fresh water will be provided in the van at all times.

Spiny Plants: The most common injury results from spines penetrating light weight shoes. Almost every desert plant in Arizona is armed with thorns or spines and we recommend tough canvas or leather shoes of at least ankle height and tough (and preferably cool, light weight) trousers as the best safeguards.

Miscellaneous: Rattlesnakes are not a hazard but one always needs to use common sense and be alert in desert areas. We actively look for reptiles and feel lucky to see one rattlesnake per trip. Scorpions are nocturnal and rarely seen, and the tarantulas often seen on the highways are not dangerous.

Chiggers or biting insects may be encountered occasionally in moist areas, but are generally not an issue on spring trips to Arizona.

For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website [www.masta-travel-health.com](http://www.masta-travel-health.com)

**ACCOMMODATION:** We stay at standard hotels throughout.

**LAUNDRY SERVICE:** This is available in or near all our hotels on this tour.

**ELECTRICITY:** 110/120V AC 60Hz. An international travel plug is useful and can be bought in most airport departure lounges. You may find the following website helpful: <http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com>.

**FOOD:** Food is North American standard with most breakfasts and dinners taken at our accommodation or in in local restaurants. Lunches will be a combination of picnic lunches and local sandwich shop visits. We will include several good Mexican and southwestern restaurants in the itinerary.

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.

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**INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE ACCESS:** Our hotels have reasonably good Wi-Fi connections. Mobile phone access is very good near our lodging locations but can be intermittent when in the field.

Mobile phones can be useful while on tour but keep in mind that many countries operate on a different cellular technology. Your phone may be incompatible with the local system, so please check with your local carrier. Fortunately, with the advent of smartphones, it is easy to download applications such as Skype or Google Voice, which can make calling home free or very inexpensive. Another option is to replace the data (“SIM”) card in your phone in-country. The SIM cards, including data can be very cheap. If you wish to use this option you will need to check that your smart phone has a SIM card slot.

Note that due to our proximity to Mexico and to New Mexico (which is in a different time zone) Mobile phones often connect to non-Arizona based towers. Should your phone provider charge you international or roaming fees due to your phone connecting to Mexican phone towers automatically it is generally possible to explain your location and have those charges reversed.

In addition, during our time in Portal mobile phones often connect to the nearby towers above Rodeo, New Mexico, thus shifting the internal clock on the phone. This can have ramifications for those who use their phone as an alarm clock.

**FIELD CLOTHING:** We will usually experience cool mornings, and warm to hot afternoons, so the very best way to regulate for these changes in temperature is with layers. A clothing combination that works well is a shirt (or t-shirt) under a long sleeve button down shirt or a weather/wind-proof jacket. Long, lightweight, convertible hiking trousers are often preferred as they are loose enough for air to circulate and can be converted into shorts if so desired.

Sun hat/sunglasses	Light-weight sweater or jacket
Short-sleeved cotton shirts	Folding umbrella, or light-weight rain clothes
Long-sleeved cotton shirts	Sturdy walking shoes
Convertible trousers/shorts of quick-trying fabric	

### MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS:

Notebook and pencil	Wrist watch
Alarm clock	Water bottle/canteen
Small rucksack/day pack	Insect repellent
Torch/head lamp with spare batteries (for owling)	Sunscreen/lip balm
Ear plugs (if you are a light sleeper)	Personal medication

**Optional:** Telescope & tripod (recommended if you have them), camera and film, spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage), field guide, swim suit.

**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).

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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:** Leaders will provide the following:

Telescope	Field guides and maps
Ice chest	Maps
Water cooler	Small First Aid kit
Playback 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. Please bring all your film or memory cards with you as it may be difficult to find precisely what you need on short notice. Please understand that birdwatching tours are not always the best vehicle for bird photography as we often cannot remain in one place for extended periods of time. Digiscoping is perfectly compatible with the tour, though it is recommended you bring your own telescope as the leader's telescope is not available for this activity. An opportunity to try your hand at hummingbird photography is possible on two of our days.

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:** Depending on the group size we will be travelling by 12 or 15-passenger window minibus. The leader will arrange a seating rotation. Participants should be able to ride in any seat in our vehicles.

**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.

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**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, 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:**

#### **Field Guides: Birds**

Dunn, Jon L. and Jonathan Alderfer. 2017. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. 7th Edition. National Geographic Society, Washington, DC. One of the top two field guides for North America, more portable than the Sibley guide. ISBN-13: 9781426218354 **Highly Recommended**.

Sibley, David Allen. 2016. *Sibley Birds West*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. A newer edition of the classic Sibley tailored specifically to the western half of the ABA area.. ISBN-13: 978-0307957924. **Recommended**

Sibley, David Allen. 2014. *The Sibley Guide to Birds – second edition*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. Arguably the best North American field guide. **Recommended**.

Taylor, Richard Cachor. 1995. *A Birder's Guide to Southeastern Arizona (ABA/Lane Birdfinding Guide Series)*. American Birding Association, Colorado Springs, Co.

Tucson Audubon Society. 2015. *Finding Birds in Southeast Arizona*, Revised 8th Edition. Tucson Audubon Society. Newly revised and edited. ISBN-13: 978-0964503168.

#### **Field Guides: (non-birds)**

Brennan, Thomas C., and Andrew T. Holycross. 2006. *A Field Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles of Arizona*. Arizona Game and Fish Department. The best guide to the herpetofauna of Arizona.

Brodkin, Hank, Priscilla Brodkin and Bob Stewart. 2001. *Butterflies of Arizona - a Photographic Guide*. Second Edition. West Coast Lady Press.

Brock, Jim. P., and Kenn Kaufman. 2006. *Butterflies of North America*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Kaufman, Kenn, Rick Bowers, and Nora Bowers. 2007. *Kaufman Focus Guide to Mammals of North America*, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston.

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Lowe, Charles H., Cecil R. Schwalbe and Terry B. Johnson. 1986. *The Venomous Reptiles of Arizona*. Arizona Game and Fish Department. Phoenix, Arizona. An excellent book with much information about life histories, behaviour, etc.

Paulson, Dennis. 2009. *Dragonflies and Damselflies of the West* (Princeton Field Guide Series). Princeton Field Guides.

**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](http://www.nhbs.co.uk)

Subbuteo Books  
Tel: 0870 010 9700  
[www.wildlifebooks.com](http://www.wildlifebooks.com)

WildSounds  
Tel: 01263 741100  
[www.wildsounds.co.uk](http://www.wildsounds.co.uk)

**MAPS:** Maps of the region may be available from:

The Map Shop  
Tel: 01684 593146  
[www.themapshop.co.uk](http://www.themapshop.co.uk)

Stanfords  
Tel: 020 7836 1321  
[www.stanfords.co.uk](http://www.stanfords.co.uk)

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