



TOUR INFORMATION FOR HAWAII

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! If you need to change aircraft to continue on within the USA, 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. It can prove invaluable in helping you get a replacement if your original is lost or stolen. You should pack the photocopy separately from the original.

INTRODUCTORY MEETING: There will be an introductory meeting at 17:00 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, the next day's schedule, etc. After the meeting, we will have dinner together.

We encourage you to arrange your flights so that you can be present at the introductory meeting. If you elect to arrive late in the evening of Day 1, please be aware that the birding day may 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.

HAWAII: Tour Information...2

CURRENCY: The currency the US Dollar. Credit cards are widely accepted. Money can be changed at Honolulu airport and at ATMs around the country.

LANGUAGE: English is the language of Hawai'i, but our co-leader is fluent in the local pidgin, a mix of Hawaiian, Creole, and English.

CLIMATE: The days are generally warm, and usually summer clothes are suitable for most days. However, you must bring a warm layer or jacket for higher altitudes on the Big Island and Kauai, or in case a storm moves through.

Hawaii has a tropical climate cooled by trade winds, which usually blow at 12 mph or more. The windward sides of the islands tend to be cool, wet and windy, while the leeward sides are warm and dry. Rainfall varies dramatically from an average of 6" a year in the driest spots, to an average of 486" at Mt. Waialeale on Kauai, the wettest spot on earth! Winter temperatures (November to April) usually range from a low of 32°F (at 7500 feet elevation) to a high of 80°F (on the coast). Waterproof clothing is important. Water temperature in March is about 76°F. Also, even though the air temperature is relatively cool for the tropics, the sun is intense.

PACE OF THE TOUR: Most mornings will start around 06:00, but there will be two or three earlier mornings, as well as several later ones. On several days we will try to schedule one or two hours of free time after lunch or before dinner for rest and relaxation.

Walks on this tour are easy to moderately strenuous due to Hawaii's steep topography. We'll go at a comfortable pace. There may be the option of a strenuous and challenging hike on Kauai, but most of the group will elect for an easier hike. However "easy" on Kauai means a lot of mud, narrow boardwalks, inclement weather, and uneven ground with a round trip of up to 2.5 – 3 miles. At all times, as long as two leaders are present, there will be the option to remain near the vehicle and avoiding the longest walks. Most of the endemics require hikes into the remaining native forest. We will do our best to reduce strenuous hiking, but it's not always easy here. Rough lava, slippery mud, and somewhat-steep terrain could all be encountered, but even the best trails are usually over uneven ground. Most of the non-passerine endemics, including the waterbirds and seabirds, will be easily seen with little to no walking.

After two short (0.5 to 1.5 miles), but relatively steep walks on Oahu, the longest walks are at Hakalau National Wildlife Refuge, and in the Alaka'i Swamp, which has good trails (often with boardwalks) and a couple of very steep stretches alternating with more level walking. Rain and slippery conditions are likely, especially in the Alaka'i – one of the wettest places on Earth. These two field excursions into native upland forest will last most of the day, and we'll carry sack lunches with us in the vehicles. Most other walking is done on roads and trails, which can be muddy after rains. Generally, you need to be physically able to walk on uneven or rocky terrain, and be able to walk or hike for longer stretches of time (2-4 hours), at a birders pace, but with few opportunities to sit and rest; we're on our feet for long periods of time.

Those with balance and stability issues should bring a collapsible walking stick with a wrist loop, and those who find it difficult to stand for long periods should bring a small travel stool. The few longer drives will be broken with stops for birding or other allurements.

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.

There are no special health concerns. Water is generally safe for drinking, and bottled water is always available. We will have water to refill bottles almost always available.

HAWAII: Tour Information...3

Biting insects are not usually a problem on this tour but may be encountered. Insect repellent will provide adequate protection. Many brands use diethyltoluamide (DEET) which, while providing the best protection, can be corrosive and therefore require care when using. There are many 'natural' and less-harmful repellents available from various camping supply stores.

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

ACCOMMODATION: Standard, comfortable, modern hotels and resorts will be enjoyed throughout our travels, including multiple resorts that provide all the amenities from pools to beaches.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is available at all hotels.

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: The food on these islands is replete with fresh fish, fresh fruit, and mouth-watering flavours. We will dine at local restaurants from quick "plate lunches" featuring Hawaii's unique fusion of cultures to "white tablecloth" dining experiences. A picnic lunch or two is likely, but most of our meals will be held at restaurants, while breakfasts will mostly be on the go or at hotels, even perhaps a couple of relaxing mornings at our hotel, and one or two picnics in the field. Vegetarian options are almost never a problem.

Our 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, regrettably, 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: Our hotels have reasonably good Wi-Fi connections. Mobile phone access is 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.

HAWAII: Tour Information...4

CLOTHING: Lightweight “tropical” quick-drying fabrics are highly recommended for most days. The following items are basic:

Light rain-proof clothes	Sun hat
Light wind-proof jacket for cool mornings and windy days	Sandals
Sweater or heavy sweatshirt for cooler mornings and evening seawatching	
Hiking boots or sturdy walking shoes with ankle support (this is a must!)	

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS: Please bring the following:

Notebook/pencil	Alarm clock
Small rucksack/Day pack	Sunglasses and sun cream
Torch (plus extra batteries)	Bandanna
Small LED headlamp	Wash cloth
Water bottle (important)	Laundry bag
Dry sack for camera equipment	Ear plugs (especially for Kauai)
Pocket knife (checked through in your suitcase!)	Personal medication

Optional: A telescope & tripod, spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage), field guide, swimwear. Spotting scopes are helpful for several seawatching and for waterbird observations, but they will not be used on most days, and you will not need to carry them far.

Note: Hawaii has a significant plastic pollution problem and we will be doing our best to reduce the impact, especially on seabirds. Therefore, we urge you to bring a reuseable water bottle. Alternatively, we will purchase a bottle for you upon your arrival to use throughout the trip. All our hotel water is potable, and we'll carry large refillable jugs whenever possible.

LEADER'S EQUIPMENT: Leader will provide the following:

Telescope	Basic first-aid kit
Fieldguides and maps	Ice box
Step stool for the minibus	

Notes: Tapes WILL NOT be used to lure endangered species or in National Parks and elsewhere where use is not permitted. The leaders will have recordings for reference in the vehicles, and perhaps to “tickle” one or two of the introduced things that are of less concern.

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.

Note: We are traveling on several inter-island flights which are limited to ONE checked-in bag with a maximum weight of 23kg (50 pounds). Additional charges for more than one bag per person or overweight bags on any of these flights will be the clients' responsibility.

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.

HAWAII: Tour Information...5

PHOTOGRAPHY: Scenery and memory shots will be plentiful and simple to obtain. Memory cards may be difficult to obtain and will certainly be more expensive than at home so you should bring with you all that you expect to need. Camera equipment should be packed in moisture and dust-proof bags as a precaution. If you wish to 'digiscope' please ensure that you bring your own telescope.

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 traveling by 15- (or 12) passenger minibus, depending on the group size. When using a 15-passenger minibus, we generally take a maximum of seven passengers plus the leader, per vehicle, unless a local tour operator is driving and provides the transportation for our group. When traveling with a local tour operator, that operator may use 15-passenger minibuses where we may need to seat more than seven (or the entire group), or they'll use larger tour coaches. We may also use 4WD vehicles, seating 4-7 people per vehicle. Participants should be able to ride in any seat in tour vehicles and are expected to change seats with others daily.

SMOKING: Smoking or vaping is not allowed in the vehicle 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:

Pratt, H. Douglas, P.L. Bruner, and D.G. Berret. 1987. *The Birds of Hawaii and the Tropical Pacific*. Princeton University Press.

Denny, Jim. 2010. *A Photographic Guide to the Birds of Hawai'i*. University of Hawai'i Press.

Culliney, John L. 2006. *Islands in a Far Sea: The Fate of Nature in Hawai'i*. Revised edition. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu. An excellent overview of Hawai'i's geological formation, colonization by plants and animals, ecology, and environmental history.

HAWAII: Tour Information...6

Pratt, H. Douglas. 1998. *A Pocket Guide to Hawaii's Trees and Shrubs*.

Stone, Charles P. and Linda W. Pratt. 2002. *Hawaii's Plants and Animals: Biological Sketches of Hawaii Volcanoes National Park*. Second edition. Hawaii Natural History Association. Illustrated profiles of the characteristic plants, birds, mammals, reptiles and invertebrates for each major ecological zone within the national park, from seacoast to alpine.

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. Other news will be communicated as necessary. If you have any questions, please contact us.