

## General Trip Information

**Documents:** *It is necessary to have a passport to travel in and out of Mexico.* Within Mexico, you will need a tourist visa, which can be obtained by showing proof of citizenship, in the form of a valid passport. The price of a tourist visa is approximately \$25.00 and is not included in the price of the tour. If you are flying into Mexico on an international flight, the visa is usually paid for in the price of your airline ticket. Visas are typically valid for 180 days and are valid for multiple entries.

**Pace of the Days:** As is true everywhere, but even more so in the tropics, the bird activity is best early in the morning. We get up early each day and often times do breakfast in the guide's room or out in the field, unless we can find restaurants that serve early and quick breakfasts. Some days, we spend all day out in the field, and make a nice picnic lunch. Other days, we eat lunch at restaurants. Whenever possible, we take a mid-afternoon siesta, and then go out later in the afternoon till dusk. We try to vary the longer days with more relaxed days and always strive to find the right balance on a trip to make it a great birding vacation.

**Vehicles:** Depending on the trip, we either use 15 passenger vans or mini-buses. We have found that these vehicles are best for accessing most birding areas. In vehicles with bench seats we strive to make sure that everyone gets a window seat and plenty of room, usually two people per bench seat. In many areas, we hire local transportation companies which provide the vehicle and a driver.

**Vehicle Etiquette:** We encourage all participants to rotate in the van, taking turns up front, in the middle and in the back. This way it keeps things fair for everyone. If someone is prone to motion sickness, we try to be sensitive to their needs and ask that everyone on the trip do the same. We try to stay away from birding from the van, but sometimes it just works out that way.

**Language Considerations:** Although speaking Spanish is by no means a prerequisite for traveling in Mexico, any Spanish that you know, learn and attempt to use will open many doors to wonderful experiences for you. From being able to order your own meal (more or less) to explaining to someone just what the heck you are looking at up in those trees, knowing just a little of the language will enrich your Mexican experience incredibly! If you don't have time to take a class, even having a small phrase book that you can use to look up unknown words will pay off in one use. We highly encourage our guests to attempt to communicate with the locals and make a connection – it will really add to your experience and to theirs. Mexicans are a warm and friendly culture and any effort on your part to communicate can be satisfying and fun!

**Food and Water in Mexico:** The general concern about sanitation and cleanliness has improved greatly in Mexico. Good food is very important to us and we seek out restaurants that serve up delicious food in a sanitary environment. As is the case when traveling, especially in tropical countries, we encourage you to consider what your system is used to before you eat it and use common sense when consuming food and

beverages. This is the best way to prevent and unwanted problems. As for water, we don't recommend drinking water from the faucet and purified water is available everywhere we go, as well as purified ice.

**Meal Policy:** All meals are included in the price of all of our tours, and we generally allow our participants to order what ever they want off the menu. On rare occasions when we know we may overwhelm a small kitchen there will be a set menu, however we rarely do this.

**Drink Policy:** The price of the tour includes unlimited soft drinks and purified water for you to consume throughout the tour. This includes a cooler full of drinks that your guide will keep stocked during the trip. We encourage you to let us know ahead of time what you like to drink during the day so that we can have it on hand. There is a place to write down your drink preferences on the registration form. Alcohol is NOT included in the price of the tour and participants are encouraged to either pay for alcohol separately after each meal, or keep track of their drinks and pay the leader at the conclusion of the tour, including the tip.

**Medical and Health Concerns:** The places we travel within Mexico do not require any special vaccinations. If you have any specific health conditions, we recommend you consult with your physician prior to your trip to make sure you have all your necessary medication and can address any other health concerns.

**Dress and Clothing:** On all of our trips, it's 'birder-casual', both in the field and at dinner. There are a couple of our tours where it is appropriate to wear nicer clothes at dinner and this will be clarified in the specific trip literature. In the field, we recommend layering. Field clothing should be light weight, long sleeves and long pants are preferable to shorts. Please follow the recommendations in the packing lists so that you don't end up missing something once we get down to birding.

**Bathrooms:** Being out in the field, there are rarely bathroom facilities available. One must be prepared to use the great outdoors. When on the road, we always seek out the best bathroom options available and are sensitive to people's individual needs in this regard. Some bathrooms in Mexico are less than lovely and we do our best to avoid those whenever possible.

**Smoking:** If you are a smoker, we ask that you refrain from smoking while in the midst of other participants and smoke with discretion in public places and establishments. We do not allow smoking in the vehicle.

**Mexico 'Moments':** We do our best to make things go smoothly on our trips, but sometimes things happen that we cannot anticipate and it is up to both our guides and our guests to make the best of unforeseen situations. Our trips are adventures for you to enjoy in Mexico. Guests will be served well if trips are viewed as such and understand that traveling in Mexico, as with many places in the world, brings certain surprises or logistical considerations that are different than traveling in the USA. Those who have

experienced Mexico's colorful culture understand that this is part of its charm. And, occasionally we will make changes during the trip if we know it will improve the overall experience and make the trip better. So, flexibility and a sense of humor are good qualities to have while traveling.