



Birding Tours Worldwide

Updated: November 2022

WINGS COVID-19 PROTOCOLS

Operating tours in our current environment is challenging, but with certain precautions we have successfully run many tours during the pandemic. Much has been learned over the last several years, and as the initial alarm of 2020 has waned and we continue travel, it's important to understand that group travel will have inherent risks. While we can mitigate these risks, it's impossible to control each environmental factor within the diversity of our destinations. Please read through this document to have a sense of our practices and expectations, as well as your responsibilities prior to and during the tour.

Please note this document is subject to frequent updates.

VACCINATION REQUIREMENT: WINGS believes that by requiring all participants and leaders to be fully vaccinated, we reduce the risk of disruptions to the tour. **Tour participants and leaders will be required to have completed the primary doses of an approved COVID-19 vaccine at least two weeks prior to the start of the tour.** We also strongly recommend getting a current booster shot at least two weeks prior to the tour, if available. Some destinations require these booster shots.

An exception to our vaccination policy *may* be possible on some tours for those medically unable to receive this vaccination. Please provide a doctor's note regarding the vaccination issue and plan to be tested for COVID within three days of tour start. Note: Many international destinations require proof of vaccination to enter the country without quarantining.

Proof of full vaccination should be provided to the WINGS office before departure and carried with you on tour. Please send updated documentation if you subsequently received your booster. An image on your mobile phone is sufficient in most cases but be prepared to bring the physical document if required by the specific destination.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Many travel insurance providers now offer plans that cover COVID-19-related illnesses or expenses. We recommend travel insurance in general, but in the current environment we **very strongly recommend** a plan that covers COVID-related interruptions. Please query your provider about their COVID-19 coverage and familiarize yourself with your policy benefits. Should a participant be unable to join (or continue) on with their tour due to a COVID-related reason or other medical reason, all costs associated with isolating and/or later rejoining the tour are the participant's responsibility. This is also true for delays getting home after a tour. Additionally, we cannot offer any refunds for missed days of the tour.

If testing is required within the tour, such as for transit from one destination to another, or at the end of a tour to re-enter your home country, those costs are not included in the tour price. We will, however, make sure that the group has the opportunity to complete the proper testing.

**PRIOR TO THE TOUR:**

- Travelers should familiarize themselves with the entry/exit requirements of their own journey to and from the tour destination. This includes reviewing and monitoring the embassy websites for any changes that can occur up until the tour commences.
- We also recommend downloading your airline app, which can guide you through travel requirements for your personal itinerary and send you useful notifications.
- In the two weeks leading up to the tour, please continue to practice standard CDC health protocols to limit your exposure (social distancing, mask wearing, avoiding unnecessary gatherings, etc.)
- While some of these requirements have been removed, **we strongly recommend mask-wearing in airports and on planes and other public transportation.**
- **Please take a COVID-19 test within 3 days of tour departure**, regardless of whether your destination requires pre-departure testing.
- **Each participant should bring at least one box (two tests) of COVID antigen home tests in case self-testing is needed during the tour.**
- Please bring with you personal supplies of hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes to use as you travel and during the tour.
- Participants should expect health screenings en route to or while on tour, especially with air travel, and often in the form of an online attestation form that needs to be filled out prior to departure. On some tours it is possible you'll need to present proof of a completed COVID-19 vaccination series. Some communities may require a very recent negative COVID test. Regardless, in some tour destinations you might be required to retest on arrival. If you exhibit signs of illness upon arrival at the airport, you might be quarantined. The WINGS office will let you know if your tour appears to have any of these requirements.
- If you have not already done so, **we recommend getting a seasonal flu shot at least two weeks prior to departure** in order to reduce the possibility of exhibiting COVID-like symptoms during the tour.

ON-TOUR PROTOCOL: Tour participants will be in close proximity during much of the tour and are encouraged to exercise commonsense health practices as set forth by the CDC. The CDC recommendations for vaccinated travelers are updated regularly and we will follow the most recently published guidance. The leader will remind participants to follow guidelines for the good of the group. Please note protocol may change on short notice; there is no one-size-fits-all procedure for all of our tour destinations, and we do our best to adapt in accordance with current local conditions and guidelines.

- Mask wearing will be required at times on tour in accordance with local guidelines, when the group may be in close contact with someone who is unvaccinated, and as directed by your leader. Mask wearing is not required in group vehicles unless requested by the leader; for example, for the first several days of the tour. You are of course welcome to wear a mask in the vehicle if that is your preference. **You must follow the tour leader's directives.**



- Please wear a mask that conforms to basic standards: N95 or KN95 masks (without vents), dust masks, and certain cloth masks in combination with a surgical mask or better. We ask that you **bring an adequate personal supply of well-fitting and effective masks with you on tour. Carry a mask with you at all times while with the group.** Please do not use face coverings with unreliable protection, such as face shields (unless accompanied by an approved mask), vented masks, buffs, scarves, or handkerchiefs.
- **It is your responsibility to advise the leaders if you are feeling sick.** Leaders also will monitor the group. Typical symptoms that you should notify the leader of include a dry cough, fever, trouble breathing, fatigue, congestion, and possibly a loss of smell or sense of taste. **If you exhibit symptoms, you will be separated from the group until you have been tested and receive a negative result.** It's worth noting that you may be required by local regulations to self-isolate.
- **If you receive a positive COVID-19 result while on a domestic United States tour,** the WINGS leader and office will arrange for you to isolate at the tour hotel, or other suitable location. We will assist in coordinating medical care if necessary, and getting in touch with your emergency contact if you are unable to do so. If, following isolation, you receive a negative COVID test result, you may rejoin the tour if the circumstances allow. Please note that any costs associated with your isolation, trip interruption, and rejoining the tour are your own responsibility.
- **If you receive a positive COVID-19 result while on an international tour,** the WINGS leader and office will coordinate with the local ground agent to make arrangements for you per local quarantine requirements. The local agent is best situated to communicate and manage logistics pertaining to the specific region's rules and regulations. If necessary, the WINGS office will get in touch with your emergency contact if you are unable to do so. If, after the isolation period has ended, you test negative, you may be able to rejoin the tour if the circumstances allow. Please note that any costs associated with your isolation, trip interruption, and rejoining the tour are your own responsibility.

WINGS LEADERS WILL PLAN FOR AND FOLLOW (AT A MINIMUM):

- Keeping fresh airflow as much as possible while in vehicles.
- Avoiding crowds in common birding areas as much as possible while still getting good looks at our bird targets.
- Determining appropriate dining situations considering location, options, cultural standards, etc. In some situations, this may include takeout meals to be eaten in participants' own rooms. Please note that some meals will be eaten indoors.