



Zach Smith's

Veracruz River of Raptors Tour ♦



Combine this tour with the **Eagle Pre-Tour Extension**, 1–4 October (See **Page 4**)

Watch the largest raptor migration on Earth!



The world's largest raptor count of between four and seven million migrating raptors have been recorded per season in recent years at Veracruz, on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico.

Most were **Swainson's** and **Broad-winged Hawks**, and **Turkey Vultures**, but many other species are also tallied in smaller numbers. We saw over a million in four days on an earlier tour. We will sample this migration, as well as the great variety of

Neotropical raptors found nearby. We will also visit a remnant patch of rainforest on this tour.

The perfect Raptor Vacation

Tour is conducted at a relaxed pace with lots of time to look at raptors (and other birds), plenty of time to relax at hotels, walk along beaches and nature trails looking for birds, or enjoy your drink while you watch the migration from the very hotel's rooftop! Meet fellow hawkwatchers from all over the world at count sites and learn about the River of Raptors first hand.



***Ornate Hawk-Eagle** is a real possibility near Catemaco and on the **Eagle Pre-Tour Extension**.*

© P. Mosto



*There is no other place on Earth like Veracruz. In a good day you can see **250,000 raptors**!*



Day-by-Day Itinerary | Main Tour

Day 1 | 4 OCTOBER

Afternoon arrival in Veracruz International Airport (IATA Code: VER). Shuttle participants to our hotel in Cardel. Checkin. 6:30–7:30 PM: Dinner together at the hotel. Personal introductions at dinner. Night in Cardel.

Day 2 | 5 OCTOBER

7:45 AM: Breakfast at the hotel.
8:30–9:30 AM: Welcome Briefing. This briefing includes a short outline of the tour, what to expect each day, and a discussion of participants' expectations and goals for the tour, a brief introduction to the Veracruz River of Raptors (VRR) count project, how it is done and the need to respect the space & time of the counters while we are sharing the roof. 10:00 AM: Meet at the hotel roof top to watch the migration. Target species from the roof will primarily be flocks of **Broad-winged** and **Swainson's Hawks**, **Turkey Vultures**, **Mississippi Kites** and other migrant raptors, including **Peregrine Falcon**, **American Kestrel**, **Zone-tailed Hawk**, **Osprey**, **Hook-billed Kite**. 6:00 PM: Dinner at the hotel. After dinner, attend a 1-hour presentation on history of the VRR count, explanation of migration dynamics in Veracruz, and a brief ID session covering the common species seen at the count sites. Night in Cardel.

Day 3 | 6 OCTOBER

6:00 AM: Breakfast at our hotel.
7:30–11:00 AM: Morning birding at Playa Juan Ángel. This is a beach with dunes, a river mouth and some patches of lowland forest. Our primary target species here is **Applomado Falcon**. If we are lucky, more than one of these elegant falcons will be seen hunting or harassing other falcons in the area. Also, **Gray Hawk**, **Roadside Hawk**, **Common Black-Hawk**, **Merlin** and **Crested Caracara** are commonly seen here. This site is also good for general birding (reliable for **Fork-tailed Flycatcher**). Easy walking on flat

ground. Then, we will head back to our hotel for lunch and rest. We will see how the migration is going over the hotel roof (duration: 2–4 hours). Depending on the flight, we can stay or move to the Chichicaxtle count site, which typically has more raptor migration activity later in the day. There are often local raptors that fly close to the count site for great looks, such as **Short-tailed**, **Zone-tailed Hawks** and **Laughing Falcons**. Hunting falcons are also fairly common in this rural area. 6:30 PM: Dinner at the hotel. Night in Cardel.

Day 4 | 7 OCTOBER

6:00 AM: Breakfast at the hotel.
7:30–11:00 AM: Morning birding at La Mancha. This is a coastal lagoon with lowland forest and beach habitats. The target here is the elusive **Collared Forest-Falcon** (heard in 2014!). We could also see **Laughing Falcon**, **Gray**, **Roadside**, **Zone-tailed**, and **Common Black-Hawks**, **Peregrines**, **Osprey**, accipiters and more. Easy walking on dirt road and beach. Bring bug spray and cover up exposed ankles and legs. We will keep our eyes open for kettles and streams of migrants to decide when to head back to Cardel. Back to the hotel to rest and watch from the roof (2–3 hours). Afternoon at Chichicaxtle if the flight is good or another local spot for some variety (Palmar—pasture; Playa Chalchihuecan—dune, scrub, beach). 6:30 PM: Dinner at the hotel. Night in Cardel.

Day 5 | 8 OCTOBER

6:00 AM: Breakfast at the hotel.
7:30–10:30 AM: Morning birding at Río Escondido. This is a dirt road along a canal that travels through the canyon rim above the river. The primary target here is **Bat Falcon**, which is commonly seen perched on high-tension towers or hunting over the area. Also, **Laughing Falcon**, **Short-tailed Hawk**, **Crested Caracara** can be seen here. Easy walking on flat dirt road. If the previous



*Some 900,000 **Swainson's Hawks** migrate through Veracruz every autumn en route to their final destination in South America.*
© S. Seipke



***Great Black Hawks** can be seen on the Eagle Pre-Tour Extension.*
© D. Podestá



day's raptor migration was good, groups of **Broad-winged** and **Swainson's Hawks** may have roosted nearby so we can be lucky and witness a liftoff flight. General birding is also quite good here. We will likely stop by Chichicaxtle to hopefully see some raptor migration (1–3 hours). Lunch at the hotel. Afternoon will be spent at hotel or back at Chichicaxtle, depending on the flight. 6:30 PM: Dinner at the hotel. Night in Cardel.

Day 6 | 9 OCTOBER

6:00 AM: Breakfast at the hotel.
7:30–10:00 AM: Morning birding at La Mancha or Juan Ángel. Revisit one of these sites to become a little more acquainted with it and see species that were missed on the previous visit. Location will be decided based on participant consensus and desired birds to be seen. Return to Cardel for lunch and rest. Assess the raptor flight in Cardel and move to Chichi or stay on the roof for the afternoon. 6:30 PM: Dinner at the hotel. Night in Cardel.

Day 7 | 10 OCTOBER

Eat breakfast at the hotel and be on the road by 7:00 AM. 8:00 AM–12:00 PM: Birding at Las Barrancas, an area of grasslands, pastures and flooded fields just west of Alvarado. Target species here are **Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture**, **Aplomado Falcon**, and other open-country raptor species. We will be birding primarily from the vehicle, with

frequent stops to get out and scan for birds. Drive around the countryside around Alvarado looking for local species in the afternoon. Drive back to Cardel. 6:30 PM: Dinner at the hotel. Night in Cardel.

Day 8 | 11 OCTOBER

6:00 AM: Breakfast at the hotel. Drive to the Alvarado Lagoon. Morning boat ride on Alvarado Lagoon. Target species here are **Black-collared Hawk** and **Common Black Hawk** (many close looks). We will try to go slowly so that we can enjoy the amazing mangroves which line the lagoon. Lunch in Alvarado. Drive back to Cardel. Relax, pack, have dinner (maybe go out for our last night), trip summary. Night in Cardel.

Day 9 | 12 OCTOBER

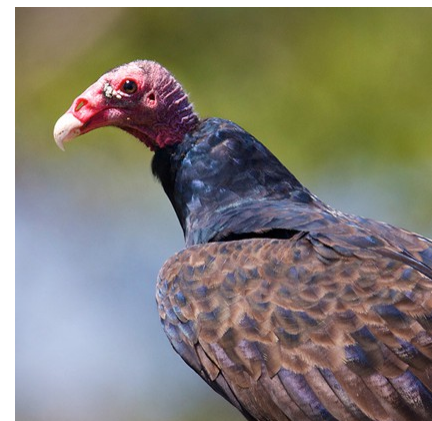
Catch morning flights home.



Email Raptours, L.L.C.
(raptours@hotmail.com) to reserve your place in this tour, or book online at www.raptoursllc.com.



Over 1.5 million **Broad-winged Hawks** are counted every year at Veracruz, making it the second most abundant migrant at the site.
© B. Clark



Turkey Vulture is the most abundant raptor migrant at Veracruz. An average of 1.8 millions are recorded every autumn.
© S. Seipke

SUGGESTED FIELD GUIDES

CLARK, W.S. and N.J. SCHMITT. 2017. **Raptors of Mexico and Central America**. Princeton U. Press, Princeton.

HOWELL, S.N.G. and WEBB, S. 1995. **A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America**. Oxford U. Press, Oxford.

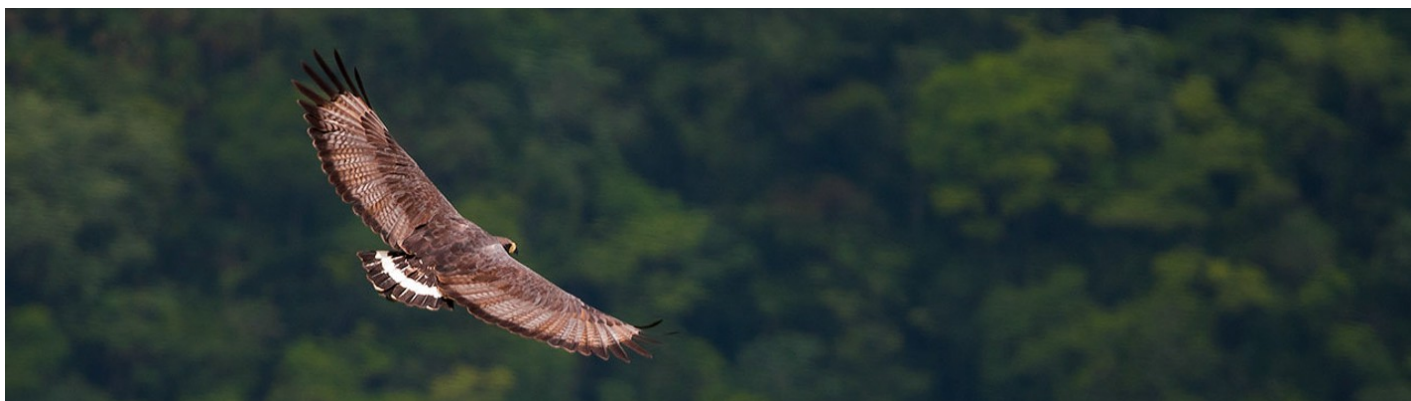


Eagle Pre-Tour Extension



Make the most of your trip! Add the **Eagle Pre-Tour Extension** and join us on this quest for some of the most spectacular Neotropical eagles. This Pre-Tour Extension has been especially

designed to see all three hawk-eagles occurring in the region, namely the **Black-and-white**, **Black**, and **Ornate Hawk-Eagles**, with a chance to see **Montane Solitary Eagle**.



Montane Solitary Eagle
© Y. Seminario

Day-by-Day Itinerary

Day 1 | 1 OCTOBER

Afternoon arrival in Veracruz International Airport (IATA Code: VER). Shuttle participants to our hotel in Veracruz. Check-in.
6:30–7:30 PM: Dinner together at the hotel. Personal introductions at dinner. Night in Veracruz.

Day 2 | 2 OCTOBER

6:00 AM: Breakfast at the hotel. 7:00 AM: Check-out. 7:15–10:30 AM: Drive to Tuxtepec. Then drive the road to Oaxaca looking for raptors. We should see all three **Black-and-white**, **Black**, and **Ornate Hawk-Eagles**, with a chance for **Montane Solitary Eagle**. In addition, we should see **Gray** and **White Hawks**, **Double-toothed Kite**, **Bat Falcon**, **Great Black Hawk**, and others. Picnic lunch. Dinner at the hotel. Night in Tuxtepec.

Day 3 | 3 OCTOBER

6:00 AM: Breakfast at the hotel. Then all day at elevation on the road from Tuxtepec to Oaxaca looking for raptors, focusing on the species we haven't seen yet. We will travel a little higher to try for the local subspecies of **Red-tailed Hawk**. Picnic lunch. Dinner at the hotel. Night in Tuxtepec.

Day 4 | 4 OCTOBER

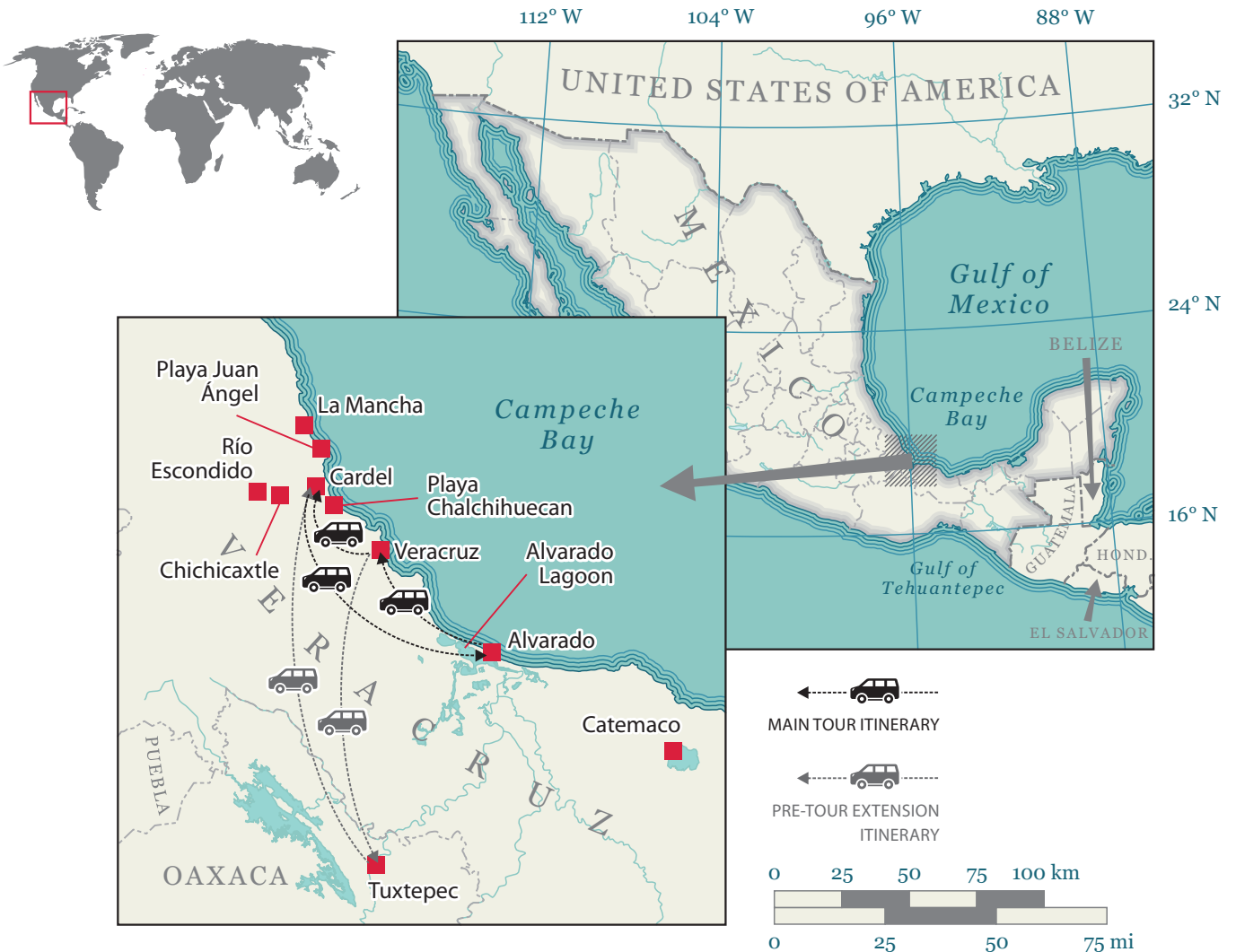
6:00 AM: Breakfast at the hotel. Bird in the morning, then drive to Cardel. Check-in at our hotel. Lunch at the hotel's restaurant. Free afternoon—raptor migration can be watched from the hotel rooftop. 6:30 PM: Dinner at the hotel. Meet new arrivals and start the **Veracruz River of Raptors Tour!**



*We will target **Black-and-white Hawk Eagle** on the Eagle Pre-Tour Extension.*
© S. Seipke



Tour Map

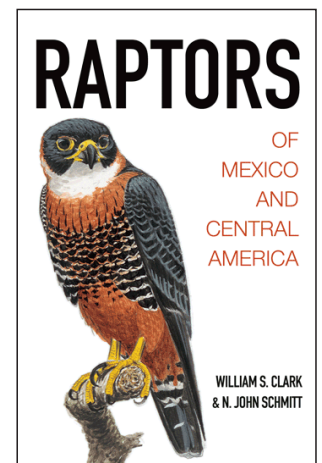


Get up to speed before you leave home!

Featuring 32 color plates and 213 color photographs, the hot-off-the-press **Raptors of Mexico and Central America** is the first illustrated guide to the region's 69 species of raptors, including vagrants.

Sign up for this tour and **get a free copy** delivered directly to your home so you can get up to speed with the bewildering variability of plumage, flight silhouettes, and behavior of Mexican raptors even before you check your bags!

Kindle and Hardcover Editions available. (*Offer valid for continental US customers only.*)





Tour Guide



Zach Smith has been to Veracruz many times. He was an official counter at the **Veracruz River of Raptors Project** for three years, and has led or co-led this tour since 2014. Zach understands the dynamic migratory raptor flight in Veracruz. He also knows all the right places to look for resident raptors. He is also an accomplished birder and knows all the other birds occurring in the area as well. He speaks **English** and **Spanish**.

Zach will bring a state-of-the-art **Zeiss Conquest Gavia 85** (30–60×) **Spotting Scope** and a pair of **Zeiss Victory SF** 10×42 binoculars.

TOUR LEADER &
RAPTOR EXPERT GUIDE

Zach Smith

*Former Pronatura Veracruz
River of Raptors official counter
and count coordinator.
USA*

TARGET SPECIES

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| 1. Osprey
<i>Pandion haliaetus</i> | 14. White Hawk
<i>Pseudastur albicollis</i> | 27. Black Hawk-Eagle
<i>Spizaetus tyrannus</i> |
| 2. Black Vulture
<i>Coragyps atratus</i> | 15. Black-collared Hawk
<i>Busarellus nigricollis</i> | 28. Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle*
<i>Spizaetus melanoleucus</i> |
| 3. Turkey Vulture
<i>Cathartes aura</i> | 16. Common Black Hawk
<i>Buteogallus anthracinus</i> | 29. Ornate Hawk-Eagle*
<i>Spizaetus ornatus</i> |
| 4. Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture
<i>Cathartes burrovianus</i> | 17. Great Black Hawk
<i>Buteogallus urubitinga</i> | 30. Northern Crested Caracara
<i>Caracara cheriway</i> |
| 5. Mississippi Kite
<i>Ictinia mississippiensis</i> | 18. Crane Hawk
<i>Geranospiza caerulescens</i> | 31. Laughing Falcon
<i>Herpetotheres cachinnans</i> |
| 6. White-tailed Kite
<i>Elanus leucurus</i> | 19. Montane Solitary Eagle*
<i>Harpyhaliaetus solitarius</i> | 32. Collared Forest Falcon
<i>Micrastur semitorquatus</i> |
| 7. Hook-billed Kite
<i>Chondrohierax uncinatus</i> | 20. Roadside Hawk
<i>Rupornis magnirostris</i> | 33. American Kestrel
<i>Falco sparverius</i> |
| 8. Double-toothed Kite
<i>Harpagus bidentatus</i> | 21. Gray Hawk
<i>Buteo plagiatus</i> | 34. Merlin
<i>Falco columbarius</i> |
| 9. Snail Kite
<i>Rostrhamus sociabilis</i> | 22. Broad-winged Hawk
<i>Buteo platypterus</i> | 35. Bat Falcon
<i>Falco ruficularis</i> |
| 10. Northern Harrier
<i>Circus hudsonius</i> | 23. Short-tailed Hawk
<i>Buteo brachyurus</i> | 36. Aplomado Falcon
<i>Falco femoralis</i> |
| 11. Sharp-shinned Hawk
<i>Accipiter striatus</i> | 24. Swainson's Hawk
<i>Buteo swainsoni</i> | 37. Peregrine Falcon
<i>Falco peregrinus</i> |
| 12. Cooper's Hawk
<i>Accipiter cooperi</i> | 25. Zone-tailed Hawk
<i>Buteo albonotatus</i> | |
| 13. Harris's Hawk
<i>Parabuteo unicinctus</i> | 26. Red-tailed Hawk
<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i> | |

* Extension tour only

Make a difference!

RAPTOURS®, L.L.C. will make a financial contribution to **Hawk Mountain Sanctuary** for every member that signs up for this tour. Join us on this tour and make a lasting contribution to raptor conservation.





Tour Details

TOUR PRICE

Main Tour price is **\$2,900 per person**, and includes hotels (double occupancy), all meals, entry fees, ground transportation, a boat ride, and guide fees.

Extra nights in Veracruz, alcoholic beverages, items of personal nature, tips, and insurance of any kind are **not included**.

Eagle Pre-Tour Extension price is **\$1,050**.

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT

Main Tour single supplement is **\$250**.

Eagle Pre-Tour Extension single supplement is **\$80**.

Single rooms will be subject to availability.

Roommates will be assigned to those participants willing to share a room. If a roommate is not available, you will be required to **pay the single supplement**.

COUNTRY ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Citizens of **these countries** need a visa to entry Mexico. Citizens of **these countries** do not need a visa. All visitors need a valid passport. Make sure you review this information at least **2 months** before the tour date.

DIFFICULTY

The level of difficulty of this tour is **easy**. No strenuous hikes are involved.

COMFORT

We will stay below 3,000 m (10,000 ft) above sea level.

Accommodations range from **good to excellent**. We will drive in a comfortable van.

Guide-to-passenger ratio will be **1:5 or better**.

WEATHER & CLOTHING

October is characterized by gradually falling daily high temperatures in Veracruz, with daily highs around 86 °F / 30 °C throughout the month, and daily lows ranging 70–74 °F / 21–23 °C. Dew point ranges 59–77 °F / 15–25 °C. The median cloud cover is c. 70%. Probability of precipitation averages 50–30% and light and moderate rain, and thunderstorms are the common forms of precipitation.

Weather in Tuxtepec is more comfortable as we expect daily highs around 72 °F / 22 °C, and lows above 40 °F / 5 °C. Rain is expected at 60% probability. Dew point here ranges 37–54 °F / 3–12 °C.

Hat, sunglasses, and a raincoat or folding umbrella are highly recommended for this tour. Sunscreen is also essential.

HEALTH

Travel medical insurance is strongly recommended.

For detailed information on health precautions and vaccines recommended for Mexico visit [CDC's website](#) **6 weeks before departure**.

LOCAL CURRENCY

Local currency is the **Mexican peso**, and exchange rate is **nearly 19 Mexican pesos for U.S. dollar**.

Passengers arriving at Mexican airports who need to obtain pesos should use the exchange counters or ATMs in the arrival/departure gate area, where access is restricted, rather than changing money after passing through Customs. ATMs are widely available throughout the tour.

It is recommended to **start the tour with pesos cash** for expenses such as meals, souvenirs, drinks or phone calls.

NEED TO KNOW

TOUR DATES

14–12 October (yearly)

BOOKING CLOSES ON

1 August

GROUP SIZE LIMIT

10 participants

TOUR PRICE

**Main Tour \$2,900
Tour Extension \$1,050**

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT

**Main Tour \$250
Tour Extension \$80**

RAPTOR SP. EXPECTED

25

COUNTRY ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Varies according to nationality

DIFFICULTY

Easy

COMFORT

Good to Excellent

WEATHER & CLOTHING

Mostly hot, humid, and sunny, but showers are expected | Bring a hat, sunglasses, and an umbrella

HEALTH

Travel medical insurance recommended

LOCAL CURRENCY

Mexican peso





Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk

I understand that the tour to which I am a party demands that I be in good health and physical condition. I acknowledge the risk and hazards of travel in remote areas where injury, delay or unanticipated events may occur. I understand that such risks simply cannot be eliminated without jeopardizing the essential qualities of the activity. I may be subjecting myself to dangers and hazards which could result in illness, injury, or death. I recognize that such risks, dangers, and hazards may be present at any time during the trip. I also realize that medical services or facilities may not be readily available or accessible during some or all of the time in which I am participating in the tour. I realize that I will be traveling in remote areas with poor or no access to emergency and/or medical services. I understand that there is a risk that accidents or illness can occur in remote places where medical facilities, emergency treatment or other services cannot be rendered. I understand that there is a risk involved in the consumption of food or drink.

The undersigned, being of lawful age, in consideration, and as part payment for the right to participate in the trip/tour, and associated activities, services, and food arranged for me by Raptours, L.L.C., and its agents, employees, affiliates or associates, I have and do hereby fully assume all risk of illness, injury or death, and hereby release, hold harmless, and discharge Raptours, L.L.C. and its agents, employees, affiliates or associates from all actions, claims, demands, or lawsuits for any accident, injury, property damage or personal loss to me or to those traveling with me in connection with any accommodation, transportation or other travel service, resulting from, related to, or arising in any manner out of my participation in the tour, as well as from any act of terrorism, defect in vehicle, break down in equipment, strike, theft, delay, or cancellation of or changes in itinerary or schedule, whether foreseen or unforeseen.

The undersigned understands that Raptours, L.L.C., its owners, operators, or agents have booked transportation, made reservations for lodging, made land arrangements for local transportation and is conducting the above prearranged tour; that the undersigned assumes the risk that the owners, operators and agents of the transport companies, hotels, and resorts may cancel or change the times, types or method of transportation or accommodations; that the undersigned understands that Raptours, L.L.C., its owners, operators or agents does not have control or responsibility for any such cancellations or changes in times, types, or methods of transportation or accommodations; that the undersigned may incur additional charges and expenses because of the cancellations and changes to the times, type or method of transportation or accommodations; and the undersigned hereby releases and discharges Raptours, L.L.C., its owners, operators or agents from any additional charges or expenses incurred by the undersigned. The undersigned agrees to promptly pay the additional charges and expenses because the owners, operators and agents of the transport companies, hotels, and resorts have cancelled or changed the times, type or method of transportation or accommodations.

I agree that I will not sue Raptours, L.L.C. and its agents, employees, affiliates or associates for damages incurred as a consequence of my participation in tour caused by the negligence or other acts of Raptours, L.L.C. and its agents, employees, affiliates or associates or any employee, agent or contractor thereof. Should Raptours, L.L.C. or anyone acting on their behalf, be required to incur attorney's fees and costs to enforce this Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk, I agree to indemnify and hold them harmless for all such fees and costs.

I agree that if I suffer injury or illness, Raptours, L.L.C. and its agents, employees, affiliates, or associates can, at my cost, arrange medical treatment and emergency evacuation service, as Raptours, L.L.C. and its agents, employees, affiliates or associates deem necessary for my safety.

I agree that the foregoing obligation, release and assumption of risk shall be binding upon me personally, as well as upon my spouse, heirs, executors, assigns, and administrators, and for all members of my family, including any minor accompanying me. I have carefully read this Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk and fully understand its contents, terms, and conditions. I am aware that this is a release of liability and contract between me and Raptours, L.L.C. and/or its affiliated organizations or representatives, and I sign it of my own free will.

I state that I am of lawful age and legally competent to sign this affirmation and Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk; that I understand the terms herein are contractual and not a mere recital; and that I have signed this Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk as my own free act.



*You will be required to sign this form upon meeting with your tour leader at the tour starting point. **Please read carefully before booking.***

TOUR TERMS

Raptours, L.L.C. reserves the right to alter this itinerary as necessary, or to cancel the tour prior to departure, with full refund to participants.

Raptours, L.L.C. or its agents may decline to accept or retain any person as a member of this tour at any time.

No smoking will be permitted while with the group, either when indoors or in the field.

Travel medical insurance is strongly recommended.

*All passengers will be required to sign a hard copy of the **Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk** form (at left) upon meeting with the tour leader in Veracruz.*

*No participants will be allowed in the group without a signed copy of the **Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk** form.*

