

# 7 Things to Know Before Booking Your Photo Tour

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## 1) Tour or workshop?

These terms are sometimes interchanged, but they're really not the same. A **workshop** typically focuses on targeted instruction. During a workshop, the leader's job is to teach you specific skills or techniques. A **tour**, on the other hand, is all about getting images at shot locations. During a tour, the leader's main job is to get you to the right place at the right time. He/she may also offer dedicated instructional time, but it's more likely that he/she teaches individual participants as needed in the field. **Pointer:** use local workshops to learn techniques before spending thousands of dollars traveling to exotic destinations to take the shots!

## 2) What's included?

In many instances several tour operators offer the exact same itinerary. That's because, for the most part, we use the same ground agents. In spite of this, you'll find a wide variation in the price. Do a little digging to see if the variation is due to differences in lodging, included meals, or length of stay (*also see tip #3*). **Keep in mind:** just because you're paying more may not mean you're getting more!

## 3) Group size.

The number of folks on a tour – or in a workshop – can have a bearing on the price. You may pay more for a smaller group size, but that might be worth it. A smaller group size gives you better access to the tour leader when/if you need assistance.

## 4) Insured? Permits?

To lead a photography tour in a National Park or National Wildlife Refuge, a permit is required. And, in order to procure a permit, the government requires proof of insurance. While it may be tough to ascertain if a company (*or tour leader*) follows the rules with regard to procuring needed permits don't hesitate to ask them for proof that they've done so.

## 5) Physical requirements.

Determining a tour's physical requirements is especially important if you have mobility issues or specific health problems. Some tours require hikes to shot locations, while others get you to where you need by vehicle. Also consider elevation, slopes, and expected temperatures when deciding which tour to choose.

## 6) How long at shot locations?

To be able to work a scene or capture keepers of wildlife behavior you need to slow down and take your time. It may be difficult to determine ahead of time how your leader works, but you can ask others who've taken the tour if they felt rushed through shot locations. If staying until you're satisfied with your captures is important to you make sure the leader will allow you the time you need at each shot spot.

## 7) Availability of the tour leader.

Ask questions – and don't hesitate to do so *before* you sign up! Don't be shy! A leader who's responsive to your needs before a tour starts is a good sign that he/she will be responsive during the tour. You may even want to give him/her a call and see what kind of vibe you get over the phone. **Keep in mind:** tour leaders spend a lot of time on the road so they may not be able to get back to you immediately.

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\* *Award-winning naturalist photographer, Jeff Parker, leads friendly & informative photo tours & workshops focused on the flora & fauna of North, Central, & South America, in addition to India.*

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