



Magellanic Woodpecker – © Alec Earnshaw

Full North Patagonia Birding Tour

From the Atlantic to the Pacific

(Argentina & Chile)

16 days/15 nights tour

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Magellanic Penguin – © Marcelo Gavensky

INTRODUCTION

Patagonia is one of the most iconic and famous regions of South America. Known for its wilderness, it is a very large region which comprises a wide arrange of habitats, landscapes and species. In terms of biodiversity, it can not be compared with the one of the tropics, but most of the species found here are not found anywhere else.

This is a comprehensive tour to the most diverse part of Patagonia, covering an extensive territory along a transect from the Atlantic coast in the east, to the Pacific coast in the west, across scrublands, deserts, steppes, transitional forests and temperate rainforest, visiting impressive breeding colonies, looking for endemic, range-restricted and endangered birds, and sightseeing breathtaking landscapes, as well as experiencing the exquisite local cuisine.

This tour offers good chances of seeing many of the most attractive Patagonian birds, including a particularly high diversity of Rhinocryptids (tapaculos, gallitos and huet-huets), a big part of the Argentine endemic birds, endangered species such as Yellow Cardinal and Humboldt Penguin, two species of Rheas, marine birds in both oceans, the world's largest breeding colonies of Magellanic Penguin and Burrowing Parakeet, and a good number of marine and land mammals, such as Southern Right Whale, Southern Elephant Seal, Dusky Dolphin, Guanaco, Patagonian Cavy (Mara), armadillos and more.

Join us to the most complete tour to one of the top destinations in South America.



Elegant Crested Tinamou - © Jorge La Grotteria

TOUR DESCRIPTION

Arriving in Trelew airport, we will travel to our first birding destination at Punta Tombo natural reserve. This reserve protects one of the world's largest breeding colony of **Magellanic Penguin**, with over one million penguins before the end of the season (when visited at the beginning of breeding season, the number is lower and most penguins are taking care of their eggs and young chicks, hiding in their burrows, but still lots of them are visible). Walking along the trails we will have the chance of seeing species such as **Elegant Crested Tinamou**, **Lesser Rhea**, **Sharp-billed Canastero**, **Patagonian Mockingbird**, **Scale-throated Earthcreeper**, **Mourning Sierra-Finch**, **Gray-hooded Sierra-Finch**, **Common Diuca-Finch**, **Long-tailed Meadowlark** and non-birds such as **Guanaco** and **Greater Hairy Armadillo**. Along the coast, we will be specially looking for **Chubut (White-headed) Steamer-Duck**, our first Argentine endemic target. Other coastal species include **Great Grebe**, **Chilean Skua** and **Southern Giant Petrel**.

After Punta Tombo we will start our way to Puerto Madryn, with a birding stop in the area of Isla Escondida. This place is already in Monte desert habitat so we will have our first chances for **Carbonated Sierra-Finch** (Argentine endemic) and **Hudson's Black-Tyrant**, among others. On the coast there is a small colony of **Southern Elephant Seal** that really worth a visit.

In Puerto Madryn we will spend our first night, and around the hotel we can have our first sights of **Austral Thrush**, **Chiguanco Thrush** and **Black-chinned Siskin**.



Sandy Gallito – © Marcelo Gavensky

From Puerto Madryn we will travel to Valdes Peninsula making birding stops on the way and hoping to get our first views of **Southern Right Whales** from the coast. Targets this day would include **Lake Duck, Black-headed Duck, Red Shoveler, (Southern) Silvery Grebe, Cinereous Harrier, Variable Hawk, Rusty-backed Monjita** (Argentine endemic), **Gray-bellied Shrike-Tyrant, Patagonian Yellow-Finch** and more. Spending one night in Valdes Peninsula (in the town of Puerto Piramides) we will take advantage of the following morning for birding in the surroundings, visiting a **South American Sea Lion** colony to look for **Snowy Sheathbill, Rock Cormorant** and **Dolphin Gull**, and also bird in the steppe and scrubland, looking for **Band-tailed Earthcreeper (Eremobius), Patagonian Canastero** (Argentine endemic), **Tufted Tit-Tyrant, Pallid Tit-Spinetail** and **Darwin's Nothura** among others.

After visiting Valdes Peninsula we will continue our way northwards to reach the town of Las Grutas, which we will use as our base for a couple of nights. The following day we will spend the morning birding in the surroundings of Las Grutas, where we will be looking for more Argentine endemic birds from the Monte desert habitat such as **Sandy Gallito, White-throated Cacholote** and **Cinammon Warbling-Finch**, the breeding endemic **Black-crowned Monjita, Yellow-billed Tit-Tyrant** and many of the other species mentioned before. After having a typical Patagonian lunch we will look for waders and coastal species in the San Antonio bay, where both boreal and austral migrants (as well as resident species) can be found. Possibilities include **Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, White-rumped Sandpiper, Sanderling, Two-banded Plover, Crested Duck** and more.

The following morning we will take a boat for a short (half-day) pelagic trip in the San Matias gulf, where we will be looking for birds such as **Black-browed Albatross, (Atlantic) Yellow-nosed Albatross, White-chinned Petrel, Southern Giant Petrel, Great**



Yellow Cardinal (female) - © Jorge La Grotteria

Shearwater, Manx Shearwater, South American Tern and also marine mammals such as **South American Fur Seal, Short-beak Common Dolphin, Dusky Dolphin** and more. Closer to the shore we will also look for **Chilean Flamingos, Royal Terns** and **Snowy-crowned Terns** among others.

In the afternoon we will move towards General Conesa, our next destination, where we will spend the night and get ready for the following day, when we will be birding in a transitional area between Monte desert and Espinal forest, where our targets will include the endangered **Yellow Cardinal** and many other specialties such as **Crested Gallito, Spotted-winged Falconet, Greater Rhea, Brushland Tinamou, Brown Cacholote, Tufted Tit-Spintail, Lesser Shrike-Tyrant, Ringed Warbling-Finch, Chaco Earthcreeper, White-tipped Plantcutter, White Monjita** and many more.

From General Conesa we will travel to El Condor, a small town located near the mouth of the Rio Negro (the largest river in Patagonia) and home to the world's largest breeding colony of Psittacids (parrots and parakeets) of any kind, purely formed by **Burrowing Parakeets**, a large and colorful species. Their burrows are dug along a very tall cliff that faces the ocean, and the total number of birds can exceed 500 thousands by the end of the breeding season (fewer birds are found at the beginning of the season, but still in great and impressive numbers). We will visit this place in the afternoon and following morning before continuing our trip. On the way to El Condor we might get some more new birds such as **Long-winged Harrier** and **Firewood Gatherer**.



Burrowing Parakeet - © Jorge La Grotteria

After that we will go back from El Condor to Las Grutas partly through an alternative road which goes parallel to the San Matias gulf, where we will be trying to clear up the list before moving to General Roca, on a different part of Patagonia, after a pleasant night transfer from Las Grutas.

From the city of General Roca we will drive a short distance to look for birds at Paso Cordoba, where our targets include **Steinbach's Canastero** (Argentine endemic) and **Andean Swift**. In the afternoon we will travel westwards to Zapala, where we will be birding in a Patagonian lagoon, looking for **Chilean Flamingo**, **Black-necked Swan**, **Coscoroba Swan**, **Chiloe Wigeon**, **Lake Duck** and more. The following morning we will continue towards Junin de los Andes, making a birding stop in the Collon Cura river valley and in a Condor observatory where we hope to get our first sights of the magnificent **Andean Condor** and **Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle**. In the river valley and surroundings we will focus in finding the beautiful **Many-colored Rush-Tyrant** and other reed bed specialties such as **Ticking Doradito**, **Wren-like Rushbird** and the grassland dwelling Grass Wren. The adjacent Patagonian steppe could give us **Austral Canastero**.

Junin de los Andes is located near Lanin National Park, which we will visit and where we will have our first experience birding in the Patagonian forest and its transitional area with the Patagonian steppe. Here we will be looking for **Austral Parakeet**, the great **Magellanic Woodpecker**, **Striped Woodpecker**, **Chilean Flicker**, **Patagonian Forest Earthcreeper**, **Des Mur's Wiretail**, **Thorn-tailed Rayadito**, **Chuca Tapaculo**, **White-crested (Chilean) Elaenia**, **Patagonian Tyrant**, **Great Shrike-Tyrant**, **Fire-eyed Diucon**, **Rufous-tailed Plantcutter**, **Patagonian Sierra-Finch**, **Austral Blackbird** and more.



Chucaco Tapaculo - © Jorge La Grotteria

In the marshy areas we will start seeing locally very common **Upland Goose**, **Ashy-headed Goose** and **Black-faced Ibis**. After that we will drive to the town of San Martin de los Andes, where we will spend a couple of nights.

The Patagonian forest around San Martin de los Andes will give us more chances of finding the species missed in Lanin National Park, and maybe add other ones such as the rare **Ochre-flanked Tapaculo**, **Chilean (Bicolored) Hawk**, **Magellanic Tapaculo**, **Black-throated Huet-huet**, **White-throated Treerunner**, **Dark-bellied Cinclodes** (common in lake and river shores), **Green-backed Firecrown**, **Andean Hawk** and more. A nocturnal hike could add an encounter with **Austral Pygmy-Owl** and even the scarce **Rufous-legged Owl**, both endemic of the Patagonian forest.

Leaving San Martin de los Andes we will head towards Villa la Angostura along the scenic “seven lakes road”, where we will make strategic birding stops to try finding more species such as **Flying Steamer-Duck** and the very scarce **Rufous-tailed Hawk** (one of the rarest Neotropical raptors).

Before taking that road we will visit Chapelco mount in search of species from the high Andes ecoregion at fairly low elevation, as it occurs in Patagonia. Some of our targets there include **White-throated Caracara**, **White-sided Hilstar**, **Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant**,



Yellow-bridled Finch - © Andrés Terán

White-browed Ground-Tyrant, Cinereous Ground-Tyrant, Ochre-naped Ground-Tyrant, Plumbeous Sierra-Finch and the rare **Yellow-bridled Finch**. After this we will continue our way to Villa la Angostura, where we will spend the night.

From Villa la Angostura we will continue our way westwards and enter Chile, where we will travel to Puerto Varas, making birding stops along the way for **Torrent Duck** and **Chilean Mockingbird**, and in Puyehue National Park to try clearing up the list of Patagonian forest birds. After one night in Puerto Varas we will continue traveling to our next destination, in the island of Chiloe. For that we will be crossing a narrow strait on a ferry, from where we will be looking for oceanic birds such as **Pink-footed Shearwater**, **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** and the scarce and recently described **Pincoya Storm-Petrel** (Chilean endemic), as well as marine mammals such as **Peale's Dolphin**.

In Chiloe island we will be looking for coastal species along the shore, such as **Peruvian Pelican**, **Flightless Steamer-Duck**, **Hudsonian Godwit**, **Whimbrel**, **Baird's Sandpiper**, **Franklin's Gull** and more. Inside the island the farmland is a good area to look for **Slender-billed Parakeet** (Chilean endemic), and the bamboo thickets would give us more chances of finding the rare **Ochre-flanked Tapaculo** and **Des Mur's Wiretail**.

Spending a night in Chiloe island we will have time to look for all of our targets, and the following morning we will take a boat trip to visit the southernmost breeding colony of **Humboldt Penguin** at Puñihuil islands (mixed with **Magellanic Penguins**), where we will also look for other great targets such as **Kelp Goose** and the beautiful **Red-legged Cormorant**. A great (although not guaranteed) non-bird target in this place would be the rare **Marine Otter**. After this great experience we will travel to Puerto Montt airport where our Patagonian odyssey ends.



Flightless Steamer-Duck - © Jorge La Grotteria

ITINERARY*

DAY 1: AM arrival at Trelew airport and transfer to Punta Tombo natural reserve. PM transfer to Puerto Madryn with birding stop at Isla Escondida. Night in Puerto Madryn.

DAY 2: AM transfer to Puerto Piramides (in Peninsula Valdes natural reserve) with birding stops along the way. PM birding around Puerto Piramides. Night in Puerto Piramides.

DAY 3: AM birding around Puerto Piramides (optional whale watching boat trip available in October-November). PM transfer to Las Grutas. Night in Las Grutas.

DAY 4: Full day birding in Las Grutas surroundings. Night in Las Grutas.

DAY 5: AM pelagic trip in San Matias gulf. PM transfer to General Conesa. Night in General Conesa.

DAY 6: Full day birding in General Conesa surroundings. Night in General Conesa.

DAY 7: AM transfer with birding stops to El Condor. PM birding in El Condor surroundings. Night in El Condor.

DAY 8: AM birding in El Condor surroundings. PM transfer to Las Grutas with birding stops. Overnight transfer to General Roca.



Ochre-flanked Tapaculo - © Andrés Terán

DAY 9: Arrival in General Roca and AM birding in Paso Cordoba and surroundings. PM transfer to Junin de los Andes with birding stops around Zapala. Night in Zapala.

DAY 10: Transfer to Junin de los Andes with birding stops in Collon Cura river valley and Andean Condor observatory. Night in Junin de los Andes.

DAY 11: Full day birding tour to Lanin National Park. PM transfer to San Martin de los Andes. Night in San Martin de los Andes.

DAY 12: Full day birding in San Martin de los Andes surroundings. Night in San Martin de los Andes.

DAY 13: AM visit to Chapelco mount. PM transfer with birding stops to Villa la Angostura through seven lakes scenic road. Night in Villa la Angostura.

DAY 14: AM border crossing to Chile and transfer with birding stops to Puerto Varas. PM and night in Puerto Varas.

DAY 15: AM transfer and full day birding in Chiloe Island. Night in Chiloe Island.

DAY 16: AM boat tour to Puñihuil islands. PM transfer to Puerto Montt airport. End of the tour.

** The itinerary may change due to force majeure*



Lesser Rhea - © Jorge La Grotteria

TOUR DETAILS

Price

Please contact us to find out about our prices for the current and/or following seasons.

Our prices **include** all accommodations, three meals a day (breakfast, lunch and dinner), all land transfers in private vehicle, local guide/driver and tour leader with quality spotting scope, snacks and drinks (bottled water) during the tour. Our prices **do not include** flight tickets (unless asked on request) to and from Trelew nor Puerto Montt airports, personal insurance, alcoholic drinks, tips, nor anything not mentioned on previous sentence.

Whale watching boat tour from Puerto Piramides (2 hours duration) is optional and will be added to the quote on request (only available on whale-watching season).

Group size

We run this tour on request for groups with a minimum size of 2 and a maximum of 8 passengers. Please contact us for information about larger groups and options for single travelers.

Physical difficulty

Easy to moderate.



Black-browed Albatross - © Andrés Terán

Accommodations

Comfortable 3 stars hotels in most locations, comfortable apart-hotel in El Condor.

Best time of the year

This is a tour that needs to be carried out during southern hemisphere summer time, from mid October to early March. In this period of time, chances of seeing Southern Right Whales are only from mid October to mid November.

Weather in northern Patagonia

In this trip we will be going through many different habitats and landscapes, from the warm north-east Patagonia (where we can have temperatures over 30°C) to the cold and windy Patagonian steppe and high Andes (where temperatures could be below 10°C at times in the summer). Rains are not expected but could occur, especially in the west.

Packing for the trip

Bring light clothing (long-sleeves shirts and long pants) with a good polar fleece sweater or jacket and an impermeable windbreaker. It's also important to bring closed shoes (2 pairs if possible), a good hat and sun glasses. Sun screen, insect repellent (which may not be needed) and a flash light (with its batteries or charger) would complete the list.



Lanin volcano and Araucaria trees in northwest Patagonia – © Marcelo Gavensky

Best combined with

South Patagonia Birding Tour 7 days/6 nights

Southern Entre Rios 3 days/2 nights tour

Central Chile endemics and pelagic trip 4 days/3 nights tour


Important (READ): our tours are designed for small groups, with low impact, personalized attention and hiring local guides whenever possible, in order to increase their quality. We keep the use of play back down to a minimum possible so to avoid stressing the birds or affecting their natural behavior, thus actively contributing to the conservation of the same and promotion of responsible birding and ecotourism practices.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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