



Chucaco Tapaculo – © Jorge La Grotteria

North-west Patagonia Birding Tour

6 days/5 nights tour in Argentina

(with optional 2 nights extension in Chile)

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Long-tailed Meadowlark – © 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.

In this comprehensive tour we will be covering most Patagonian ecosystems, including Monte desert, Patagonian steppe, lagoons, marshes and different types of Patagonian forest (and even Pacific coast if the Chilean extension is booked), looking for endemic and range-restricted 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), most of the Argentine continental endemic birds, the magnificent Andean Condor, the scarce Magellanic Woodpecker, Lesser Rhea and, if combined with Chile, two species of penguins and other marine birds and mammals.

Come with us and experience the best of northwest Patagonia!



Sandy Gallito - © Marcelo Gavensky

TOUR DESCRIPTION

Arriving in Neuquen airport, we will drive for an hour to visit Paso Cordoba, our first birding destination, where our targets will be species from the Monte desert, including many Argentine endemics such as **Sandy Gallito, White-throated Cacholote, Rusty-backed Monjita, Carbotaned Sierra-Finch, Patagonian Canastero** and the rare **Steinbach's Canastero**, and some Argentine breeding endemics like **Lesser Shrike-Tyrant, Hudson's Black-Tyrant** and **White-banded Mockingbird**. Other targets include **Elegant Crested Tinamou, Andean Swift, Greater Wagtail-Tyrant, Burrowing Parakeet, Yellow-billed** and **Tufted Tit-Tyrants, Band-tailed Earthcreeper, White-tipped Plantcutter** and the common and widespread **Patagonian Mockingbird** and **Long-tailed Meadowlark**.

In the afternoon, before continuing our journey westwards to Zapala, we will make a stop at lake Pellegrini where we will look for **Crested Gallito**. In Zapala surroundings we will visit a Patagonian lagoon, where chances are big for **Chilean Flamingo, Black-necked Swan, Coscoroba Swan, Chiloe Wigeon, Lake Duck, Red Shoveler, Silver Teal, Red-gartered** and **White-winged Coots**, and some waders such as **Two-banded Plover** and **Baird's Sandpiper**.

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**



Many-colored Rush-Tyrant – © Alec Earnshaw

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**, **Chucao Tapaculo**, **White-crested (Chilean) Elaenia**, **Patagonian Tyrant**, **Great Shrike-Tyrant**, **Fire-eyed Diucon**, **Rufous-tailed Plantcutter**, **Patagonian Sierra-Finch**, **Austral Blackbird** and more.

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.



Magellanic Woodpecker - © Alec Earnshaw

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**, **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 one last night before ending the tour in Bariloche.

Optional tour extension to Chile

If the 2 extra nights Chilean extension is booked, 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**.



Magellanic Penguin - © Jorge La Grotteria

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 a mixed breeding colony of **Humboldt** and **Magellanic Penguins**. This is a great place to also look for other great targets such as **Kelp Goose, Rock Cormorant** and the beautiful **Red-legged Cormorant**. During the short navigation we could get views of **Black-browed Albatross**. 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 Chilean extension ends.

ITINERARY*

DAY 1: Arrival in Neuquen and AM birding in Paso Cordoba and surroundings. PM transfer to Junin de los Andes with birding stops in lake Pellegrini and Zapala surroundings. Night in Zapala.

DAY 2: 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 3: Full day birding tour to Lanin National Park. PM transfer to San Martin de los Andes. Night in San Martin de los Andes.



Yellow-bridled Finch - © Andrés Terán

DAY 4: Full day birding in San Martin de los Andes surroundings. Night in San Martin de los Andes.

DAY 5: 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 6: AM birding in Villa la Angostura. PM transfer to Bariloche airport (or hotel). End of the tour.

CHILEAN EXTENSION 2 NIGHTS TOUR: **DAY 6** would start with an AM border crossing to Chile and transfer with birding stops to Puerto Varas. PM and night in Puerto Varas.

DAY 7: AM transfer and full day birding in Chiloe Island. Night in Chiloe Island.

DAY 8: AM boat tour to Puñihuil islands. PM transfer to Puerto Montt airport. End of the tour.

**The itinerary may change due to force majeure.*



Ochre-flanked Tapaculo - © Andrés Terán

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 Neuquen nor Bariloche (or Puerto Montt) airports, personal insurance, alcoholic drinks, tips, nor anything not mentioned on previous sentence.

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.



Flying Steamer-Duck - © Jorge La Grotteria

Accommodations

Comfortable 3 stars hotels.

Best time of the year

This is a tour that needs to be carried out during southern hemisphere summer time, from mid October to March.

Weather in northwest Patagonia

In this trip we will be going through many different habitats and landscapes, from the warm Monte desert (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 even in the summer). Rains are not expected but could occur.

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.



Elegant Crested Tinamou – © Jorge La Grotteria

Best combined with

South Patagonia Birding Tour 7 days/6 nights

Southern Entre Ríos 3 days/2 nights tour

Costanera Sur reserve (Buenos Aires) Half Day 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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