



Magellanic Plover – © Andrés Terán

South Patagonia Birding Tour El Calafate & Ushuaia (Argentina)

7 days/6 nights tour

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Magellanic Woodpecker - © Alec Earnshaw

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 special tour we will be visiting the far south region of Patagonia where we will be birding around two famous locations: El Calafate and Ushuaia (the southernmost city in the world). The ecosystems visited include the Patagonian steppe, Patagonian forest, lagoons, marshes and the Beagle channel, where we will take a ferry excursion in order to navigate it for a few hours. We will be looking for Patagonian endemic and range-restricted birds, and we will be able to appreciate fantastic and breathtaking landscapes such as the famous Perito Moreno glacier, as well as experiencing the exquisite local cuisine.

This tour offers good chances of seeing many of the most attractive Patagonian birds, including rarities such as Magellanic Plover, Black Cinclodes (recent split from Blackish Cinclodes) and White-bellied Seedsnipe, up to three species of penguins, the magnificent Andean Condor, the scarce Magellanic Woodpecker, Lesser Rhea and many others. An alternative tour extension is offered to look for the critically endangered Hooded Grebe.

Come with us and experience the wilderness of one of the most pristine regions in the world!



Long-tailed Meadowlark – © Marcelo Gavensky

TOUR DESCRIPTION

Arriving in El Calafate airport, we will check in at the hotel and have our first birding experience along the shore of Argentino lake, where we will be looking for aquatic and coastal species such as **Upland** and **Ashy-headed Geese**, **Chilean Flamingo**, **Black-necked** and **Coscoroba Swans**, **Crested Duck**, **Chiloe Wigeon**, **Red Shoveler**, **Magellanic Snipe** (recent split from South American Snipe), and waders such as **Baird's Sandpiper**, **Two-banded Plover** and one of our big targets of the trip: the **Magellanic Plover**. Other targets in the surroundings include **Black-faced Ibis**, **Patagonian Mockingbird**, **Austral Thrush**, **Long-tailed Meadowlark**, **Spectacled Tyrant** and many more.

The following day we will take a full day tour to Los Glaciares National Park, a world famous destination for its magnificent (and enormous) Perito Moreno glacier. We will take an alternative road on the way there, where we will be looking for Patagonian steppe species like **Least Snipe**, **Scale-throated Earthcreeper**, **Band-tailed Earthcreeper**, **Common Diuca-Finch**, **Patagonian Yellow-Finch**, **Mourning Sierra-Finch**, **Cinnamon-bellied Ground-Tyrant** and more. In the humid prairies we will try to spot the **Magellanic Oystercatcher**, and closer to the mountains we will have our first chances of seeing **Andean Condors**. Other raptors in the area include **Variable Hawk** and **Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle**. Once in the national park we will start birding in the Patagonian forest and its transition with the steppe. In the forest our targets include the great (and scarce) **Magellanic Woodpecker**, **Austral Parakeet** (the world's southernmost Psittacidae), **White-throated Treerunner**, **Thorn-tailed Rayadito**, **Magellanic Tapaculo**, **Fire-eyed Diucon**,



Least Seedsnipe – © Jorge La Grotteria

Patagonian Sierra-Finch, Black-chinned Siskin, Austral Blackbird and more. In the transitional area we will be looking for **Chilean Flicker, Pallid Tit-Spinetail, Tufted Tit-Tyrant** and **Rufous-tailed Plancutter**. We will also have chances of seeing **Spectacled Duck** in the wetlands of the area.

The Perito Moreno glacier really deserves some time to appreciate its magnificence. This enormous, still growing, glacier descends from the Southern Patagonian Ice Field. To contemplate the views from the trails and view points, awaiting for pieces of it to fall from the edge, it's a unique experience and can give us a glimpse of how big parts of the world must have looked like during the ice ages.

The following day we will spend it birding in the Patagonian steppe, where we will be looking for some very attractive specialties such as the rare **Patagonian Tinamou, Lesser Rhea, Chocolate-vented Tyrant, Tawny-throated Dotterel, Austral Canastero, Short-billed Miner**, and we will have more chances for finding some of the previous day targets, such as **Least Snipe, Patagonian Yellow-Finch** and **Band-tailed Earthcreeper**. **Guanaco** and **(Patagonian) Gray Fox** are some of the non-bird animals that we would be seeing.

The last morning in El Calafate we will be visiting Laguna Nimez natural reserve, which protects a lagoon and its surrounding marshes, where we will be looking for **Southern Silvery** and **White-tufted Grebes, Lake Duck, Andean Duck, Black-headed Duck, Red-gartered, Red-fronted** and **White-winged Coots, Cinereous Harrier** and more.



Chocolate-vented Tyrant - © Andrés Terán

From El Calafate we will take a PM flight to Ushuaia, where we will make check in at the hotel and have a first walk in the surroundings, along the coast of the Beagle channel, looking for species such as **Kelp Goose**, **Dolphin Gull**, **Dark-bellied** and **Buff-winged Cinclodes**.

The first full day in Ushuaia we will visit the Tierra del Fuego National Park, the only park in Argentina that combines Patagonian forest with the sea coast. There we will have a second chance for the Patagonian forest birds that we looked for in Los Glaciares, such as **Magellanic Woodpecker**, but with the addition of coastal birds such as **Flightless** and **Flying Steamer-Ducks**, and sea birds such as **South American Tern**, **Chilean Skua** and the first (but possibly distant) views of **Black-browed Albatross** and **Southern Giant Petrel**.

The following day we will make an early short visit to the local dump to look for **White-throated Caracara**, a scarce raptor that can be reliably seen in that site, and other raptors such as **Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle**. Afterward, we will visit the Martial glacier mount, where we will hike up the mountain in order to reach high Andes ecosystem where we will look for special birds such as **Ochre-naped Ground-Tyrant**, **Yellow-bridled Finch** and the rare **White-bellied Seedsnipe**.

In our last day we will take a ferry trip in the Beagle channel and visit a couple of islands, where our targets will be some of the most attractive species of southern Patagonia, including the rare **Black Cinclodes**, **Snowy Sheathbill** and a mixed breeding colony of



Gentoo and Magellanic Penguins in Isla Martillo - © Jorge La Grotteria

Megellanic and Gentoo Penguins. If we are lucky we might get a third species of penguin, as some **King Penguins** use the island for moulting at times. During the navigation we will have chances for better views of **Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel** and some other less common species such as **Magellanic Diving-Petrel** and **Southern Fulmar.** **South American Sea Lion** and **South American Fur Seal** are among the marine mammals that we would be seeing during the trip.

After these days experiencing the wildlife of one of the most remote places in the world, we will end the trip at Ushuaia's airport*.

** There is an optional 5 days/4 nights "Quest for the Hooded Grebe" tour extension that can be booked separately, and modifies the order of the places visited.*

ITINERARY**

DAY 1: PM arrival in El Calafate airport. Birding in Argentino lake shore. Night in El Calafate.

DAY 2: Full day birding tour to Los Glaciares National Park. Night in El Calafate.



Flightless Steamer-Duck - © Jorge La Grotteria

DAY 3: Full day birding tour to the Patagonian steppe. Night in El Calafate.

DAY 4: AM birding in Laguna Nimez reserve. Flight connection to Ushuaia. Birding in the Beagle Channel around the hotel. Night in Ushuaia.

DAY 5: Full day birding tour to Tierra del Fuego National Park. Night in Ushuaia.

DAY 6: AM birding in Ushuaia's dump. PM birding in Martial glacier mount. Night in Ushuaia.

DAY 7: Ferry navigation (5 hours) in the Beagle Channel to Les Eclaireurs Lighthouse and Martillo islands (no disembarking in the islands). Transfer to Ushuaia's airport. End of the tour.

QUEST FOR THE HOODED GREBE TOUR (4 NIGHTS EXTENSION): The order of the South Patagonia Birding Tour itinerary would change, starting with DAY 1 arriving in Ushuaia and DAY 7 ending in El Calafate, from where the quest for the Hooded Grebe begins. Please ask us for more information about this tour extension.

***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 El Calafate nor Ushuaia 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.



Black-browed Albatross - © 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 south Patagonia

In this trip we will be visiting cold areas that even in the summer can have temperatures around zero degrees Celsius. Wind is almost constant in Patagonia, and can be strong in the steppe, as well as in the high Andes and during the navigation in the Beagle channel. Rains could happen, but they are hard to predict.

Packing for the trip

Bring comfortable clothing (long-sleeves shirts and long pants) with a couple of good polar fleece sweaters or jackets and an impermeable windbreaker, as well as a stronger coat in case of cold days. It's also important to bring closed shoes (2 pairs if possible), a good hat and sun glasses. Sun screen and insect repellent (which may not be needed) would complete the list.



The breathtaking Perito Moreno glacier

Best combined with

Quest for the Hooded Grebe Tour 5 days/4 nights

North-east Patagonia Birding Tour 8 days/7 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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