



Magellanic Woodpecker – © Alec Earnshaw

Full North Patagonia Birding Tour

From the Atlantic to the Pacific

(Argentina & Chile)

15 days/14 nights tour (+ optional South Patagonia extension)



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 range of habitats, landscapes and species. In terms of biodiversity, it cannot 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. The 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), quite a few Argentine endemics, the endangered 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.

For the very few Patagonian targets that are not found in North Patagonia, we offer a tour extension to South Patagonia, focusing on the highly endangered Hooded Grebe and other attractive species such as Magellanic Plover, Austral Rail and more.

Join us on the most complete tour to one of South America's top destinations.



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 colonies 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 **Large 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**.



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 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, 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**



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, Spot-winged Falconet, Greater Rhea, Brushland Tinamou, Brown Cacholote, Tufted Tit-Spinetail, 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 (largest river in Patagonia) and home to the world's largest breeding colony of parrots 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 thousand 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**.



After that we will take a flight connection to the city of Bariloche, where we will begin our NW Patagonia tour leg. From Bariloche we will travel to San Martin de los Andes (a town that we will use as our base for the following couple of days) on a full day transfer with birding stops across the Patagonian steppe and along a river valley, 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**.

From San Martin de los Andes we will visit Lanin National Park, 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. In the marshy areas we will start seeing locally very common **Upland Goose**, **Ashy-headed Goose** and **Black-faced Ibis**.

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**, **White-throated 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 the seven lakes 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 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, on 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**



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 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 species 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 experience we will travel back to Bariloche, in Argentina, where our North Patagonian odyssey ends (and the South Patagonia Hooded Grebe extension begins).

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). 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.



Burrowing Parakeet – © Jorge La Grotteria

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 flight to Bariloche. Night in Bariloche.

DAY 9: Transfer to San Martin de los Andes birding in the Patagonian steppe and marshes. Night in San Martin de los Andes.

DAY 10: Full day birding in Lanin National Park. Night in San Martin de los Andes.

DAY 11: AM birding in San Martin de los Andes surroundings. Transfer to Villa La Angostura with stops at Cerro Chapelco and different spots along the seven lakes scenic road. Night in Villa La Angostura.

DAY 12: AM border crossing to Chile and transfer with birding stops to Puerto Varas. PM and night in Puerto Varas.

DAY 13: AM transfer and full day birding in Chiloe Island. Night in Chiloe Island.

DAY 14: AM boat tour to Puñihuil islands. PM transfer to Villa La Angostura (Argentina).



Yellow-bridled Finch – © Andrés Terán

DAY 15: Transfer to Bariloche airport. End of the tour (or beginning of South Patagonia Hooded Grebe extension).

The optional **South Patagonia Hooded Grebe extension** begins on DAY 15 of the main itinerary, with a PM flight connection from Bariloche to El Calafate:

DAY 15: Flight connection to El Calafate (from Bariloche airport). Birding in Lago Argentino looking for Magellanic Plover and more. Night in El Calafate.

DAY 16: Full day transfer to Lago Strobel Lodge with birding stops along the way, looking for Patagonian steppe specialties. Night in Lago Strobel Lodge.

DAY 17: Full day looking for Hooded Grebes in the lakes and lagoons of Lago Strobel Lodge surroundings. Night in Lago Strobel Lodge.

DAY 18: AM looking for Hooded Grebes (in case we still need to find them). Transfer to Estancia La Angostura. Rest of the day looking Austral Rail and other specialties of the area. Night in Estancia La Angostura.

DAY 19: AM birding in Estancia La Angostura looking for Austral Rail and other specialties of the area. PM transfer to El Calafate. Night in El Calafate.

DAY 20: AM visit to Los Glaciares National Park to see Perito Moreno glacier. PM transfer to El Calafate airport. End of the tour.

* The itinerary may change due to force majeure



TOUR DETAILS

Price

\$7,600 (eight participants), \$8,000 (seven participants), \$9,200 (six participants)

single room supplement: \$1,500

Extension: \$3,300 (single room supplement \$700)

Dates: 2025: October 18 start date, November 1 extension start date

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** internal flight tickets (unless asked on request) to and from Trelew nor Puerto Montt airports, personal insurance, alcoholic drinks, tips, or anything not mentioned in the previous sentence.

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

Group size

We run this tour on request for groups with a minimum size of 2 and a maximum of 10 passengers. Please contact us for information about larger groups and options for single travelers.

Physical difficulty

Easy to moderate.



Weather in 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). Rain is not expected but could occur, especially in the west.

Packing for the trip

Bring light clothing (long-sleeved 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 sunglasses. Sunscreen, insect repellent (which may not be needed) and a flashlight (with its batteries or charger) would complete the list.

Important information: 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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