

Spectacular scenery and wildlife of South America

Chile is situated in South America, a land of great contrasts, from the deserts of the north to Tierra del Fuego in the extreme south. We are visiting central Chile including Santiago, the Pacific Ocean and the Andes mountain range. Chiloe Island has estuaries for shorebirds and other marine life. From Puerto Montt we fly over 1,500 kilometres to Punta Arenas, the most southerly city in the world. Surrounding the city are huge expanses of steppe-like habitat and mountain ranges reaching down to the sea. A highlight of Chile is Torres del Paine National Park. The park is a world biosphere reserve and includes numerous glaciers, lakes and towering peaks. Our final destination is Arica in extreme northern Chile and the nearby Andean plateau near Putre. This tour to Chile, which takes in some of the world's most spectacular scenery and wildlife, is truly the experience of a lifetime.

Days 1-2: An evening flight to Santiago de Chile. From Santiago we transfer to Laguna El Peral where reedbeds hold Stripe-backed Bittern and Black-headed Duck, the only parasitic duck in the world. The reeds also attract Wren-like Rushbird and Many-coloured Rush-tyrant. Transfer to Vina del Mar for a two-night stay.

Day 3: This morning we board a fishing trawler to visit the cold Humboldt Current which is considered one of the world's best for pelagic birding. Species occurring offshore include Sooty and Pink-footed Shearwaters and Peruvian Diving-petrel. As we enter colder waters, we may encounter Black-browed, Wandering, Northern Royal, Buller's and, more rarely, Chatham Islands, Shy and Salvin's Albatrosses. Other species include Southern Giant Petrel, Cape, White-chinned, Westland, Juan Fernandez and Masatierra Petrels, Wilson's Storm Petrel, Brown Skua, Grey Phalarope and Inca Tern. Ventanas is close by, a coastal lagoon fringed by reedbeds holding Lake Duck, Chiloe Wigeon, Spot-flanked Gallinule and Red-gartered and Red-fronted Coots. Further north, we reach Cachagua to see a colony of Humboldt Penguins. The rocky shoreline also has Red-legged Cormorant, Blackish and American Oystercatchers and Surfbird.

Dates

Saturday January 12th - Tuesday February 5th 2019

Leaders: Enrique Couve and Mark Finn
Group Size: 8
Birds: 280-310

Day 4: Concon is a coastal resort with a large reedbed and lagoon attracting Great Grebe and White-winged Coot. A careful exploration of rocks may reveal Chilean Seaside Cinclodes. Rock outcrops and offshore waters attract Peruvian Booby, Guanay Cormorant and Grey and Franklin's Gulls. Later, we visit La Campana National Park near Olmue for White-throated Tapaculo and Dusky-tailed Canastero. Campana is also home to the impressive Giant Hummingbird. Near La Campana we visit a rocky hillside for Crag Chilia. In the afternoon, we visit a marsh for South American Painted Snipe and continue our journey to Santiago for an overnight stay.

Day 5: Today we head south to Talca and Vilches Altos, home to the range-restricted endemic Chestnut-throated Huet-huet and other Andean forest birds. Fields with scrub attract Chilean Tinamou. At Vilches we walk the forest trails searching for Striped



Austral Rail *Photo: Enrique Couve*

Woodpecker, Green-backed Firecrown and Chucao Tapaculo. At dusk, we revisit the park for Rufous-legged Owls and other nocturnal species. Overnight near Vilches Altos.

Day 6: This morning we visit an Andean reservoir searching for Dusky Tapaculo and the endemic Chilean race of Burrowing Parrot. Return to Santiago for a two-night stay.

Day 7: Yeso Valley is our destination, an exceptional region for Andean birds. We can check fields for Black-winged Ground-dove, Band-tailed and Mourning Sierra-finches, White-browed Ground-tyrant and Rufous-banded Miner. A scan of rocky ravines may reveal Crag Chilia, a little-known Chilean endemic. Other interesting mountain birds include Andean Condor, Mountain Caracara, Black-chested Buzzard-eagle, White-sided Hillstar and Grey-flanked Cinclodes. Before reaching Yeso, we check deserted buildings for Greater Yellow-finch and Plumbeous

Sierra-finch. Grasslands and streams dominate El Yeso, home to the beautiful and rare Diademed Sandpiper-plover. We should also find Grey-breasted Seedsnipe, Cinererous, Black-fronted and Rufous-naped Ground-tyrants, Band-tailed Miner and Thick-billed and Yellow-rumped Siskins.

Day 8: Today we fly south to Puerto Montt. We have to cross the Chacao Channel to reach Ancud on Chiloe Island. The channel offers us Imperial and Rock Cormorants and Common Diving-petrel. Caulin is a superb area for shorebirds including Hudsonian Godwit. The lake itself has Silvery Grebe, Ringed Kingfisher and Snowy-crowned Tern. Transfer to Ancud for a two-night stay.

Day 9: During the morning, we explore a dirt road running eastwards towards the Pacific Ocean. At the end, we should locate Kelp Goose and other marine species. Chiloe has important populations of endemic Slender-billed Parakeet and

Chilean Pigeon. Entering the wet rain forest, we should find the beautiful and active Green-backed Firecrown and shy Patagonian Tyrants. Open fields attract Chilean Flicker, Austral Thrush and Long-tailed Meadowlark.

Day 10: We return to the mainland and head to Puyehue, an area of forests and towering volcanoes. Walking along forest paths, we should find Chucao and Magellanic Tapaculos running along fallen logs, striking Black-throated Huet-huets and elusive Ochre-flanked Tapaculos. We also have a chance of the rare and declining Magellanic Woodpecker. Overnight stay in Antillanca.

Day 11: After re-checking the forest at Puyehue, we transfer to Puerto Montt and our flight to Punta Arenas. It is a different world down here with wind-swept pampas and knarled woodlands. Vast expanses of land have Upland and Ashy-headed Geese, Lesser Rhea and Rufous-chested Dotterels. Overnight in Punta Arenas.

Day 12: We cross the Straits of Magellan with Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel and Magellanic Diving-petrels and, occasionally, King Penguins for company. On arrival in Porvenir we search an area of salt lakes for Magellanic Plover. Other waders present include Two-banded Plover and Tawny-throated Dotterels. In the large salt lakes and adjacent fields we should find Coscoroba Swan, Spectacled Duck, Wilson's Phalarope, White-rumped and Baird's Sandpipers and Patagonian Yellow-finches. We return to Porvenir Harbour for Flightless and Flying Steamer-ducks and South American Terns. Overnight in Porvenir.

Day 13: From Porvenir we travel north-east, to cross the straits. Magellanic Horned Owl and parties of Short-billed Miners are possible en route. A wetland adjacent to the Straits of Magellan has Ruddy-headed Geese and numerous waterbirds. After the crossing, we visit Paliake for Aplomado Falcon, Least Seedsnipe, Rufous-chested Plover, Tawny-throated Dotterel, Common Miner, Band-



Austral Pygmy Owl

Photo: Enrique Couve

tailed Earthcreeper, Austral Canastero, Cinnamon-bellied Ground-tyrant, Chocolate-vented Tyrant and the rare Black-throated Finch. Transfer to Puerto Natales for the night.

Day 14: From Puerto Natales, we head north to Cerro Guido, a remote hacienda overlooking the Torres del Paine National Park, our base for the next two days. Gardens here abound with wildlife and we expect Lesser Rhea, Southern Crested Caracara and Austral Thrush to be present.

Day 15: We visit a remote village set high in the Andes. En route we should see Andean Condor, Cinereous Harrier, Patagonian Mockingbird, Ochre-naped Ground-tyrant and Black-billed Shrike-tyrant. A search of low grasslands may reveal Least and Grey-bellied Seedsnipe. In the village we have a chance of White-throated Caracara and Yellow-bridled Finch. After lunch we visit a sector of Torres del Paine National Park. In the park steppes we may locate Scaly-throated Earthcreeper. The wetland regularly has White-tufted Grebe, Spectacled Duck, Andean Ruddy Duck and Red Shoveler and, in recent years, Austral Rail.

Day 16: From Cerro Guido we head south to Punta Arenas. Along the road we have an opportunity to find Ashy-headed Geese, Silver Teal and noisy parties of Buff-necked Ibis. Transfer to the airport and a flight to Santiago where we spend the night.

Day 17: We leave Santiago and transfer to Arica, the northernmost town in Chile (or transfer to Santiago airport for our flight home to Europe). The beaches of Arica are a haven for gulls, waders and seabirds including Grey Gull. Our main interest is the Azapa Valley, a lush oasis set in an arid region. The valley is home to Peruvian Shearwater and Chilean Hillstar. Other species we hope to find include Burrowing Owl, Oasis Hummingbird, Peruvian Meadowlark, Andean and Chimney Swifts and Slender-billed Finch. Overnight in Arica.

Day 18: Today we drive towards the sleepy town of Putre for a two-night stay. En route we look for Peruvian Thick-knee and Greyish Miner. Putre stands at an elevation of 3,000 metres and is the entrance point to Lauca National Park. In the afternoon, we birdwatch around Putre in search of Sparkling Violetear, Dark-winged Canastero, White-browed Chat-tyrant, Blue and Yellow Tanager, Golden-billed Saltator and Hooded Siskin.

Day 19: Another day birding around Putre searching for high-altitude species. We hope to locate Aplomado Falcon, Mountain Parakeet, the very scarce White-throated Earthcreeper, Straight-billed Earthcreeper, Black-throated Flower-piercer and D'Orbigny's Chat-tyrant.

Day 20: A visit to Lauca National Park, the highest lake in the world and a Biosphere Reserve. Two volcanoes, Pomerape and Parinacota, overlook the habitat of bogs, pools and saline lakes with puna grasslands. The lakes hold Andean and Puna Flamingos, Andean Avocet, Puna Ibis, Puna Teal and Giant and Andean Coots. The grasslands have Andean Gull, Andean Lapwing, Andean Flicker, White-fronted Ground-tyrant, Cordilleran Canastero and Andean Swallows. Passerines of interest at Lauca are Rufous-naped and Puna Ground-tyrants, Streaked Tit-spinetail, Black-hooded and White-throated Sierra-finches, Black Siskin, Puna Yellow-finch, White-winged Diuca-finch and Greenish Yellow-finch. Transfer to Arica for one night.

Day 21: This morning we make a short diversion south of Arica for the localised Tamarugo Conebill and the scarce Chilean Hillstar. Return to Arica for a flight to Calama where we transfer to San Pedro de Atacama for three nights.

Days 22-23: We explore the Atacama Desert and adjacent habitats for Chilean, Andean and Puna Flamingos, Andean Hillstar, Puna Miner, Rock Earthcreeper, Grey-bellied and White-tailed Shrike-tyrants, Andean Negrito and Ash-breasted Sierra-finch. We also visit Miscanti and Minque for the rare Horned Coot. An area of lagoons near the border with Bolivia is productive for Andean Goose, Puna and Speckled Teals, Ochre-naped, Rufous-naped and Dark-fronted Ground-tyrants, Black-hooded and Red-backed Sierra Finches and Andean Negrito.

Day 24: Final birding morning around San Pedro de Atacama before transferring to Calama for the flight to Santiago and our final night.

Day 25: Morning flight back to Europe with arrival on the following afternoon.

Prices

Ground Price: £9,690
 Single room: £880
 Deposit: £900
 *Air Fare: £1,820

Shorter tour until Day 17

Ground Price: £6,495
 Single room: £500
 Deposit: £600
 *Air Fare: £1,425

This tour is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, park entrance fees and permits, guidance, tips and taxes.

Not included: drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature.

**Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*