ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Argentina

Northern Patagonia & Pampas

24th November to 3rd December 2022 (10 days)



Killer Whale with Magellanic Penguin, Valdez Peninsula by Adam Riley.

One of the classic birdwatching destinations, Argentina's Northern Patagonia and Pampas areas not only offers superb birding, but also excellent cuisine, accommodation and transport. A vast country that possesses a large variety of habitats and climates, our tour introduces one to the famous Gaucho ridden Pampas, windswept steppes and endless barren Atlantic shores. Bird diversity thrives here, with almost half of Argentina's endemics available. The southern Atlantic coasts will provide for some of the most spectacular scenery in the country.

We start off with some relaxed city birding around Buenos Aires before heading south, birding the wetlands and tidal mudflats to Punta Rasa. We search for the rare and endangered Yellow Cardinal and range restricted Pampas Meadowlark around Bahía Blanca, while targeting two endemics - White-throated Cacholote and Sandy Gallito around Las Grutas. With a burgeoning list of impressive species including Hudson's Canastero, Hudson's Black Tyrant, Crested Gallito, Olrog's Gull, Carbonated Sierra Finch, Cinnamon Warbling Finch and Black-crowned Monjita, we head to what will surely be one of the tour highlights, the magnificent Valdés Peninsula, home of Sea Lion hunting Killer Whales as well as several immense bird and marine mammal breeding grounds.

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

MAIN TOUR ITINERARY

Day 1	**Arrival in Buenos Aires, birding Costanera Sur**
Day 2	**Buenos Aires to San Clemente del Tuyú**
Day 3	**Punta Rasa**
Day 4	**San Clemente del Tuyú to Bahía Blanca**
Day 5	**Bahía Blanca**
Day 6	**Bahía Blanca to Las Grutas**
Day 7	**San Antonio Oeste and Las Grutas**
Day 8	**Las Grutas to Valdés Peninsula**
Day 9	**Valdés Peninsula**
Day 10	**Valdés Peninsula to Punta Tombo to Trelew and final departure**

TOUR ROUTE MAP…



THE TOUR IN DETAIL…



Lark-like Brushrunner by Jonathan Rossouw

Day 1: Arrival in Buenos Aires, birding Costanera Sur. After arrival at Buenos Aires International Airport, we transfer to the nearby Costanera Sur Nature Reserve. Located within the boundaries of Argentina's capital city, this 350-hectare reserve is an excellent introduction to Argentina's Pampas birding and wildlife. We will walk along some of the numerous trails in order to explore different Pampas and riverine habitats such as grasslands, lagoons, marshes and forest. Some of the commoner local species seen here are Coscoroba and Black-necked Swans, White-winged, Red-fronted and Red-gartered Coots, Monk Parakeet, Picazuro Pigeon, Grey-necked Wood Rail, Green-barred and Checkered Woodpeckers, and many passerines, including Masked Gnatcatcher, Yellow-billed Cardinal, Black-and-rufous Warbling Finch, Spectacled Tyrant, Golden-billed Saltator and Pampa Finch. This can also be an excellent location for several difficult or shy species including Spot-flanked Gallinule, Masked Duck and Plumbeous Rail. Several species of mammals live here as well, and it is not unusual to find Coypu (Nutria), two species of opossum and Brazilian Guinea Pig on an afternoon walk. After this wonderful introduction to the birds of Argentina, we head off to our hotel to enjoy a delicious welcome dinner.

Day 2: Buenos Aires to San Clemente del Tuyú. Our drive from Buenos Aires to San Clemente del Tuyú is not particularly far, and we shall spend the majority of the day birding the roadside verges en route. The habitat is predominantly flat grasslands interspersed with lagoons, marshes and mud flats making for easy and rewarding birding. We can look forward to seeing a high number of species today with highlights likely to include Spotted Nothura, Chiloe Wigeon, Cinnamon Teal, Red Shoveler, Long-winged Harrier, Campo Flicker, Sulphur-bearded Spinetail, Curve-billed Reedhaunter, Greyish Bay-wing and Scarlet-headed Blackbird. A combination of effort and luck might elicit some of the trickier species such as Dot-winged Crake or South American Painted-snipe. We shall spend the following two nights in San Clemente de Tuyú.



Spotted Nothura by Glen Valentine

Day 3: Punta Rasa. Our day will be spent birding the tidal mudflats, salt marshes and sand dunes of Punta Rasa and the Bay of Samborombón. This area, not far south of Buenos Aires, is home to the most spectacular flocks of migrant waders, a wide array of grassland birds and some unique mammals, such as the scarce and elusive Pampas Deer. Northern migratory shorebirds are likely to include Hudsonian Godwit, Red Knot, Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs, Wilson's Phalarope, Stilt, White-

rumped, Pectoral and Baird's Sandpipers amongst many others that spend the northern winter (Austral summer), on the southernmost tip of our continent. Punta Rasa is one of the main feeding grounds for these long-range travellers that share the area with some local residents, such as the near endemic Hudson's Canastero, Bearded Tachuri, Firewood-gatherer, Bay-capped Wren-Spinetail, Hellmayr's Pipits-and and Greater Rhea. Other species that we will be on the lookout for during the day include Lake Duck, Great and White-tufted Grebes, Roseate Spoonbill, Whistling Heron, American Oystercatcher, Black Skimmer, Cabot's Tern, Freckle-breasted Thornbird, Wren-like Rushbird, Sooty Tyrannulet, Warbling Doradito, Scarlet Flycatcher, Yellow-winged and White-browed Blackbirds and Brown-and-yellow Marshbird.



Many-colored Rush Tyrant by Rob Williams

Day 4: San Clemente del Tuyú to Bahía Blanca. Today we travel south-west along the Atlantic coast to the city of Bahía Blanca and its surroundings. This is a fairly long drive, but we shall only make cursory birding stops en route in suitable habitat. On today's drive we will keep a sharp lookout for the uncommon Black-headed Duck, Blue-crowned Parakeet, Bay-capped Wren-Spinetail and Tufted Tit-Spinetail while we would need a healthy dose of luck to find rarities such as Pampas Pipit, Dot-winged Crake and Speckled Rail.

Day 5: Bahía Blanca. Bahía Blanca sits in an ecotonal area between the Pampas and Patagonia regions, thus offering a fantastic diversity of species. It is here that we will have the opportunity to see the spectacular and highly restricted Pampas Meadowlark, a near-endemic bird only possible in the southern Pampas and some areas of Uruguay, which is suffering from habitat degradation throughout its range. It is also here where chances are best for another highly restricted passerine: the endangered and declining Yellow Cardinal. We will also look for Olrog's Gull, one of the most endangered seabird species that nests in the area. The woodlands in the area are extensive as well and hold some real specials including the striking Crested Gallito, Stripe-crowned Spinetail, near endemic Sharp-billed Canastero, Short-billed Canastero, Firewood-gatherer, Brown Cachalote, the impressive Scimitar-billed and Narrow-billed Woodcreepers, White-banded Mockingbird, White-winged Black Tyrant, Ringed Warbling Finch and even Spot-winged Falconet. We will also take time to check a variety of wetlands and adjacent habitat for species such as Hudsonian Godwit, Many-



Sandy Gallito by Clayton Burne

colored Rush Tyrant, Long-tailed Meadowlark, Correndera and Short-billed Pipits, Gull-billed, South American and Snowy-crowned Terns, American Cliff Swallow, Southern Martin, Black-crowned Monjita, and Grassland Yellow Finch.



Coscoroba Swans by Glen Valentine

Day 6: Bahía Blanca to Las Grutas. We continue to travel south towards Las Grutas. While much of the day will be spent travelling, we can expect to add yet more species to our list. Excluding the above-mentioned birds, we will also be keeping our eyes on the road verges for Darwin's Nothura. On arrival at Las Grutas, we will no doubt be greeted by flocks of Burrowing Parrots, as they are very common here. After checking into our hotel, we will then go birding along the coast where we will look for a number of endemic and near-endemic species such as Sandy Gallito and Carbonated Sierra Finch, Hudson's Black Tyrant, Scale-throated Earthcreeper, Tufted Tit-Tyrant, White-throated Cacholote, White-tipped Plantcutter, Austral Thrush, Common Diuca Finch, Black-chinned and Hooded Siskins, and Greater Wagtail-Tyrant. We spend the following two nights in Las Grutas, a small village turned popular beach resort.

Day 7: San Antonio Oeste and Las Grutas. We will start early this morning, birding the surrounding areas of San Antonio Oeste. Our first stop will be just outside the city boundaries where we will search for White-throated Cacholote and Sandy Gallito (if we missed them yesterday). Here we also have a good chance for Elegant Crested Tinamou, the near-endemic Dark-faced Ground Tyrant, Black-crowned, Rusty-backed and White Monjitas, Grey-hooded and Mourning Sierra Finches and Scarlet Flycatcher.

We will then drive eastwards to search for the elusive Yellow Cardinal (in case we missed it previously), as well as Pale-breasted Spinetail, Straneck's Tyrannulet, Plain-mantled Tit-Spinetail,



Burrowing Parrots by Glen Valentine



White-throated Cacholote by Clayton Burne

Chaco Earthcreeper, Short-billed Canastero, Yellow-billed Tit-Tyrant, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Blue-and-yellow Tanager and Cinnamon Warbling Finch. Time permitting, we will again bird the surroundings of Las Grutas for any birds we might have missed to date.

Day 8: Las Grutas to Valdés Peninsula. We will spend the morning birding the surroundings of Las Grutas in search of any birds we might have missed in this area, and then start heading southwards to the Valdés Peninsula where we will spend the next two nights of the tour in the small village of Puerto Pirámides, situated on the shores of the Nuevo Gulf. The Valdés Peninsula is a marine mammal's paradise, and those wishing to do so will be able to watch Southern Right Whales on a boat tour this afternoon.

We will also bird the surroundings of Puerto Pirámides in search of species such as Rusty-backed Monjita, near endemic Band-tailed Earthcreeper and endemic Patagonian Canastero. Further interesting steppe dwellers may include Elegant Crested Tinamou, Short-billed Pipit, Least Seedsnipe and Common Diuca Finch. We should also find a number of land mammals that include Guanaco, a wild relative of the Llama, Patagonian Cavy (Mara), an overgrown, long-legged version of the Guinea Pig, and if we are lucky, South American Grey Fox, Humboldt's Hog-nosed Skunk and the Large Hairy Armadillo.

Day 9: Valdés Peninsula. Declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1999, we will spend the day exploring the riches of the Valdés Peninsula. A harsh yet spectacular environment, this remote peninsula is a haven for Patagonian marine and terrestrial wildlife including massive colonies of South American Sea Lion and Southern Elephant Seal. The abundance of afterbirth and young pups here attracts the attention of several scavengers and predators, including the striking Killer Whales that are known to beach themselves along this coastline to capture prey, as well as Southern Giant Petrel and unique Snowy Sheathbill that forage through the remains. The rocky coastline may hold Imperial and Rock Shags alongside the commoner Neotropic Cormorants.

The more barren interior of the Valdés Peninsula offers a chance to find the endemic Patagonian Canastero and Carbonated Sierra Finch, as well as Lesser Shrike-Tyrant and Two-banded Plover. Other birds we will search for include the stately Lesser Rhea, Common Miner, near endemic Patagonian Yellow Finch, near-endemic Austral Negrito, Blue-and-white Swallow, Grey-bellied Shrike-Tyrant and Elegant Crested Tinamou walking through the short-stunted growth.



Carbonated Sierra Finch by Keith Valentine

During the day, we will be making a



Elegant Crested Tinamou by Keith Valentine

small detour to a huge Magellanic Penguin colony tucked away in a secluded area of Valdes. Aside from the penguins, there are also an array of seabirds and shorebirds that include Blackish, American and Magellanic Oystercatchers, Chilean Flamingo, near endemic Dolphin Gull and Brown Skua, alongside several passerines such as Cordilleran Canastero, Scale-throated Earthcreeper and the near-endemic Patagonian Mockingbird, to name but a few. This is a good site for rarities, and we could be lucky and find Upland or Ashy-headed Geese, or even Flying Steamer Duck.

Day 10: Valdés Peninsula to Punta Tombo to Trelew and final departure. This morning we will depart from Puerto Piramides and make our way south past Puerto Madryn and Trelew towards the fantastic Magellanic Penguin colony at Punta Tombo. The major target of the area is the endemic Chubut Steamer Duck, an extremely localised and flightless species, which can traditionally be found at Punta Tombo with relative ease. The penguins are also another great reason to visit this beautiful, remote site and we will get fabulous views of them on our stroll to the peninsula. Also, of additional significant interest is the surrounding habitat. Here low Patagonian scrub offers a range of fantastic specials that can often be even easier to find than on the Valdes Peninsula and we have excellent chances for specials such as Rusty-backed Monjita, Little Shrike-Thrush, White-winged Black Tyrant, Band-tailed Earthcreeper and Patagonian Canastero. Other species of interest also include Variable Hawk, White-tailed Kite, Burrowing Owl, beautifully marked Tawny-throated Dotterel, Chilean Swallow, Tufted Tit-Tyrant and near-endemic Grey-hooded and Mourning Sierra Finches. After lunch at Punta Tombo we will work our way back towards Trelew Airport where the tour will conclude.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs (where applicable) and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES.

The tour price includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 10;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).

The tour price does not include:

- Visa fees;
- **ANY** flights and airport taxes (see above);
- Any drinks;
- Special gratuities;

- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:
a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.
b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small party supplement will have to be charged.
c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to major foreign exchange fluctuations and unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.
d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, porters and restaurants) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader. If, therefore, you feel that he has given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip him.

Special Notes

- Much of our time is spent in vehicles, as we do have to cover long distances in order to get to the best areas for birds and animals. The more luggage you pack, the less room there is in the vehicle, so it is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lb) for hand luggage.
- Argentina has a reciprocity fee with some countries which must be paid online prior to arrival. Please consult your embassy in advance to check the most currency status.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:
This tour **does not** include **ANY** airfares. The tour will depart from Ministro Pistarini International Airport (IATA: EZE), Buenos Aires on day 1 at **12:00** (**noon)**; kindly arrive in advance of this time, or arrive the day before. The tour will conclude at Almirante Marcos A. Zar Airport, Trelew (IATA: REL) late afternoon on day 10.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

It is important to note that there are two airports in Buenos Aires;
1) Ministro Pistarini International Airport (IATA: EZE) and;
2) Buenos Aires – Aeroparque, also known as Jorge Newberry (IATA: AEP) which handles domestic flights.

Both the international and domestic airports cater for internal flights within Argentina. These airports are completely separate, and the drive between them usually takes between 1 and 1½ hours. It is,

therefore, essential that you confirm with your travel agent the airport code in order to be sure which airport your flights arrive at and depart from.

FLIGHTS:

Ministro Pistarini International Airport, Buenos Aires (IATA: EZE) is the main port of entry for international flights into Argentina and is well serviced by all of the world's major airlines. Almirante Marcos A. Zar Airport, Trelew (IATA: REL) has regular flights to Buenos Aires. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**