ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Argentina & Chile

Southern Patagonia & Torres del Paine

3rd December to 13th December 2022 (11 days)



Magellanic Plover by Rich Lindie

Our tour through Argentina's Southern Patagonia takes us on an amazing adventure through the southern portion of this incredible continent in search of the unique Magellanic Plover at Laguna Nímez, the rare White-bellied Seedsnipe of northern Tierra del Fuego, and the charismatic Magellanic Woodpecker.

Our journey begins in Los Glaciares National Park, famous in birding circles for its population of the impressive Andean Condors, uncommon Bronze-winged Duck, Chilean Flicker and the strange Rufous-tailed Plantcutter. Crossing the border into Chile, we spend a few days at possibly the most scenically impressive site on a tour of grand vistas - Torres del Paine. Aside from being a staggeringly spectacular stretch of mountains - quite possibly the most attractive scenery of all the Andes - Torres del Paine National Park also happens to be one of the best places in the world to see the mighty Puma. Next, we travel to the Punta Arenas, exploring the most southern continental locations for

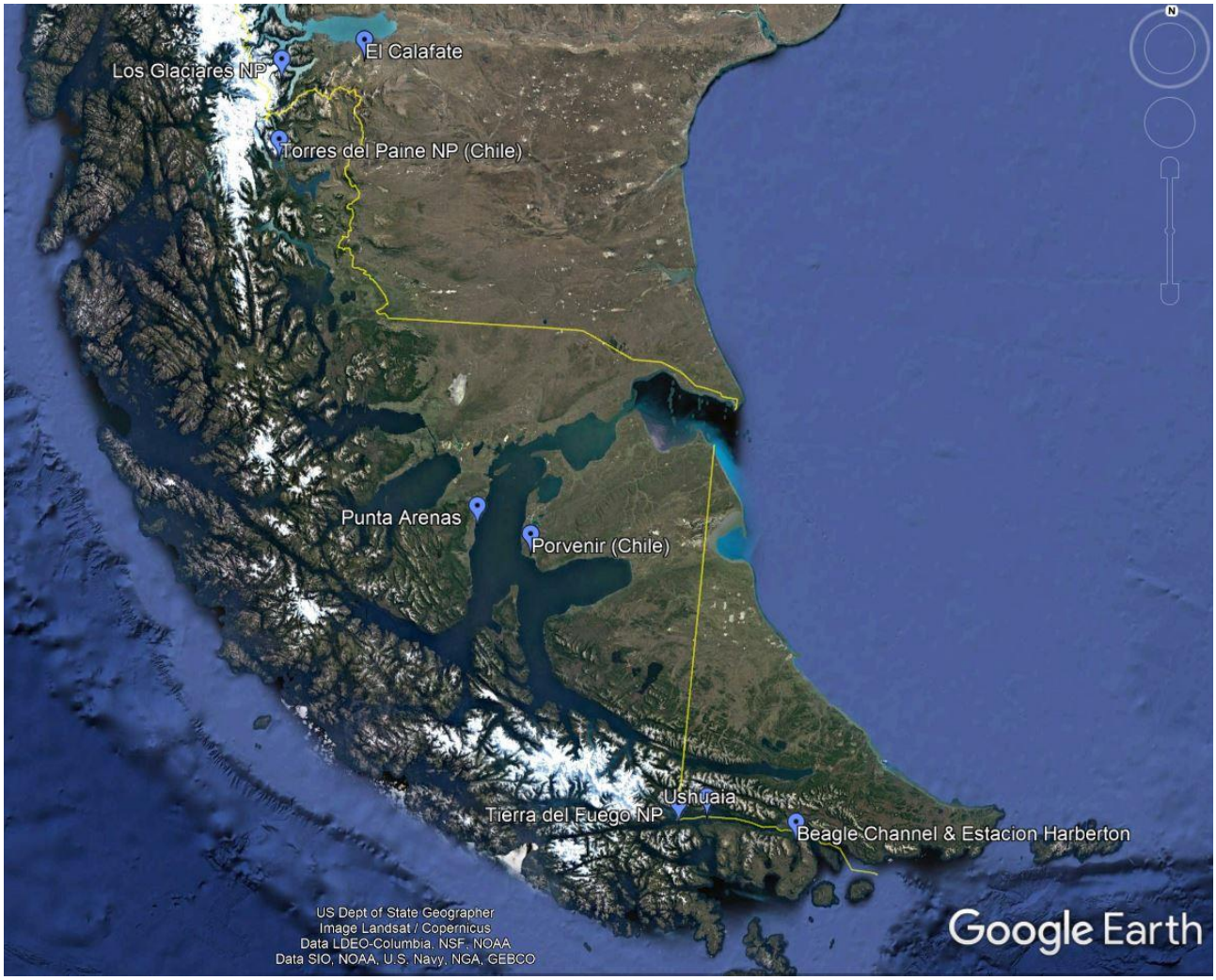
their plethora of rare and endemic species, both by road and ferry. As the tour draws to a close, we will be searching for birds in the dramatic and fabled landscapes of Tierra del Fuego. Here a visit to Tierra del Fuego National Park could produce Austral Pygmy Owl, White-throated Treerunner and the fantastic Magellanic Woodpecker. In the Beagle Channel, we hope for Magellanic Diving Petrel, Fuegian Steamer Duck and White-throated Caracara, while in the Paso Garibaldi area we search for the rare White-bellied Seedsnipe. This tour covers the most essential sites in the southern portion of Argentina and gives a splendid overview of the breath-taking scenery, mind-blowing birding and excellent mammal viewing that this exceptional part of the world has to offer.

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

MAIN TOUR ITINERARY

Day 1	**Arrival in El Calafate and birding Laguna Nímez**
Day 2	**Los Glaciares National Park**
Day 3	**El Calafate to Torres del Paine National Park**
Day 4	**Torres del Paine National Park**
Day 5	**Torres del Paine National Park to Punta Arenas**
Day 6	**Punta Arenas to Porvenir**
Day 7	**Porvenir area including King Penguin colony**
Day 8	**Porvenir to Ushuaia**
Day 9	**Tierra del Fuego National Park**
Day 10	**Beagle Channel and Estancia Harberton**
Day 11	**Le Martial Glacier and transfer to Ushuaia Airport for departure**

TOUR ROUTE MAP…



THE TOUR IN DETAIL…



Fuegian Steamer Duck by Glen Valentine

Day 1: Arrival in El Calafate and birding Laguna Nímez. Our tour of Southern Patagonia begins in the Patagonian town of El Calafate, the base of the Southern Andes. This scenically breath-taking region is known as the gateway to the glaciers and, with the nearby Los Glaciares National Park as a backdrop, we will arrive in this quaint village characterised by rustic houses adorned with steeply sloping roofs, giving it a quaint, personable feel.

Time permitting, you will start birding immediately at Laguna Nímez, a small lagoon not far from El Calafate town centre, on the shores of Lago Argentino. This lagoon is surrounded by reed beds and gives shelter to such attractive species as Black-necked Swan, Chilean Flamingo, Andean Duck, South American Snipe, Upland Goose, Many-colored Rush and Spectacled Tyrants, Chilean Pigeon and the rare and scarce Magellanic Plover. After an excellent introduction to the Patagonian birding, we shall head back to our hotel this afternoon, and gather later for a welcome dinner.

Day 2: Los Glaciares National Park. We have a magnificent day ahead of us, birding amongst the grand scenery of Los Glaciares National Park. The park was created in 1937 to preserve this unique wilderness, its pristine Southern Beech forests, Andean lakes and 13 spectacular glaciers. Due to its undeniably magnificent natural beauty, it was also declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1981.

The road between El Calafate and Los Glaciares National Park is flanked by rocky cliffs, with the snow-covered peaks of the majestic Andes in the background. This is home to Andean Condor, master of the Andean skies, who will surely escort us all the way to the park.



White-throated Treerunner by Glen Valentine

Once within the park, we'll be on the lookout for some of the 'Magellanic' specials, namely the ground-dwelling Chilean Flicker, Thorn-tailed Rayadito, Magellanic Woodpecker, Fire-eyed Diucon, Green-backed Firecrown, Band-tailed and Scale-throated Earthcreepers, White-throated Treerunner, Magellanic Tapaculo, Upland Goose, Austral Parakeet, Tufted Tit-Tyrant, Great Shrike-Tyrant, Patagonian and Grey-hooded Sierra Finches, rare Black-winged Ground Dove, Long-tailed Meadowlark,



Los Glaciares National Park by Adam Riley

White-browed Ground Tyrant and Rufous-tailed Plantcutter, amongst many others. Mammals are well represented in the park with possibilities of Guanaco, Humboldt's Hog-nosed Skunk, Large Hairy Armadillo, Culpeo and South American Grey Fox.

Time permitting, we shall pay a visit to Perito Moreno Glacier. By far the best known and most visited of the park's glaciers, and easily accessible by land. The series of trails and lookouts in front of it provide breathtaking close-up views and superb photo opportunities. After an exquisite day within in the park, we shall head back to El Calafate for the night.

Day 3: El Calafate to Torres del Paine National Park. We leave El Calafate early this morning for a drive into Chile. As we traverse the Patagonian High Plateau, we shall make a few stops to search the roadside for specials. Short side trips to brackish ponds are liable to reveal flocks of Chilean Flamingo, Upland Goose, Red Shoveler, Silver Teal, Chiloe Wigeon, White-winged and Red-gartered Coots, Black-necked Swan and Black-faced Ibis. The roadsides could turn up Chocolate-vented Tyrant, Least Seedsnipe and the rare Patagonian Tinamou, while overhead we may chance upon Cinereous Harrier and Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle. We shall target isolated patches of secondary forest for Chilean Flicker, Striped Woodpecker and Austral Pygmy Owl.



Puma on a kill by Adam Riley

Located on the Chilean side of southern Patagonia, Torres del Paine National Park shares a common boundary to the north with Los Glaciares National Park in Argentina. Covering an area of roughly 243,000 hectares, it is one of the largest parks in Chile and certainly one of the most visited. The main attraction is the staggeringly attractive Towers of Paine, three distinctive granite peaks standing out of the Paine Massif. They rise 2,850 meters above sea level. The Towers of Paine constitute one of the most iconic images of this national park, along with the

Horns of Paine, situated along the same cordillera, slightly south of the towers. The landscape here is dominated by the Paine massif, which is an eastern spur of the Andes, located on the eastern side of the Grey Glacier, rising dramatically above the Patagonian steppe. Small valleys separate the spectacular granite spires and mountains of the massif, and the Southern Patagonian Ice Field marks a large portion of the park. The area also boasts spectacular valleys, rivers, lakes and glaciers. The park contains four different vegetation zones; Patagonian steppe, Pre-Andean shrubland, Magellanic subpolar forests and Andean Desert allowing for a plethora of fauna and flora.



Austral Rail by Adam Riley

This afternoon we shall make our first exploratory excursion, where we have excellent chances to find a number of rare or localised mammals such as Guanaco, a wild relative of the Llama, and the endangered Patagonian Huemul, a species of deer that happily survives winter temperatures as low as -50°C!

We will also be looking for Humboldt's Hog-nosed Skunk, Large Hairy Armadillo and South American Grey Fox. However, the main target here is rather grander, a little sleeker and requires some luck – Torres del Paine's apex predator, the magnificent Puma! What's more, the world's largest Pumas are to be found furthest from the Equator, and southern Patagonia possesses some very large



Torres del Paine National Park by Glen Valentine

males, weighing in at close to 100kgs (160 lbs)!



Two-banded Plover by Glen Valentine

Day 4: Torres del Paine National Park. We awake to one of the world's most spectacular landscapes, as the morning sun lights up the stark peaks surrounding us. We have a full day to explore the park, searching for any new or missing mammals and birds. High on our priority list are the three signature birds of Torres del Paine, the gigantic Andean Condor and rapid surfing Torrent Duck. The third target is a little less obvious, and certainly more cryptic; in fact, until 1998, there had been only three confirmed records of the bird since 1900 (and none since 1959!). However, the Austral Rail lives and Torres del Paine is one of the better haunts in which to find it. In addition, our birding over the course of day is sure to turn up a number of highlights, with possibilities including Black-necked Swan, Bonze-winged and Lake Ducks, Magellanic Woodpecker, Austral Parakeet, Chilean Hawk, White-throated Treerunner, Patagonian, Plumbeous and Mourning Sierra Finches, Common Diuca Finch, Green-backed Firecrown, Lesser Rhea, the rare White-throated Caracara, Patagonian Tyrant, Austral Canastero, Cinnamon-bellied and Spot-billed Ground Tyrants, Patagonian Mockingbird, and the scarce Yellow-bridled Finch.

Day 5: Torres del Paine National Park to Punta Arenas. Today we depart Torres del Paine National Park and head further south to Punta Arenas. During the morning, we will search the scrubby habitat for Grey-bellied Shrike-Tyrant, Sharp-billed Canastero, Patagonian and Greater Yellow Finches, Grey-breasted Seedsnipe and Rufous-banded Miner. Time permitting, we may make a short stop at Otway Sound to observe the large Magellanic Penguin colony, where it is possible to see three families of flightless bird from one spot! (Penguin, Rhea & Steamer Duck)

While most of the day will be dedicated to travel, we shall make further stops as we pass through Puerto Natales, en route to Punta Arenas. Large herds of Guanaco will be ever present, while we may have further sightings of Humboldt's Hog-nosed Skunk, South American Grey Fox or Large Hairy Armadillo.



Kelp Goose (pair) by Glen Valentine

On arrival in Punta Arenas, we shall start birding the city environs for Ruddy-headed



King Penguin by Rich Lindie

Goose, Coscoroba Swan, Flying and Fuegian Steamer Ducks, Rufous-tailed Hawk, Magellanic Oystercatcher, Imperial Shag, the attractive Two-banded Plover, Southern Lapwing (the northern sub-species are due to be slit), Chilean Skua, Dolphin and Kelp Gulls and Austral Negrito.

Day 6: Punta Arenas to Porvenir. We head out this morning on a short pelagic trip while crossing the Strait of Magellan en route to Porvenir. While not particularly large, Porvenir is the main town in the north-west sector of the mythical island at the southern end of the world, Tierra del Fuego, or Land of Fire. The ferry ride is approximately 2 hours in length, giving us plenty of time to find good numbers of Southern Giant Petrel, Magellanic Diving Petrel, Cape and White-chinned Petrels, Sooty Shearwater, Chilean and South Polar Skuas, Black-browed Albatross and Brown-hooded Gull as well as an opportunity to see Peale´s Dolphins and Burmeister's Porpoise.

We will spend the afternoon birding sites near to Porvenir that include the coastal escarpment and alkaline lagoons where we may find Ashy-headed, Kelp and Upland Geese, Magellanic, Rufous-chested and Two-banded Plovers, Hudsonian Godwit, Short-billed Miner, Plain-mantled Tit-Spinetail, Tawny-throated Dotterel, Lesser Rhea, Blue-and-white Swallow, Yellow-billed Teal, Yellow-billed Pintail, Chiloe Wigeon, Great and White-tufted Grebes, Baird's and White-rumped Sandpipers, Wilson's Phalarope, Black-necked Swan and Crested Duck.

Day 7: Porvenir area including King Penguin colony. After breakfast, we´ll drive to Bahía Inútil, more commonly known as Useless Bay, to appreciate the only continental colony of the magnificent King Penguin. En route, we will make the occasional stop in the grassy meadows searching for Variable Hawk, Aplomado Falcon and Ruddy-headed Goose, while we also have a chance of finding Lesser Horned Owl at roadside cuttings and ravines.



Rufous-chested Plover (Dotterel) by Glen Valentine

After what promises to be a most enjoyable session with the King Penguins, we'll start our return journey to Porvenir taking in the steppes and the low hills of Tierra del Fuego looking for White-bridled Finch, Rufous-chested Dotterel, Chocolate-vented Tyrant and Cinnamon-bellied Ground Tyrant.

Day 8: Porvenir to Ushuaia. This morning, we set out early from Porvenir traversing a large portion of Tierra del Fuego, birding vast



Magellanic Woodpecker by Markus Lilje

wide-open grasslands and rolling vistas. We will stop near the town of Río Grande to search for migratory shorebirds, as well as resident species such as South American Painted-snipe and Rufous-chested and Two-banded Plovers. We will also concentrate on locating the mainland form of Ruddy-headed Goose, now a difficult bird away from the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) due to the overgrazing of pastures. Other possibilities include Least Seedsnipe, the Patagonian form of Common Miner (a likely split), Short-billed Miner, Elegant Crested Tinamou, Correndera Pipit, Red-fronted Coot and Cinnamon-bellied Ground Tyrant.

As we get closer to Ushuaia, we shall make a stop at El Paso Garibaldi to search for the scarce Yellow-bridled Finch and the mega White-bellied Seedsnipe, found only in this desolate region. If we are very fortunate, we will be able to pinpoint this rare and incredibly well-camouflaged bird. We also have a chance of finding White-throated Caracara, Austral Parakeet, Austral Thrush, Chilean Swallow, Black-chinned Siskin and Patagonian Sierra Finch before arriving to Ushuaia in the late afternoon.

Day 9: Tierra del Fuego National Park. Today, we venture out to the edge of the Chilean border, where we will spend the day exploring the famous Tierra del Fuego National Park, complete with dramatic waterfalls, awesome stunted forests, lofty mountains and extensive glaciers. Located 8kms west of Ushuaia, this park was created in 1960 to protect a vast relict of coastal Southern Beech forest, and its associated wildlife. Several mammals make their home within the boundaries of the park, with highlights including Culpeo, Marine Otter and Southern River Otter standing out amongst the pervasive and habitat-destroying introduced species such as American Beaver, European Rabbit and Muskrat. The park authorities have been working hard to keep their populations low and under control but thus far have failed to eradicate these undesired invaders completely.

This national park is certainly the best site in Argentina for Magellanic Woodpecker, but it's also great for Flying and Fuegian Steamer Ducks, Kelp and Ashy-headed Geese, Buff-winged and Dark-bellied Cinclodes, Dark-faced and Ochre-naped Ground Tyrants, Chilean Elaenia, White-throated Treerunner, Black-faced Ibis, Austral Blackbird, Fire-eyed Diucon, Chilean Hawk, rare Striated, Crested & Chimango Caracaras, very rare Blackish Cincoldes, Patagonian Sierra Finch, Chilean Swallow, Black-chinned Siskin, Thorn-tailed Rayadito and all three major Patagonian owl species,



Austral Parakeet by Glen Valentine

Lesser Horned (Magellanic), Rufous-legged and Austral Pygmy.



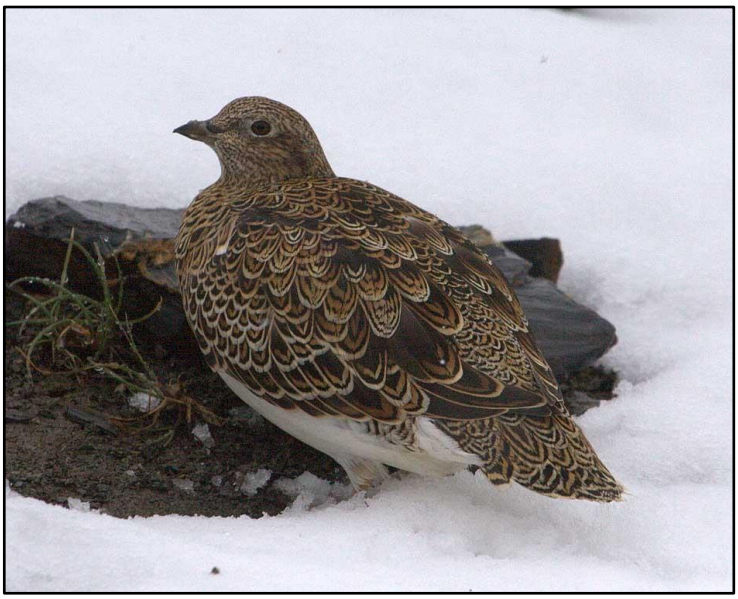
Thorn-tailed Rayadito by Glen Valentine

Day 10: Beagle Channel and Estancia Harberton. The shores of the Beagle Channel offer excellent opportunities to find terrestrial and marine wildlife along the coast. The channel is about 150 miles long and separates Isla Grande from several smaller islands to the south. It was named after the ship HMS Beagle that surveyed this region of South America in the early 19th century, and later took Charles Darwin on several adventures as an amateur naturalist.

A special day for all those who enjoy a pelagic and the abundant birds and mammals that come with it. From Ushuaia port, we will board a motorised catamaran for a tour along the Beagle Channel that will take us east of Ushuaia, all the way to Estancia Harberton. There are several South American Sea Lion and South American Fur Seal colonies on the seashores and small islets of the Beagle Channel. Seabirds are abundant here, with Imperial and Rock Shags, Magellanic and Gentoo Penguins, South American Tern, Dolphin Gull, Southern Giant Petrel, Magellanic and Common Diving Petrels, Sooty Shearwater, Slender-billed Prion, Wilson's Storm Petrel, Black-browed Albatross and Southern Fulmar all being fairly common, while we will also be searching for Magellanic and Blackish Oystercatchers, Kelp Goose and Snowy Sheathbill.

We take lunch aboard the catamaran, before disembarking at Estancia Harberton, the first farm of Tierra del Fuego, established way back in 1886 by Rev. Thomas Bridges. We have some time to bird the estate for Fuegan Steamer Duck, Grey-flanked and Dark-bellied Cinclodes and if we get lucky, a sighting of the rare White-throated Caracara.

Day 11: Le Martial Glacier and transfer to Ushuaia Airport for departure. This morning, we'll visit Le Martial Glacier, just above the town. We intend on catching a ride up to the top of the ski-lift area, so as to get above the timberline. Our focus here will be on finding some very localised gems, including the striking Yellow-bridled Finch, Ochre-naped Ground Tyrant and Grey-flanked Cinclodes. We also have a good chance of finding Magellanic Tapaculo, and far less of a chance for White-bellied Seedsnipe. While this used to be the traditional twitching spot, there have been few sightings over the past several years, unfortunately. We shall also



White-bellied Seedsnipe by Adam Riley

be treated to spectacular views of Ushuaia, the Beagle Channel and the Chilean island of Navarino splayed out before us.

All good things must ultimately come to an end, and we shall depart Le Martial Glacier for the nearby airport of Ushuaia for our final departures mid-morning.

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 breakfast on day 11;
- 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 Comandante Armando Tola International Airport (IATA: FTE), El Cafayate on day 1 **at 12:00 (noon)**; kindly arrive in advance of this time, or arrive the day before. The tour will conclude at Malvinas Argentinas Ushuaia International Airport (IATA: USH), Ushuaia mid-morning on day 11.

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.

As many international flights route via Buenos Aires, it is important to note that there are two airports in the city;

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. Comandante Armando Tola International Airport, El Cafayate (IATA: FTE) and Malvinas Argentinas Ushuaia International Airport, Ushuaia (IATA: USH) are all well connected via Buenos Aires airport. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**