Paraguay

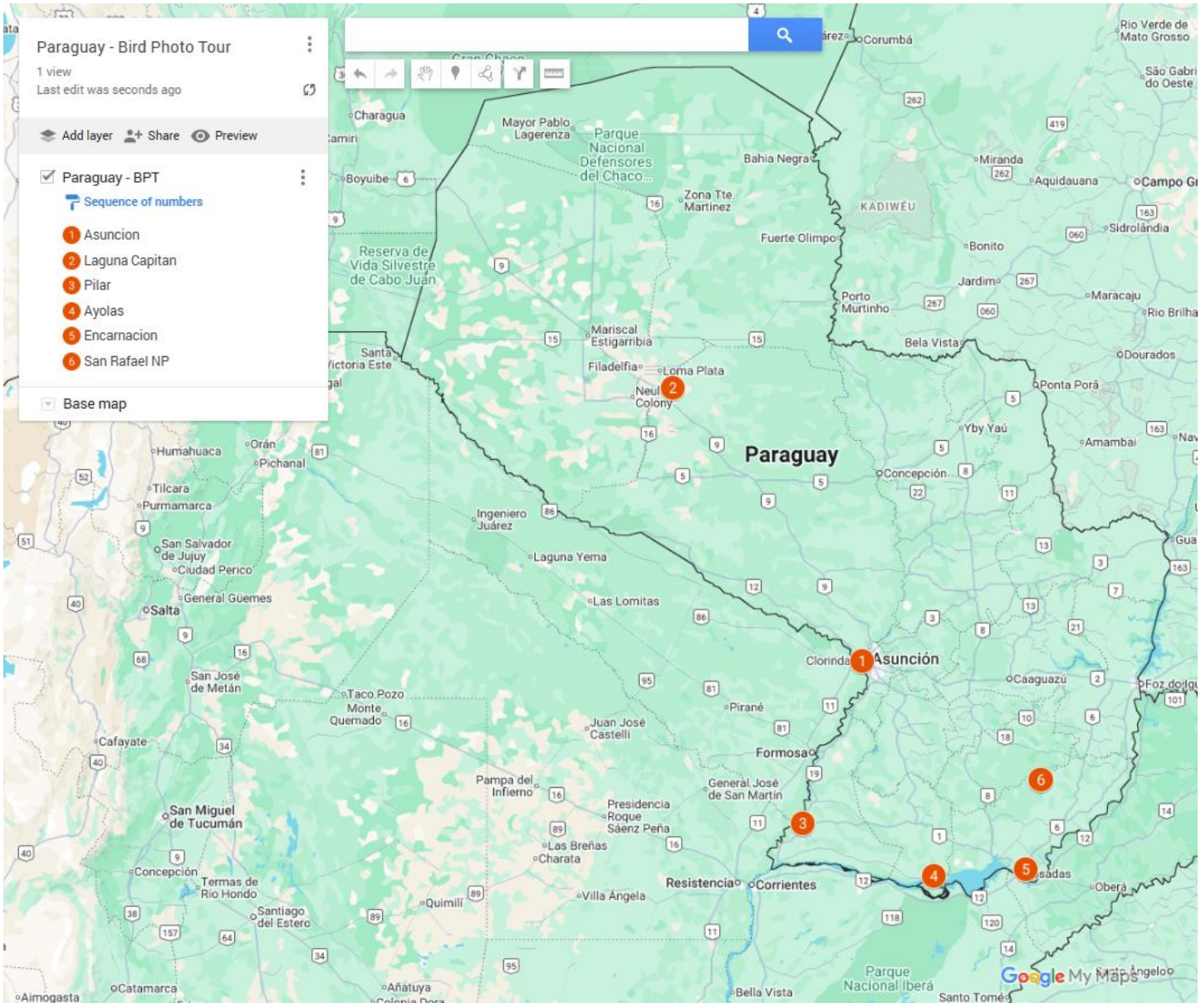
Bird Photo Tour



Blue-tufted Starthroat by Clayton Burne

Holding some of the last remaining large tracts of pristine Atlantic Lowland Forest, cerrado savannas, grasslands and most of the vast thorny Chaco, Paraguay appeals as an excellent introduction to Neotropical birding, fantastic photographic opportunities and home to an interesting array of mammals. What's more, this is a vast country with few inhabitants, and nowhere is this more noticeable than in the chaco, for many, the major attraction of the country. We'll search for a handful of range-restricted species such as Strange-tailed and Cock-tailed Tyrants and Russet-winged Spadebill as well as encounter members of several core South America families with Greater Rhea, Red-legged Seriema, Black-capped Donacobius and Southern Screamer.

Itinerary & Map



Day 1	**Asunción to Laguna Capitan**
Days 2 to 4	**Laguna Capitan & Central Chaco**
Day 5	**Laguna Capitan to Asunción**
Day 6	**Asunción to Pilar**
Day 7	**Humid Chaco**
Day 8	**Pilar to Ayolas**
Day 9	**Mesopotamian grasslands**
Day 10	**Ayolas to Encarnacion via Artigas grasslands**
Day 11	**Encarnacion to Parque Nacional San Rafael**
Days 12 & 13	**Parque Nacional San Rafael**
Day 14	**Parque Nacional San Rafael to Asunción & final departure**

Highlights

- ***Striking Strange-tailed and Cock-tailed Tyrants in breeding plumage.***
- ***Several habitat endemics of the Chaco, Mesopotamian grasslands and Atlantic Forest.***
- ***Open grassland and stunted chaco habitat offering varied photographic backgrounds.***

Sites in detail

Asunción to Laguna Capitan. Departing Asunción, we head northwest towards the towns of Loma Plata and Filadelfia - known collectively as Colonias Mennonitas. Home to generations of ethno-German Mennonites, the area is located within the humid Chaco belt, along the Trans-Chaco Highway. While most of the surrounding habitat has been cleared for cattle *estancias*, we will find large tracts of palm savanna that once covered the entire landscape. We'll find several commoner grassland and waterbirds species easily found from the road. Amongst the more interesting and attractive species are stately groups of Jabiru, Southern Screamer, Plumbeous and Buff-necked Ibises, Scarlet-headed Blackbird and possibly our first major Chaco target in the form of Chaco Chachalaca.



Jabiru by Dušan Brinkhuizen

As we continue our drive, we start entering somewhat drier habitat containing increasingly thornier bushes and spike-laden trees. The isolated water pools here host further common waterbirds alongside Black-backed Water Tyrant, Firewood-gatherer, Grey Monjita, Black-capped Donacobius, Great Black Hawk and Many-colored Chaco Finch (resembling a saltator rather than a finch!).

Laguna Capitan & Central Chaco. Our time here will take in a series of waterholes and surrounding woodlands. A host of special Chaco species that might be found include Brushland Tinamou, Chaco Chachalaca, Cream-backed Woodpecker, Scimitar-billed and Great Rufous Woodcreepers, Chaco Earthcreeper, Crested Hornero,



Strange-tailed Tyrant by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Cinereous Tyrant and Black-capped Warbling Finch. Birding activity is generally very good and the short, stunted Chaco allows for excellent photographic opportunities. Despite the Chaco specials, we will also search for the skulking Stripe-backed Antbird, Little Thornbird, Greater Rhea, Great Antshrike, White-fronted and Checkered Woodpeckers, Blue-tufted Starthroat and, hopefully, more Many-colored Chaco Finch.

Despite being surrounded by *estancias*, villages and towns, the area provides us with our first opportunity to find some of the larger mammal inhabitants such as Puma and Lowland Tapir, as well as the rather amiable Southern Three-banded Armadillo.

Humid Chaco. A short drive from Asuncion lies the humid chaco. Here, we'll explore the savannas and tropical grasslands for a diverse array species, several of which are endemic to the chaco region. High on our list of targets are Greater Rhea, Red-legged Seriema, Chaco Chachalaca, Plumbeous and Buff-necked Ibises, Crimson-

crested and Cream-backed Woodpeckers, Laughing Falcon, Nanday, Maroon-bellied and Blue-crowned Parakeets, Fulvous-crowned Scrub Tyrant, Bearded Tachuri, several seedeaters such as White-bellied, Tawny-bellied and Rusty-collared, Black-capped Warbling Finch, White-lined Tanager, Scarlet-headed Blackbird, Yellow-rumped Marshbird, Golden-winged Cacique and Crested Oropendola amongst many others.

Ayolas. We'll bird the gallery forests stretching along the banks of the Rio Paraná and Rio Paraguay near Ayolas. This species-rich environment could turn up any number of new birds including Green-backed Becard, Golden-winged Cacique, Orange-headed Tanager, Ultramarine Grosbeak, Blue-winged Parrotlets and Little



Red-legged Seriema by Clayton Burne

Woodpecker.

Mesopotamian grasslands. These extensive grasslands are host to Bearded Tachuri, Crested Doradito, Yellow-rumped Marshbird, White-headed Marsh Tyrant, a number of finches including Lesser Grass, Long-tailed Reed and Pampa, as well as numerous seedeaters such as Rusty-collared, Double-collared, White-bellied, Tawny-bellied, Marsh or Dark-throated. However, our main target is the bizarre-looking Strange-tailed Tyrant. Hovering across the open grasslands, we can expect to find a number of males in full breeding plumage.

Other species we are liable to find in the grasslands include Spotted Nothura, Red-winged Tinamou, South American Snipe, White-bellied Seedeater and Scarlet-headed Blackbird. With some luck we may also stumble

upon a threatened Ochre-breasted Pipit amongst the commoner Hellmayr's and Short-billed, Pinnated Bittern, Black-masked Finch or a roosting Sickle-winged Nightjar.

Coronel Bogoda. We'll spend some time searching for Saffron-cowled Blackbird and Pinnated Bittern. Time permitting, we'll also make a quick stop in town to sample some cheesy cornbread called *chipa*, a local speciality for which Coronel Bogado (Capital de la Chipa) is famous.

Parque Nacional San Rafael. Along with Mbaracayú, this 73 000 hectare park protects a massive swathe of virgin Atlantic Forest. While San Rafael and Mbaracayú share a similar species composition, a number of rare or



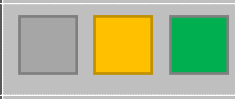
Scarlet-headed Blackbird by Clayton Burne

localised species are much easier to find here. The Atlantic Forest endemics are obviously high on our list of targets with such mouth-watering prospects as Spot-backed and Tufted Antshrikes, Solitary Tinamou, Southern Bristle Tyrant, Blackish-blue Seedeater, Drab-breasted Bamboo Tyrant, Green-headed Tanager, Russet-winged Spadebill and Rusty-barred Owl. We won't be caught up only on the above specials though, as a number of other forest species are sure to grab our attention; the tiny Purple-crowned Plovercrest, shy White-shouldered Fire-eye, Large-tailed Antshrike, Wing-barred Piprites, Ochre-breasted and White-eyed Foliage-gleaners, White-throated Woodcreeper, Grey-bellied, Rufous-capped and Spix's Spinetails, White-spotted Woodpecker, Greenish Schiffornis Red-capped Parrot, Red-crowned Ant Tanager, Dusky-tailed Antbird, Rough-legged and Yellow Tyrannulets, Red-ruffed Fruitcrow and Chestnut-headed Tanager.

The extensive grasslands around Kanguery hold Sedge Wren, Capped Seedeater, Saffron-cowled Blackbird, Lesser Grass Finch, Sharp-tailed Grass and Cock-tailed Tyrants, and possibly a handful of the migratory

seedeaters such as Marsh, Dark-throated and Chestnut. A large lake holds some rather typical waterbirds in the form of Brazilian Teal, Anhinga, Ringed, Green and Amazon Kingfishers, as well as Grey-rumped and Sick's Swifts. However, it is only once the light dims that we can hope to find the star of the show, roding Giant Snipe! Nightbirds are again good, with more chances of finding Common and Long-tailed Potoos as well as the scarce Tawny-browed and Rusty-barred Owls.

Tour Grading & Key

Photography		Good to good+, can be very bright in open habitats. No hides or regular feeders, many species reasonably approachable, good lighting opportunities.
Overall Ease		This is a moderate to comfortable tour. Most days start pre-dawn & end after dark. Several long travel days. You should have a good level of fitness & be in good health. Not suitable for anyone with moderate mobility or health challenges.
Accommodation		Comfortable in the large towns, a little more basic in remoter areas. Hot water is not always provided given the very hot environment.
Walking / Trails		Lots of roadside birding, easy trails in the Atlantic Forest area.
Vehicles / Roads		Comfortable small coach or minibus. Road conditions are generally average to decent.
Birding Ease		Moderate to easy. Some headline species are low density.
Annoyances		Weather conditions are expected to dry, sunny, and very hot in most areas. Some long days.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from lunch on day 1 to breakfast on day 14;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- 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.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is 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. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- Whilst this tour involves very little arduous walking, we will however spend large amounts of time vehicle-bound while traversing the vast plains of Paraguay. If you have any physical limitations or medical conditions of any sort, please do let the Rockjumper office know in advance of the tour.
- Most days will start before dawn to take advantage of the most comfortable conditions. We will spend the hotter parts of the day either birding more option conditions or driving to our next birding location. We'll likely be birding in the later afternoon again, followed by more birding after dinner for nocturnal species.
- We will be birding in some remote areas well away from modern medical facilities.
- The hotels are of a comfortable standard throughout.
- Transport is by small coach or minibus. Road conditions fluctuate from good to decent. Some areas are prone to flooding, and may interfere with our trip, though we have minimized this risk by undertaking the tour during the driest part of the season.
- We expect the weather to be dry, sunny, and very hot in most areas. Broad hats, sunscreen and sunglasses will certainly be required.

Bird Photo Tours

- Our Bird Photo Tours are a hybrid between our Classic birding tours and dedicated photographic tours. You don't have to be a professional photographer or have the biggest lens; this is for everyone with an interest in photography and birding. Whether you're using a bridge camera or the latest body and prime lens, our aims are the same.
- These tours are not aimed at seeing the most species possible on the route, rather taking time to photograph key targets and any other interesting species we may find. Naturally, the overall species list will be lower than a comparable birding focused tour.
- Whilst we may use blinds, feeders and hide setups on some of these tours, we will not be spending an entire day nor even several hours fixed in one spot.
- These tours are suitable for photographers who prefer opportunistic photography over entire days in a hide.
- Our leaders will assist in helping everyone secure good photographic opportunities and advise as much as they can on camera setup. However, they are not professional photographic tour leaders.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour will depart from the capital city of Asunción on Day 1 and, as we have an early departure today, you are expected to be in the country the day before the tour begins. The tour will conclude in the mid-afternoon at Silvio Pettirossi International Airport, Asuncion (IATA: ASU) on Day 14.

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.

Silvio Pettirossi International Airport, Asuncion (IATA: ASU) is the main port of entry and departure for this tour.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.