Chile & Argentina

Birds & Wine



Burrowing Parrots by Dušan Brinkhuizen

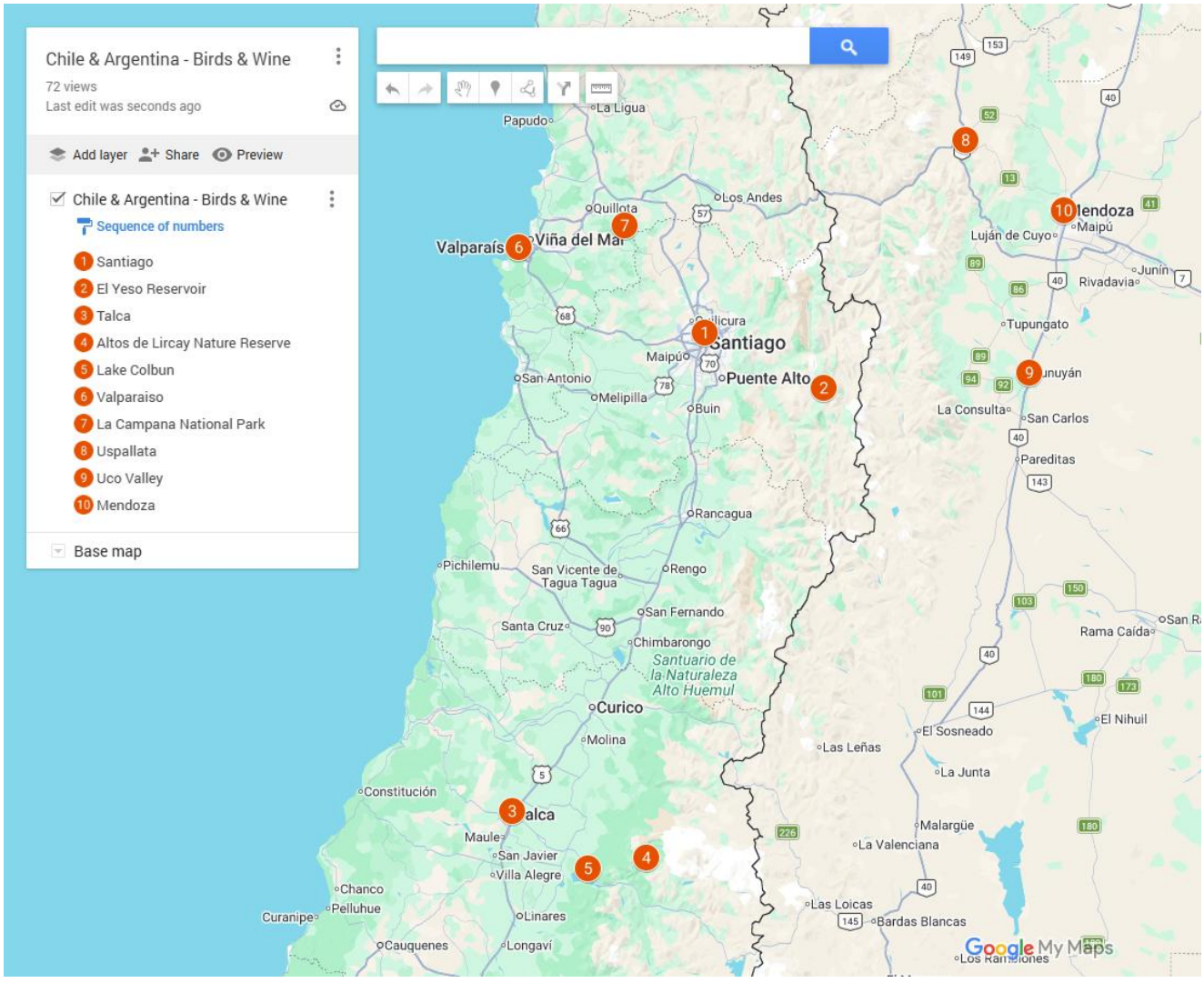
Chile forms a long, narrow ribbon of land stretching some 4,250km (2,650 miles) between the Pacific Ocean and the Andes, from the arid north to the windswept landscapes of Patagonia. On this journey we explore a range of these dramatic environments before crossing into neighbouring Argentina, where the vineyards of Mendoza provide a fitting finale. Both countries rank among South America's most stable and rewarding travel destinations, offering an outstanding combination of scenery, wildlife and world-class wine.

This tour has been carefully designed to balance exceptional birding with a selection of distinctive wine estates, allowing time to fully appreciate both. We visit a variety of key habitats, from Andean highlands and temperate forests to coastal waters, targeting an impressive range of species. Highlights include Andean Condor, Magellanic Woodpecker, White-throated Treerunner and the highly sought-after Diademed Sandpiper-Plover, along with a suite of Chilean endemics such as huet-huets and turcas. An exciting pelagic excursion offers the chance of seabirds including Peruvian Diving Petrel and Chilean Skua.

Complementing the birding, we visit a curated selection of wineries across Chile and Argentina, experiencing the diversity of regions that produce some of South America's finest wines, from elegant cool-climate styles to the bold Malbecs of Mendoza. Throughout the tour we enjoy comfortable accommodation, excellent cuisine and warm local hospitality, making for a rewarding and well-rounded exploration of these two remarkable countries.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Santiago, Chile**
Day 2	**Santiago area & wine tasting at Aquitania Winery**
Day 3	**El Yeso Reservoir**
Day 4	**Santiago to Talca & Altos de Lircay Nature Reserve**
Day 5	**Lake Colbún & wine tasting at Santa Cruz Winery**
Day 6	**Colchagua Valley & wine tasting at Montes Winery**
Day 7	**Maipo River, El Peral Nature Reserve & Matetic Winery**
Day 8	**Pelagic trip off Valparaiso**
Day 9	**La Campana National Park & Casas del Bosque Winery**
Day 10	**Crossing the Andes into Argentina & birding the Uspallata area**
Day 11	**Uspallata area & wine tasting at Salentein Winery**
Day 12	**Uco Valley & visit to Zuccardi Winery**
Day 13	**Mendoza area birding**
Day 14	**Krontiras Winery & final departure**



Birding sites in detail



'Southern' Giant Hummingbird by Amanda Guercio

Santiago. We begin in the lowland wetlands north of Santiago, where birding is typically productive and varied. These marshes regularly produce a good selection of waterfowl, including Rosy-billed Pochard, Yellow-billed Teal, Red Shoveler and Chiloe Wigeon, alongside Black-headed Duck and several coot species often seen together. With a bit of luck, multiple coot species may be observed side by side, allowing for useful comparisons. Burrowing Owl and Diuca Finch are also possible in surrounding open areas, offering an engaging and relaxed introduction to the region's birdlife.

Maipo Valley & Aquitania Winery. In the Maipo Valley, framed by the Andes foothills, we visit Aquitania Winery, a boutique estate established in the early 1990s through a partnership between Bordeaux figures Bruno Prats (Château Cos d'Estournel), Paul Pontallier (Château Margaux) and Chilean winemaker Felipe de Solminihac. Recognising the potential of Alto Maipo's terroir, they developed vineyards in the historic Quebrada de Macul, long associated with premium Cabernet Sauvignon.

The surrounding foothills provide excellent birding, with species such as Giant Hummingbird ('Southern'), Crag Chilia and Moustached Turca often encountered, sometimes at close range. Andean Condors are regularly seen riding thermals above the valleys, adding to the sense of scale. The winery itself offers a refined introduction to Chilean wine, with elegant Cabernet-based wines, including the flagship Lazuli, produced only in exceptional vintages.



Magellanic Woodpecker by Bobby Wilcox

El Yeso Reservoir. The scenic Andean foothills surrounding El Yeso Reservoir offer some of the most dramatic landscapes of the tour. Birding here focuses on high-altitude specialists such as Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Grey-flanked Cinclodes, Cordilleran Canastero and Greater Yellow Finch.

Finding the Diademed Sandpiper-Plover can require patience and persistence, but successful encounters are often memorable, sometimes involving prolonged views along rocky streams. Other species such as Rufous-banded



Chestnut-throated Huet-huet by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Miner, Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant and flocks of Mountain Parakeets are regularly encountered in this rugged environment.

Altos de Lircay Nature Reserve. Situated in the Andes near Talca, Altos de Lircay protects a remnant of ancient southern beech (Nothofagus) forest. These woodlands support a diverse range of birdlife, most notably the impressive Magellanic Woodpecker, whose powerful drumming often gives away its presence before it is seen.

Mixed flocks may include White-throated Treerunner and Thorn-tailed Rayadito, while the forest understory holds species such as Chestnut-throated Huet-huet and Magellanic Tapaculo, the latter occasionally offering unusually good views. Rufous-legged Owl remains a possibility for those prepared to listen carefully in the quieter hours.

Lake Colbún. The open landscapes around Lake Colbún provide a change of pace, with opportunities to observe Burrowing Parrot, sometimes in vocal flocks near nesting areas, and scan the water for Bronze-winged Duck. The surrounding countryside acts as a transition zone between Andean and lowland habitats, often producing additional open-country species.

Colchagua Valley: Santa Cruz & Montes Wineries. The Colchagua Valley is one of Chile's most celebrated wine regions, known for producing bold, full-bodied reds. Around Santa Cruz, birding continues along quiet rural roads, while the winery itself offers a distinctive cultural experience, including access to a hilltop museum via cable car.

Montes Winery provides a different perspective, combining innovation with tradition. Founded in 1987, the estate helped elevate Chilean wine internationally and is known for its premium blends, including the iconic Purple Angel. A visit often includes a tour of the barrel cellar, where wines are famously aged to the sound of Gregorian chants, followed by relaxed tastings and outdoor meals overlooking the vineyards.



Santa Cruz Winery by Amanda Guercio

Maipo River & El Peral Nature Reserve. Along the central coast, the Maipo River estuary and nearby wetlands at El Peral offer consistently productive birding. Large numbers of waterbirds are typically



Moustached Turca by Dušan Brinkhuizen

present, including Chilean Flamingo, Black-necked Swan and Many-colored Rush Tyrant, alongside a variety of ducks, grebes and gulls. Migratory shorebirds and mixed flocks add to the diversity, making this one of the more active birding locations on the tour.

Casablanca Valley & Matetic Winery. In the cool-climate Casablanca Valley, Matetic Winery stands out as a pioneer of biodynamic viticulture in Chile. Established in 1999 by the Matetic family, the estate produces expressive wines shaped by strong coastal influence.

The surrounding wetlands and farmland can also be surprisingly productive, with species such as Austral Negrito, Wren-like Rushbird and Magellanic Snipe recorded nearby. A visit here typically combines birding with a relaxed tasting and lunch, making for one of the more balanced and enjoyable stops on the tour.

Valparaíso Pelagic & coastal areas. A pelagic excursion into the Humboldt Current offers one of the most exciting birding experiences of the tour. These nutrient-rich waters attract an impressive diversity of seabirds, including multiple albatross species, often seen at close range, along with Pink-footed and Sooty Shearwaters, White-chinned Petrel and the much sought-after Peruvian Diving Petrel.

Marine life adds to the experience, with South American Sea Lions commonly encountered and occasional sightings of whales or dolphins. Along the coast, Humboldt Penguins, Blackish Oystercatchers and Seaside Cinclodes may be seen, while rocky shorelines can produce the elusive Marine Otter.

La Campana National Park & Casas del Bosque Winery. La Campana National Park supports a rich assemblage of endemic birdlife within a striking landscape of Chilean Wine Palms. Species such as Dusky-tailed Canastero and Moustached Turca are often encountered, while White-throated Tapaculo is more frequently heard than seen. Mammals such as Common Degu are also regularly observed.

Nearby, Casas del Bosque Winery offers a relaxed tasting experience focused on cool-climate varietals such



La Campana National Park by Amanda Guercio



Sandy Gallito by Clayton Burne

as Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir. The coastal influence is evident in the wines, and visits here provide a welcome contrast to the more active birding sessions.

Andes Crossing & Aconcagua Region. Crossing the Andes into Argentina is one of the most visually striking transitions of the tour, with dramatic changes in both landscape and birdlife as we gain elevation. The winding ascent provides opportunities to stop at a variety of vantage points, where species adapted to high-altitude environments begin to appear. These may include Black-fronted and Rufous-naped Ground-Tyrants, Rufous-banded Miner and other hardy specialists of this harsh, open terrain.

Andean Condor is a regular presence here, often seen soaring effortlessly along the mountain ridges, sometimes at remarkably close range. Weather and conditions permitting, we may also enjoy clear views of Aconcagua, the highest peak in the Americas, dominating the skyline. Occasional sightings of Mountain Parakeets moving rapidly across the slopes add a sense of movement to an otherwise stark landscape. The descent into Argentina reveals a gradual shift toward drier habitats, setting the stage for a distinctly different bird community.

Uspallata area. On the Argentine side of the Andes, the Uspallata Valley introduces a new suite of species adapted to arid, open environments. Birding here is often pleasantly relaxed, with productive viewing possible around lodges and nearby habitats. Species such as Rufous Hornero, Pampa Finch and Southern Yellowthroat are frequently encountered, while more localised birds like Subtropical Doradito may also be found with some persistence.

The mix of orchards, scrub and open ground provides a noticeable contrast to the Chilean side of the Andes, and the transition in avifauna is both immediate and rewarding. This area serves as an excellent introduction to Argentina's birdlife, with a combination of familiar species and entirely new targets appearing within a relatively short distance.



Rufous-banded Miner by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Uco Valley: Salentein & Zuccardi Wineries. The Uco Valley represents the heart of Argentina's modern wine movement, where altitude, soil diversity and climate combine to produce wines of exceptional character. At Salentein, a pioneering



Zuccardi winery by Jorge Valenzuela

estate founded in the late 1990s, high-altitude vineyards stretch toward the Andes, producing wines known for their clarity, structure and balance, particularly Malbec.

The estate itself is expansive and often surprisingly productive for birding, with species such as Crested Gallito, Brown Cacholote and Guira Cuckoo regularly encountered on the grounds. Time spent here often includes both birding and a relaxed tasting, sometimes accompanied by dramatic weather rolling across the valley, adding to the atmosphere of the experience.

Zuccardi Winery offers a contrasting but complementary perspective. Established in the 1960s and now led by Sebastián Zuccardi, the focus has shifted strongly toward expressing terroir through minimal intervention and careful vineyard management. The striking, modern winery reflects this philosophy, with its clean architectural lines mirroring the precision of the wines themselves. Visits typically include a guided tasting that highlights the diversity of soils and microclimates within the Uco Valley, offering deeper insight into why the region has gained such international recognition.

Mendoza & the Monte Desert. The arid landscapes surrounding Mendoza are part of the Monte Desert, a habitat that supports a specialised and often highly sought-after bird community. Birding here can be particularly rewarding, with time spent searching through scrubby vegetation and open terrain for species that are both localised and distinctive.

Key targets include Sandy Gallito and the endemic Steinbach's Canastero, both of which may require patience but can provide excellent views when located. Mixed flocks are common and can include Chaco Earthcreeper, Ticking Doradito, Tufted Tit-Spinetail and both Straneck's and White-crested Tyrannulets. Open-country flycatchers such as White-winged and Hudson's Black-Tyrants may also be present, along with the energetic Greater Wagtail-Tyrant. Raptors are less predictable but can add excitement, with species such as Long-winged Harrier occasionally seen hunting over the plains. This region provides a fitting final birding experience, with a unique assemblage of species that contrasts strongly with everything encountered earlier in the tour.



Steinbach's Canastero by Amanda Guercio



Andean Condor by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Luján de Cuyo & Krontiras Winery. In the historic wine region of Luján de Cuyo, we visit Krontiras Winery, a small, family-run estate founded by Greek owners with a strong commitment to organic farming and minimal intervention winemaking. The focus here is on producing wines that express both varietal character and a clear sense of place, with Malbec as the standout.

The experience at Krontiras is notably intimate and relaxed, often including a tasting paired with a picnic-style lunch enjoyed in the shade of the vineyard grounds. This final gathering provides an opportunity to reflect on the journey, from the high Andes to the coastal wetlands and deserts of Argentina, while enjoying one last selection of locally produced wines. The setting, framed by distant mountain views and quiet vineyard surroundings, offers a fitting and memorable conclusion to the tour.



Inca Tern by Amanda Guercio

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Comfortable. Suitable for most participants with a general interest in birding & wildlife. Well-paced, with a mix of travel days & active field time.
Birding Ease		Generally straightforward, with many species offering good views in open habitats. Some targets are localised or require persistence, particularly in forest & high-Andean environments.
Accommodation		Comfortable throughout, with a mix of well-appointed lodges & hotels, with simpler accommodation in some remote areas.
Walking / Trails		Moderate. Mostly flat or gently undulating terrain, with occasional uneven surfaces & some forest trails.
Vehicles / Roads		Several long drives are required, particularly between regions. Roads mostly sealed, with some dirt roads in more remote areas.
Photography		Good to very good. Open habitats offer strong opportunities, though some species can be distant. Lighting - especially in bright or coastal conditions - can be challenging.
Annoyances		Weather can vary considerably, from warm lowlands to cooler high-altitude areas. Wind possible in exposed regions & occasional rain expected.

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 dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 14;
- Bottled drinking water;
- Selected wines;
- Tasting fees;
- 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 tour 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.**

- For the comfort of your fellow travellers, please avoid over-packing. We recommend a limit of 20kg (44lb) for checked luggage and 5kg (11lb) for hand luggage, as vehicle space is limited.
- We will spend time at moderate elevations in the Andes, with some sites reaching around 3,000m / 10,000ft. While most participants experience no issues, those prone to altitude sensitivity should take appropriate precautions.
- Temperatures can vary considerably depending on altitude and location. Conditions at higher elevations may be cool (around 5–10°C / 41–50°F), while lower areas can be warm to hot (up to 30°C / 86°F). Layered clothing is strongly recommended.
- Weather in central Chile is typically dry and sunny, though coastal areas can be cooler and occasionally windy. In Argentina, conditions are generally dry, but temperatures can fluctuate, particularly in the Uco Valley and Monte Desert.
- Sea conditions during the pelagic excursion can be unpredictable. Participants prone to seasickness should consider bringing suitable medication and may wish to consult a medical professional in advance.
- If you have any medical conditions or physical limitations, particularly relating to mobility or balance, please inform the Rockjumper office in advance so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour will begin in Santiago, Chile on day 1. As this is an arrival day, you are free to arrive at any time. The tour will conclude in Mendoza, Argentina after lunch 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.

Comodoro Arturo Merino Benítez International Airport, Santiago (IATA: SCL), is the main port of entry for international flights into Chile. El Plumerillo International Airport, Mendoza (IATA: MDZ) is the departure airport for this tour, which is well connected via Santiago or Buenos Aires.

It is important to note that there are two major 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 separate, and the drive between them usually takes between 1 and 1½ hours. It is, therefore, essential that you confirm the IATA airport codes with your travel agent to be sure which airport your flights arrive at and depart from.

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.