Chile

Southern Patagonia & Torres del Paine



Magellanic Plover by Dušan Brinkhuizen.

Our journey through Chile's far south takes us across a windswept world at the very edge of the continent - where immense skies meet cold seas and steppe gives way to jagged granite peaks. Beginning in Punta Arenas, we'll explore the islands of the Strait of Magellan, home to bustling colonies of Magellanic Penguins and energetic South American Sea Lions.

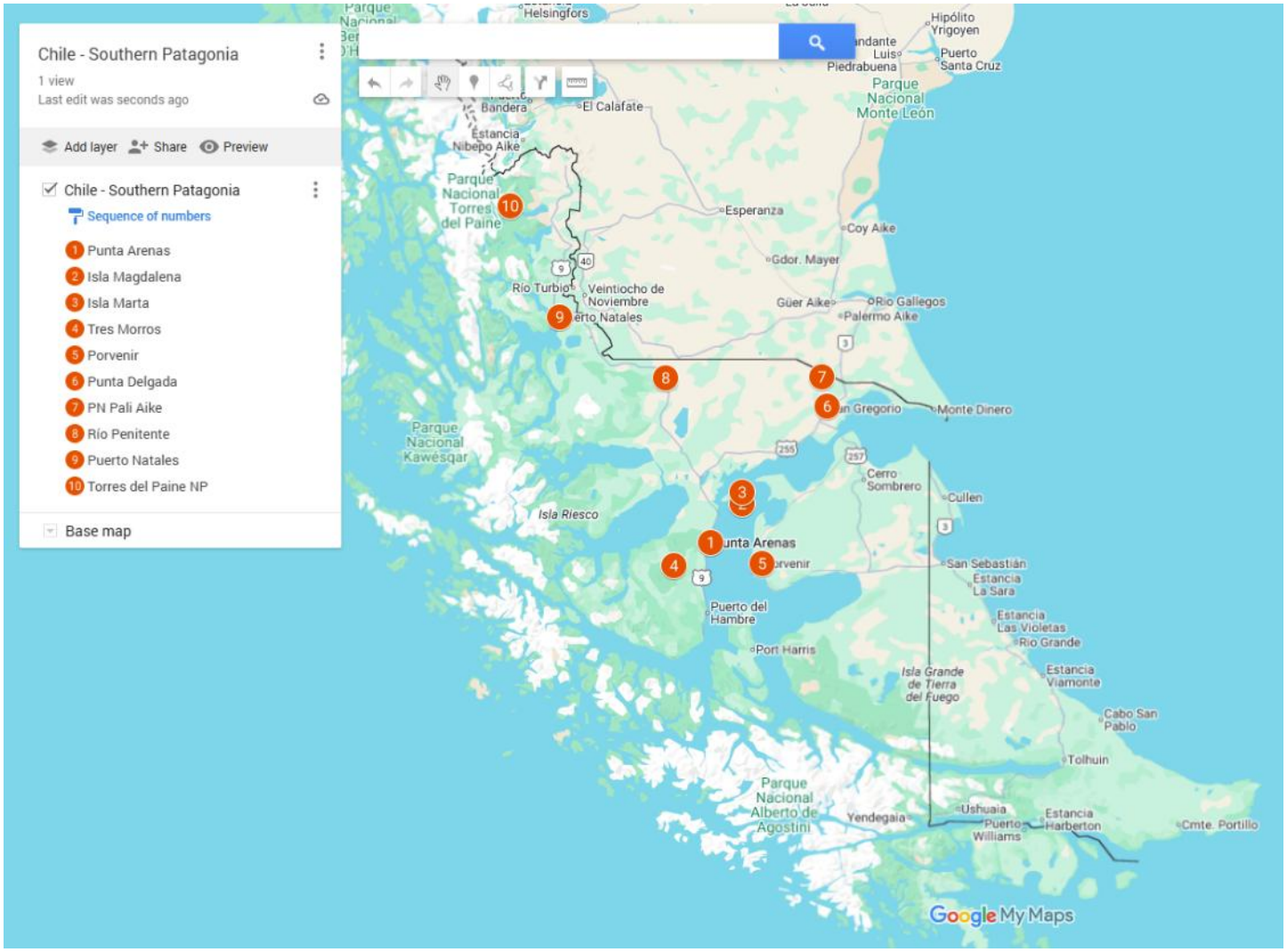
From here, we travel north into the rugged Tres Morros region before crossing by ferry to Tierra del Fuego. In this remote and beautiful landscape, we'll visit the famous King Penguin colony and traverse the Baquedano Hills, keeping watch for White-bellied Seedsnipe, Two-banded Plover, and elegant Cinereous Harriers. Continuing east to Punta Delgado via Buque Quemado, we explore open steppe and coastal wetlands teeming with Patagonian specialties.

Heading inland, the volcanic plains of Parque Nacional Pali Aike offer a dramatic change of scenery - a stark, otherworldly landscape alive with Guanucos, Lesser Rheas, and hardy desert birds. From Puerto Natales, we continue to the awe-inspiring Parque Nacional Torres del Paine, where turquoise lakes and towering peaks create one of the world's most breathtaking backdrops. We'll spend several days here, searching for the mighty Puma, Andean Condor, and the spectacular Magellanic Woodpecker among the lenga forests.

Our expedition concludes as we return south to Punta Arenas via Vega Castillo, reflecting on an unforgettable journey through the wildest corners of Patagonia — a land of immense beauty, rare wildlife, and endless horizons.

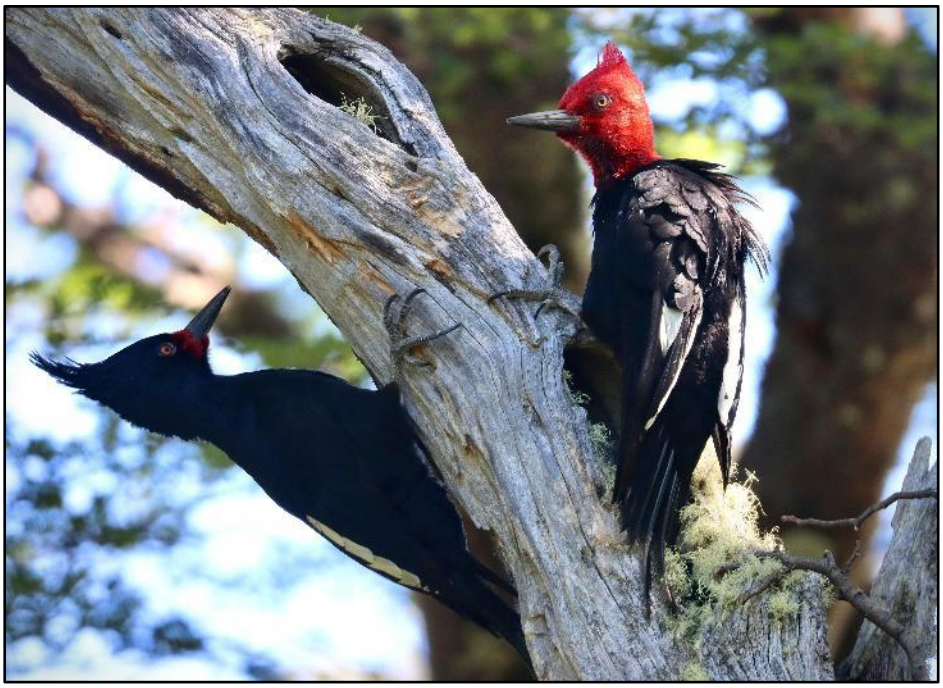
Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Punta Arenas**
Day 2	**Isla Magdalena, Isla Marta & San Juan**
Day 3	**Tres Morros**
Day 4	**Punta Arenas, ferry to Porvenir (Tierra del Fuego)**
Day 5	**King penguin colony & Baquedano Hills**
Day 6	**Porvenir to Punta Delgado via Buque Quemado**
Day 7	**Parque Nacional Pali Aike to Río Penitente via Gallegos Chico**
Day 8	**Puerto Natales to Parque Nacional Torres del Paine**
Days 9 & 10	**Parque Nacional Torres del Paine**
Day 11	**Parque Nacional Torres del Paine to Punta Arenas via Vega Castillo**
Day 12	**Final departure**



Birding sites in detail

Punta Arenas. Birding the city environs may turn up Coscoroba Swan, Flying Steamer Duck, Magellanic Oystercatcher, Imperial Shag, the attractive Two-banded Plover, Southern Lapwing, Chilean Skua, Dolphin and Kelp Gulls, and Austral Negrito.



Magellanic Woodpeckers by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Isla Magdalena & Isla Marta. In the middle of the Strait of Magellan lie Isla Magdalena and Isla Marta, two wind-lashed islands that showcase the raw intensity of Patagonian birding.

Isla Magdalena hosts one of South America's largest Magellanic Penguin colonies, where tens of thousands of birds fill the beaches and burrows. Amid the chaos, Kelp and Dolphin Gulls, South American Terns, and Chilean Skuas circle constantly, while Snowy Sheathbills patrol the colony, scavenging for scraps.

Across the channel, Isla Marta holds a vast South American Sea Lion colony and a high density of Imperial and Rock Cormorants nesting on the cliffs. Offshore, Black-browed Albatrosses, Southern Giant Petrels, and Wilson's Storm Petrels glide with the wind, offering good views.

San Juan. The forests near San Juan mark a dramatic shift from the windswept steppe, here dense lenga and coigüe woodlands draped in moss, sometimes echo with the drumming of a Magellanic Woodpecker. These towering birds, the largest woodpecker in South America, are both elusive and unforgettable. The heavy double-knock of the male is unmistakable. Despite their size, they scale tree trunks with surprising agility.



Austral Parakeet by Glen Valentine

The area also supports a fine selection of southern beech forest specialists: White-throated Treerunner, Thorn-tailed Rayadito, Austral Parakeet, and Black-chinned Siskin, while Chilean Flicker and Austral Pygmy Owl are likely to be added to our growing list. In more open habitats, Fire-eyed Diucon, Austral Negrito, and Patagonian Tyrant are

regular companions. Birding here is a patient, absorbing experience.

Tres Morros. The windswept slopes of Tres Morros provide one of the most reliable sites in southern Chile for the highly sought-after White-bellied Seedsnipe. This cryptic species, perfectly camouflaged against the barren scree and alpine grass, is a master of invisibility - often only betrayed by a soft whistle or sudden burst of movement across the ground.



White-bellied Seedsnipe by Adam Riley

While the seedsnipe might steal the spotlight, the surrounding steppe and rocky outcrops host a supporting cast of hardy species, including Least Seedsnipe, Rufous-chested Dotterel, and Two-banded Plover. Overhead, Variable Hawk and Cinereous Harrier drift on the ever-present wind, while Austral Canastero and Scale-throated Earthcreeper animate the slopes with constant movement and sound.

Tres Morros rewards persistence and sharp eyes.

Punta Arenas to Porvenir. We have 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 good for Commerson's Dolphin.

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



Rufous-chested Plover (Dotterel) by Glen Valentine

Useless Bay. We'll visit 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.



Kelp Goose (pair) by Glen Valentine

Baquedano Hills. The Baquedano Hills rise gently from the windswept plains of northern Tierra del Fuego, offering sweeping views across one of the most isolated and beautiful regions in the far south. The mosaic of rocky ridges, grassland, and scrub provides habitat for a distinctive range of Patagonian steppe birds, and birding here feels like exploring the edge of the world.

We have further chance for White-bellied and Least Seedsnipe, Rufous-chested Dotterel, Two-banded Plover, and Tawny-throated Dotterel, while Austral Canastero and Scale-throated Earthcreeper may be found working the stony slopes. Raptors are a constant presence - Cinereous Harrier, Variable Hawk, and the occasional Aplomado Falcon cutting across the skyline.

Buque Quemada. This is an excellent site for Patagonian and Elegant Crested Tinamous, whilst Patagonian Canastero, Grey-bellied Shrike Tyrant and Grey-hooded Sierra Finch are also possibilities. Associated wetlands host Silver Teal.

Parque Nacional Pali Aike. We'll bird the entrance road which cuts through some of the most desolate yet fascinating terrain in southern Chile - a volcanic steppe of black basalt, thorny shrubs, and endless wind. This stark landscape holds an excellent mix of Patagonian specialties that thrive in near-Martian conditions. The area is a reliable site for Least Seedsnipe, Tawny-throated Dotterel, and Austral Canastero, while the rocky ridges shelter Scale-throated Earthcreeper and Band-tailed Earthcreeper. The open steppe attracts flocks of Lesser Rhea and Guanaco, with Chimango Caracara, Variable Hawk, and Cinereous Harrier cruising the horizon. On still mornings, Gray-bellied Shrike-Tyrant, Patagonian Mockingbird, and Austral Negrito often appear perched along the fencelines, adding both color and attitude to the scene.



Elegant Crested Tinamou by Glen Valentine

Gallegos Chico. The Gallegos Chico region lies along the lonely borderlands of southern Patagonia — a landscape of wind, rock, and immense horizons. Despite its starkness, this area holds a remarkable diversity of open-country birds that reward patient exploration.

Key targets include Rufous-chested Dotterel, Tawny-throated Dotterel, and Least Seedsnipe, along with striking steppe residents such as Austral Canastero, Band-tailed Earthcreeper, and Patagonian Mockingbird. The area is also excellent for the elegant White-bridled Finch, often found feeding in small flocks along roadside scrub, and the impressive Chocolate-vented Tyrant, whose bold posture and sweeping tail make it unmistakable as it surveys the steppe from a low perch.

Nearby lagoons may host Magellanic Oystercatcher, Chiloe Wigeon, and Flying Steamer Duck, while raptors like Cinereous Harrier, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, and Aplomado Falcon patrol the skies.



White-bridled Finch by Bobby Wilcox

San Gregorio area. We'll spend time birding the Y405/455 road near the San Gregorio Commune, an excellent steppe birding site where we'll be looking for Rufous-chested Dotterel, White-bridled Finch, Band-tailed Earthcreeper, Chocolate-vented Tyrant. 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.

Punta Arenas to Parque Nacional Torres del Paine. We head further north to Torres del Paine today. We'll search the scrubby habitat for Grey-bellied Shrike-Tyrant, Sharp-billed Canastero, Patagonian Yellow Finch.



Pumas by Bobby Wilcox

Parque Nacional Torres del Paine. 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



Parque Nacional Torres del Paine by Glen Valentine

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

High on our priority list are the signature birds of Torres del Paine, the gigantic Andean Condor and rapid surfing Torrent Duck. 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, Lesser Rhea, the



Torrent Duck by Dušan Brinkhuizen

rare White-throated Caracara, Patagonian Tyrant, Austral Canastero, Cinnamon-bellied and Spot-billed Ground Tyrants and Patagonian Mockingbird.

The park provides us excellent chances of finding several rare or localised mammals such as Guanaco, a wild relative of the Llama, the endangered Patagonian Huemul a species of deer that happily survives winter temperatures as low as -50°C!, 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 males, weighing in at close to 100kgs (160 lbs)!



Andean Condor by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Vega Castillo. We'll visit this wetland to find another of the areas priority species, the Austral Rail. Rather 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, since re-discovery, the species has been fairly reliable in the Torres del Paine area.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Comfortable. Suitable for most birding / wildlife interest levels.
Birding Ease		Mostly easy, with many species provide decent visuals in open conditions. Some low-density targets.
Accommodation		Comfortable.
Walking / Trails		Average walking, mostly on flat ground with variable substrate. Some internal forest trails.
Vehicles / Roads		Several drives, some very long. Mostly sealed roads between towns, changing to dirt in remoter areas.
Photography		Good to good+. Some species distant, and bright light can be challenging.
Annoyances		Temperatures vary from cool to cold. Wind can be strong; some rain to be 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 breakfast on day 12;
- Bottled drinking water;
- 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.**

- To ensure your comfort and that of your companions, please limit yourself to one medium-sized suitcase or duffel bag (20 kg / 44 lb) and one carry-on bag, as space in the vehicles is limited.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour will begin in Punta Arenas on day 1 in the early evening (possibly later depending on flight schedules). The tour will conclude in Punta Arenas after breakfast on day 12.

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.

Presidente Carlos Ibáñez International Airport (IATA: PUQ) is the main port of entry and departure and is easily reached via Comodoro Arturo Merino Benítez International Airport, Santiago (IATA: SCL).

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.