



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

**SOUTHERN ARGENTINA:
SPRING MAGIC IN PATAGONIA**

DECEMBER 2–16, 2024

**SOUTHERN ARGENTINA:
HOODED GREBE EXTENSION**

DECEMBER 15–19, 2024



Male Magellanic Woodpecker © Andrew Whittaker

Our thrilling new adventure visits the dramatic southern tier of Argentina, where we will experience some of South America's finest wildlife, breathtaking scenery, comfortable accommodations, and delicious cuisine. We've carefully planned this tour to take advantage of the fine weather and outstanding birding of the austral spring, the ideal time to explore Argentina's extraordinary diversity of habitats, amazing wildlife, and such sought-after avian delights as the unique Magellanic Plover and mighty Magellanic Woodpecker. A superb, recently published field guide makes a birding visit to this magical country even more appealing.

Our December adventure in southern Argentina begins just south of Buenos Aires, on the famous pampas, home of the gaucho. Once almost treeless, these flat grasslands are now checkered with haciendas and scattered trees. We will concentrate on the wetter, coastal section of the pampas, dotted with marshes teeming with waterfowl and wetland birds. During our two days here, we will visit native hackberry woodlands, mudflats for the near-endemic Olrog's Gull, and wet and dry grasslands for the near-endemic Pampas Pipit. The wide skies and distant horizons recall W. H. Hudson's early descriptions of this fascinating region. The pampas offer one of the continent's most exciting wildlife spectacles, with birds ranging from three-inch hummingbirds to Greater Rheas almost as tall as a human, from exciting ovenbirds and tiny flycatchers to elegant swans and ponderous Southern Screamers. Among the shorebird riches of the area is the South American Painted-Snipe. We will also take an exciting short pelagic trip from Mar Del Plata, where we will visit the nearby subtropical convergence, which attracts a wealth of seabirds from both hemispheres, including magnificent albatrosses, petrels, shearwaters, jaegers, and storm-petrels.



Yellow-nosed Albatross © Andrew Whittaker

In the northern reaches of Patagonia, we'll visit a scrub desert. At first look, this very special habitat may resemble North America's Chihuahuan desert, but the wildlife couldn't be more different. At Punta Tombo Reserve, we will walk among a colony of a million penguins, and we will search for the Elegant Crested-Tinamou, the endemic White-headed (formerly Chubut) Steamer-Duck, and

exotic Burrowing Parakeets. These same areas hold an incredible mix of mammals, including Southern Elephant Seals, camel-like Guanacos, armadillos, cute Patagonian Cavies, and the odd Patagonian Maras, which have been described as looking like “giant rabbits wearing miniskirts.”

There are many interesting desert birds here, too, including endemic monjitas, canasteros, and cacholotes. On the lagoons, we should see flamingos and large concentrations of waterfowl. Another highlight will be an exciting boat trip to observe the endangered Southern Right Whale and, with luck, even Orca. Out on the wild Patagonian steppe and in coastal habitats, we will be looking for such specialties as the lovely Tawny-throated Dotterel and Two-banded Plover.

Our next exciting destination, reached by a short flight, is the famous Bariloche region of northwestern Patagonia. Here we are welcomed by some of the grandest terrain anywhere on the continent. Snowcapped mountains tower over vast glacial lakes and forests in this area famous for its skiing and delightful alpine-style architecture. Here and on the high plains and in southern beech forests, the air is cool and many of the birds endemic, found nowhere else but these forests and plains. The plethora of exciting birds we hope to enjoy here includes the Magellanic Woodpecker, White-sided Hillstar, Rufous-legged Owl, Chucao Tapaculo, Black-throated Huet-huet, and several ground-tyrants. This beautiful region is also home to the Andean Condor, the lovely Rufous-tailed Plantcutter, and the hardy White-throated Treerunner.



Chucao Tapaculo © Andrew Whittaker

A flight to El Calafate takes us to the edge of the Southern Patagonian Ice Field. Charming El Calafate is the gateway to Los Glaciares National Park and the massive Perito Moreno Glacier. A springtime visits to this ever-shifting icy landscape will make an absolutely unforgettable impression on anyone fortunate enough to visit at this delightful season.



Perito Moreno Glacier © Hernan Goni

At the top of our wish list here are the Magellanic Plover, Lesser Rhea, Least Seedsnipe, and the wonderful Chocolate-vented Tyrant. Other fine birds include the Cinerous Harrier, the very local Spectacled Duck, Austral Parakeet, Austral Pygmy Owl, and Lesser Horned Owl. Springtime is an excellent season for botanists, too, and with luck, we may see three or four species of colorful orchids and exotic-looking calceolaria.



Lesser Rheas © Andrew Whittaker

Our short, optional extension explores a remoter part of Patagonia in search of the beautiful and critically endangered Hooded Grebe and the rare Austral Rail, among other regional specialties. Argentina is so immense, and its many different habitats are home to so many bird species—more than 1,000 at last count—that it is impossible to take it all in in a single visit.

With that in mind, we also offer a second adventure, a January exploration of northern Argentina (January 3-22, 2025), where we will discover a new set of equally exciting biomes with a plethora of different birds. In combination, these two trips offer a full cross-section of this wondrous country's extraordinary wildlife.

December 2, Day 1: Flight to Buenos Aires. Most flights from the U.S. will depart in the afternoon, arriving in Buenos Aires (airport code EZE) the next morning, December 3.

NIGHT: On board overnight flight to Buenos Aires

December 3, Day 2: Arrival in Buenos Aires, and Birding Costanera Sur Ecological Reserve. Participants should plan to arrive at Buenos Aires's Aeropuerto Internacional Ministro Pistarini (more commonly known as Ezeiza, pronounced *eh-ZAY-za*; airport code EZE) between 8:00 and 10:00 a.m. this morning, December 3.

After clearing immigration and customs, you will be met by our ground operator and transferred to our hotel. Participants arriving on earlier flights may either take a taxi to the hotel or arrange a private transfer through the VENT office at an additional charge.

After lunch this afternoon, we will all meet in the lobby, where your leader will introduce himself and your excellent local guide, a close friend and one of Argentina's top birders, who will be with us for the entire tour. A short drive within the city limits of Buenos Aires will then take us to Costanera Sur Nature Reserve, which teems with waterbirds, including White-tufted Grebe, Black-necked and Coscoroba swans, Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Masked and Lake ducks, Silver and Speckled teal, Rosy-billed Pochard, Yellow-billed Pintail, Red Shoveler, and White-winged, Red-gartered, and Red-fronted coots. We have occasionally seen the rare Ringed Teal and Black-headed Duck here, as well as the South American Painted-Snipe. Among the small land birds here are usually the Picui Ground-Dove, Monk Parakeet, Guira Cuckoo, Green-barred Woodpecker, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Blue-and-yellow Tanager, Black-and-rufous Warbling Finch, and Yellow-winged Blackbird. The marsh edges hold cute Pampas Cavis and sunning Hilaire's Side-necked Turtles.



White-tufted Grebes © Andrew Whittaker

December 4, Day 3: Buenos Aires to the Pampas and San Clemente del Tuyú. The province of Buenos Aires encompasses most of the famous Argentine pampas, vast grasslands interrupted here and there by woodland. Our base is San Clemente del Tuyú, a growing resort area with miles of beautiful beach. We will stop wherever we have access to reedy marshes, which are host to a number of bird species generally not found away from these habitats in their restricted range: among them are the Giant Wood-Rail, Plumbeous Rail, Curve-billed Reedhaunter, Spix's Spinetail, Diademed Tanager, and Red-rumped Warbling Finch.

We will set out early on the day-long journey from Buenos Aires. Once away from the city, we should begin to see numerous Chimango Caracaras and Snail Kites, and we will keep our eyes open for our first Greater Rheas. Among the waterbirds we hope to see are the Maguari Stork, Coscoroba and Black-necked swans, Speckled and Silver teal, Rosy-billed Pochard, and Yellow-billed Pintail. Occasionally we encounter the graceful Long-winged Harrier. Some less common species to look for in marshy lagoons and at lake edges are the Silvery Grebe, Black-headed Duck, Gray-headed Gull, Wren-like Rushbird, Firewood-gatherer, Warbling Doradito, and Many-colored Rush Tyrant. Later in the day, we will search for the Brown-and-yellow Marshbird and the spectacular Scarlet-headed Blackbird. Other species of grassland, wetland, and wooded edge that are possible today include the Spotted Nothura, Monk Parakeet, Checkered Woodpecker, Campo Flicker, Green-barred Woodpecker, Tufted Tit-Spinetail, White-winged Becard, Masked Gnatcatcher, Golden-crowned Warbler, Screaming Cowbird, and the striking White-browed Meadowlark.



Many-colored Rush Tyrant © Andrew Whittaker

As we begin our trip, we may think back to W. H. Hudson's famous *Far Away and Long Ago* and his *Naturalist in La Plata*. Written nearly forty years after he left Argentina for the UK, these classic studies remain the best and most accurate account of the pampas and of the birds and wildlife that live there. We may not see quite the

same land that Hudson saw in his childhood on the pampas in the 1840s and 1850s, but much of this great and inspiring landscape is still in place. There are telephone poles now and fences, and with them have come legions of Rufous Horneros and flickers that drill nest holes in the poles or sing from the wires. Much of the pampas grass has been overgrazed and is shorter now, and there are more trees, too, rather than just a few scattered groves of ombu. Hudson writes of Burrowing Parrots, which we do not see today on the pampas, but we do find good numbers of waterfowl, screamers, marsh birds, and shorebirds. The stately rhea still thrives, ever watchful as it studies us from several hundred yards away, and we can still marvel at the wide-open spaces, marshes and grasslands stretching to the horizon. The pampas will not overpower you with its beauty or with a bewildering diversity of birds or plants, but there is a magic here, like that of North America's tallgrass prairies. We think that you will fall under that magical spell—and before you know it, we will have reached the wave-washed beaches and dunes of breezy San Clemente.

NIGHT: Hotel El Aguila del Tuyú, San Clemente del Tuyú

December 5, Day 4: Birding the Pampas and Coastal Punta Rasa Natural Reserve. From our comfortable and convenient base in San Clemente, we will explore a tidal estuary, coastal marshland, hackberry and ombu woodland, pampas grassland, and freshwater marshes with sedges and cattails. Among the nearly 100 species we'll be looking for today, a few birds are so characteristic that they seem almost to embody the spirit of the grasslands. Among them are the Southern Screamer, Spectacled Tyrant, Monk Parakeet, and Great Pampas Finch; we will see these birds repeatedly. Today's complete tally may include almost all of the species we saw yesterday, along with the Great Grebe, Spotted Nothura, South American Painted-Snipe (irregular and unpredictable), Aplomado Falcon, White-throated Hummingbird (rare and mainly around San Clemente), Bay-capped Wren-Spinetail, the uncommon Hudson's Canastero, Long-tailed Reed Finch, and Pampas, Correndera, and Short-billed pipits. Later in the morning, we'll check the beaches for Chilean Flamingos, shorebirds (especially wintering Hudsonian Godwits), and Snowy-crowned Terns. We will focus especially on the rare, near-endemic Dot-winged Crake (a skulker) and Olrog's Gull.



Southern Screamer © Andrew Whittaker

Weather permitting, we will end the day with a drive across a large estancia in the pampas, where a dirt track winds across open fields, low woodlands, and vast marshes. You'll get a chance to see ranch life up close,

experiencing the sights and smells and wide-open vistas that made such a lasting impression on Hudson. You will also get an opportunity to see a sprinkling of the thousands of Buff-breasted Sandpipers and American Golden-Plovers that winter on the grasslands; even Eskimo Curlews once wintered here. There are bound to be Greater Rheas, hundreds of Southern Screamers, a few Firewood-gatherers, and large numbers of swans, ducks, and other aquatic birds; we may run across the odd Seven-banded Armadillo or Molina's Hog-nosed Skunk. We expect this to be a fairly long but very exciting day, featuring one of the greatest wildlife spectacles in South America. We plan to arrive at our pleasant hotel in the coastal resort town of Mar Del Plata late this afternoon.

NIGHT: Hotel Costa Galana, Mar Del Plata

December 6, Day 5: Morning Pelagic Trip from Mar Del Plata. We'll make an early start this morning from Mar Del Plata for an exciting short trip aboard a private boat with bathroom facilities. We plan to go 10 or 20 miles offshore to the nearby subtropical convergence, which attracts thousands of seabirds. At this time of year, we can look forward to encountering seabirds from both hemispheres, or even non-breeding birds from the



Southern Royal Albatross © Andrew Whittaker

Antarctic. Yellow-nosed and Black-browed albatrosses are regularly seen, and we could encounter the enormous Southern Royal or, with luck, even a rare White-capped Albatross. White-chinned and Southern Giant-Petrels are quite common, and we hope to see Greater, Sooty, and Manx shearwaters; Wilson's Storm-Petrel; Parasitic Jaeger; and Chilean Skua. Southern Fulmar and Cape Petrel are both rare but possible. Common Dolphins are fairly frequent, and other cetaceans are possible. We will return in time for a late lunch, then have the rest of the day to rest up or to explore the marshes at nearby Reserva Natural del Puerto.

NIGHT: Hotel Costa Galana, Mar Del Plata

December 7, Day 6: Flight to Trelew, and Birding San Antonio del Oeste and Las Grutas. This morning, we will take a short flight to Trelew, in northern Patagonia; the name of the town honors Lewis Jones, a Welsh pioneer in Chubut.

This afternoon we will enjoy birding areas in the San Antonio and Las Grutas area, close to our hotel. This area has proved to be one of the most exciting birding spots in all of Patagonia. The vegetation here in northern Patagonia recalls what one might see in the Chihuahuan Desert of southwestern New Mexico and extreme eastern Arizona; in fact, the two regions even share a few plant genera—for example, *Larrea*, the creosote bush, occurs as a single species in the Chihuahuan desert, while there are two species here in northern Patagonia. Among the birds here are at least four rarely seen Argentine endemics: Darwin's Nothura (scarce), Sandy Gallito, White-throated Cacholote, and Carbonated Sierra Finch; the near-endemic Cinnamon Warbling Finch can also be found here. The area also boasts a tremendous roost and nesting site of the spectacular and near-endemic Burrowing Parakeet, as large as a small macaw. There are many other “high-quality” species to look for in the area’s splendid aquatic habitats.



Burrowing Parakeet © Andrew Whittaker

Another high priority for birders is the oddly named Sandy Gallito, a good-sized tapaculo with a restricted range and challenging habits. This must rank as one of the most charming little birds imaginable, running rapidly like a wind-up toy, climbing up through bushes, popping up to sing, then climbing down again before racing off across the sand. We’ll also be paying special attention to three endemic breeders, the Lesser Shrike-Tyrant and the Black-crowned and Rusty-backed monjitas. Attractive open-country birds here include displaying Least Seedsnipes and Elegant Crested-Tinamous.

Among the many other birds, we hope to encounter are the Spot-winged Pigeon, Lesser Horned Owl, Band-tailed and Scale-throated earthcreepers, Lesser and Patagonian canasteros, Greater Wagtail-Tyrant, Yellow-billed Tit-Tyrant, White-tipped Plantcutter, Golden-billed Saltator, and Common Diuca-Finch. Both Patagonian and White-banded mockingbirds breed here as near-endemics.

Out on muddy tidal flats, we can see many aquatic species, especially White-rumped and Baird’s sandpipers, gulls, terns, and the lovely resident Two-banded Plover.



Elegant-crested Tinamou © Hernan Goni

NIGHT: Hotel Dazzler by Wyndham, Puerto Madryn

December 8, Day 7: The Valdes Peninsula. The wildlife of the Valdes Peninsula is perhaps the most unusual, and in many ways least familiar, of any regional fauna in Argentina. This is a fairly reliable wintering site for the Snowy Sheathbill; though most of them have already migrated south at this point, if we are lucky, there may still be one or two lingering with the cormorants, terns, and oystercatchers. In the arid landscapes of scrub and grassland, we will look for the endemic Rusty-backed Monjita and Patagonian Canastero. The coast itself has thriving colonies of marine mammals and birds. Other cool birds here may include the Variable Hawk, Plain-mantled Tit-Spinetail, Austral Negrito, Short-billed Pipit, and the near-endemic Patagonian Yellow-Finch; there are often a few surprises as well.

A few Southern Sea Lions or Southern Elephant Seals are usually present on the beach. Afternoons can be particularly good for mammal watching, and it is possible to see Patagonian Hog-nosed Skunks, armadillos, and occasionally even the weasel-like Grison on the roadsides. At some point, we will also take an exciting short boat trip to see the endangered Southern Right Whales that breed offshore; Orcas are occasionally seen, too.



Southern Right Whale © Hernan Goni

NIGHT: Hotel Dazzler by Wyndham, Puerto Madryn

December 9, Day 8: Punta Tombo Reserve and Trelew. Our destination today will be Punta Tombo Provincial Reserve, on a narrow peninsula about two hours south of the city of Trelew. This is the breeding site of an amazing colony of approximately one million Magellanic Penguins! For obvious reasons, the park service permits access to only a small portion of the colony. Nevertheless, it is an impressive spectacle, and photographic opportunities are superb for both the penguins and the other wildlife in the colony and along the seacoast.



Magellanic Penguins © Andrew Whittaker

Soon after arriving here, we hope to discover our first flocks of rheas mixing with herds of graceful Guanacos. Chilean Skuas patrol the colony, while Elegant Crested-Tinamous and Least Cavies forage in nearby shrubby areas. Other species frequently seen in the colony include Scale-throated Earthcreeper, Long-tailed Meadowlark, Lesser Canastero, and Patagonian Yellow-Finch. Giant-petrels, Rock and Imperial cormorants, Two-banded Plovers, Dolphin Gulls, and South American Terns are often seen at the rugged cliffs at the edge of the colony. There should also be an excellent opportunity to study the endemic White-headed (formerly Chubut) Steamer-Duck, first described as a separate species as late as 1980 and found exclusively on these rocky shores. Watching carefully as we drive to and from the penguin colony may also produce views of one of Patagonia's more spectacular mammals, the Patagonian Mara. This large rodent, as remarkable in behavior as in appearance, was once described by a National Geographic writer as looking like “a rabbit wearing a miniskirt.”

Other birds along the road include Lesser (Darwin's) Rhea, Lesser and Gray-bellied shrike-tyrants, Rusty-backed Monjita, Plain-mantled Tit-Spinetail, Patagonian Mockingbird, and Mourning and Gray-hooded sierra finches. Oddest of all may be the gray-headed subspecies *australis* of the Rufous-collared Sparrow.

NIGHT: Hotel Libertador, Trelew

December 10, Day 9: Trelew, and Flight to Bariloche. We should be able to start the day birding near Trelew, perhaps visiting the sewage lagoons a short distance east of town. These lagoons usually host tens of thousands

of waterfowl, and this will be a chance to catch up with any waterfowl we may have missed and to see large numbers of Chilean Flamingos. Two species that could be new to our lists at this point are the White-cheeked Pintail and Andean Duck (most of the *Oxyura* ducks here are Lake Ducks). Other species, often in large numbers, could include Silvery and White-tufted grebes, Red Shoveler, Crested Duck, Silver Teal, Kelp and Brown-hooded gulls, and coots.



Chilean Flamingos © Andrew Whittaker

We will fly to Bariloche this afternoon. If our arrival schedule leaves us time, we will make a short excursion from our hotel for a quick introduction to the very different avifauna of the stunning Andes. In the last hours of daylight, against a sonic backdrop of Austral Thrushes (one of my favorites) and other lovely songsters, we will enjoy exploring the hotel grounds, home to colorful Ashy-headed Geese and noisy groups of Black-faced Ibis. The Chimango Caracaras here are of the dark race *temucoensis*.

NIGHT: Arelauquen Lodge, Bariloche

December 11, Day 10: Birding Bariloche's Southern Beech Forests. We have a busy and exciting day of exploration planned for today. We will visit a ski center surrounded by ancient lenga beeches (*Nothofagus pumillo*) where we can find three species of woodpecker, the Striped and Magellanic woodpeckers and Chilean Flicker. Other iconic species here are the Chucao and Ocher-flanked tapaculos, the incredible Des Murs's Wiretail, White-throated Treerunner, and Patagonian Forest Earthcreeper. Around midday, as thermals begin to rise, we have a chance at such interesting birds of prey as the uncommon and range-restricted White-throated Hawk. After a delicious lunch, we will return to our hotel for a rest, then go out later in the afternoon to further explore the area around the hotel.

NIGHT: Arelauquen Lodge, Bariloche

December 12, Day 11: Birds of the High Andes. Today, we expect to spend the whole morning in search of birds that are found in rocky areas above the forest, including Ocher-naped, Cinereous, Dark-faced, and White-browed ground-tyrants. We also have good chances for the Andean Condor, White-throated Caracara, the stunning Yellow-bridled Finch, and Plumbeous Sierra-Finch. The scenery here is out of this world, with

beautiful panoramas of secluded lakes and rugged snowcapped mountains. In the afternoon, we will visit areas nearer the hotel to look for skulking species such as the huge and often very vocal Black-throated Huet-huet, the mouse-like Magellanic Tapaculo, and the uncommon Patagonian Tyrant. We will also be alert for species of open habitats, such as the Austral Canastero and Great Shrike-Tyrant. This evening, we will have an optional night-birding session to look for Austral Pygmy-Owl, Rufous-legged Owl, and Band-winged (Patagonian) Nightjar.



Black-throated Huet-huets © Andrew Whittaker

December 13, Day 12: Morning Birding; Flight to El Calafate and Afternoon at Laguna Nimez. Around mid-day, we'll board a flight to El Calafate, in southern Patagonia. After checking into our hotel, we will pay a visit to a nearby lake, with good chances at seeing Andean and Lake ducks, Red Shoveler, Yellow-billed Pintail, Chiloe Wigeon, one or more coot species, and a variety of gulls and shorebirds. Cinereous Harriers and the stunning Chocolate-vented Tyrant are here, too, and the Austral Negrito is ubiquitous. Our main goal is the highly sought-after and very locally distributed Magellanic Plover. Found only on remote pebble-lined lakeshores, this shorebird is so unusual in so many ways that it is classified in its own family, Pluvianellidae, said to be most closely related to the sheathbills. This bird's curious behavior at time resembles a turnstone's, but then it stomps circles in the mud and pecks at the food it has stirred up. Magellanic Plovers feed their young on crop milk not unlike that secreted by doves.



The unique and highly sought-after Magellanic Plover © Andrew Whittaker

A small but bustling resort town, El Calafate lies about an hour and a half to the east of Los Glaciares National Park, the centerpiece of this area and of tomorrow's main activity.

NIGHT: Hosteria La Estepa, El Calafate

December 14, Day 13: The Southern Andes and Los Glaciares National Park. We expect to spend most of the day at Los Glaciares, perhaps Argentina's most spectacular national park. Newly constructed trails permit a breathtakingly close approach to the park's most famous glacier, Perito Moreno. This enormous glacier is a photographer's paradise, and on our visits, we usually witness its calving huge chunks of ice into the lake. This raw and rugged "Alaskan" landscape is home to a host of exciting birds, including Black-faced Ibis, Flying Steamer-Duck, Black-chested Buzzard Eagle, Austral Parakeet, Chilean Flicker; Thorn-tailed Rayadito, Dark-bellied Cinclodes, Fire-eyed Diucon, and Black-chinned Siskin. The rare and local Spectacled Duck also nests in higher-elevation marshy wetlands. In the past, we have seen as many as 25 majestic Andean Condors on a single day, including several feedings at carcasses at very close range. The park is excellent for Magellanic Woodpeckers, too, and we have almost always been able to find them here.



Andean Condor © Andrew Whittaker

Least and occasionally Gray-breasted seedsnipes can be found in the beautiful high-country grasslands outside the park. The broad, shallow braided streams often teem with canasteros, ground-tyrants, Patagonian Sierra Finches, and occasionally the rare Great Shrike-Tyrant. At this time of year, many species are beginning to nest, and the songs and displays of many of them can be heard or seen on calm mornings; others may already have

young. Thanks to its raw beauty, sweeping vistas, and abundant wildlife, many of us consider the Calafate area one of the highlights of the trip. As a bonus, the accommodations and food at El Calafate are truly excellent.

NIGHT: Hosteria La Estepa, El Calafate

December 15, Day 14: El Calafate; Afternoon Flight to Buenos Aires. We will spend the morning hours around El Calafate, searching for more Patagonian birds, chief among them the highly sought-after Patagonian Tinamou, a species whose population is subject to dramatic fluctuations influenced by the previous winter's weather. We'll also be looking for the attractive Chocolate-vented Tyrant, Gray-breasted Seedsnipe, Cinnamon-bellied Ground-Tyrant, Gray-hooded Sierra Finch, and other typical steppe species.

We will return to our hotel in time to pack for our flight back to Buenos Aires, where those not continuing on the extension will connect with international flights; if you would rather overnight in Buenos Aires instead, the VENT office will be pleased to book you a hotel or organize a hotel transfer.

Those participants continuing on the extension will head east from El Calafate this afternoon toward the Patagonian Plateau; see the extension itinerary on the next page.

NIGHT: On board international flight (for those not continuing on the Hooded Grebe Extension)

December 16, Day 15: Arrival Home. Most international flights leaving Buenos Aires in the evening of Day 14 will arrive in the USA this morning.

SOUTHERN ARGENTINA HOODED GREBE EXTENSION

DECEMBER 15–19, 2024



Hooded Grebe © Rob Jansen/Shutterstock

One of the most spectacular ornithological events of the twentieth century was Dr. Maurice Rumboll's amazing discovery of the Hooded Grebe in April 1974, in the state of Santa Cruz some thirty miles east of Calafate.

This enigmatic species was probably never abundant, but the introduction of non-native fish and changes in habitat and climate have contributed to the bird's decline. Seeing this special bird requires flexibility in our planning. Our efforts will be greatly aided by local researchers studying the grebe, who will know best where to look.

We will also concentrate on the nearly mythical Austral Rail—rediscovered to science in 1998—and in the process enjoy a Patagonian avifauna that includes the majestic Lesser (Darwin's) Rhea, Patagonian Tinamou (rare), Black-necked Swan, Silvery Grebe, White-throated Caracara, Least and Gray-breasted seedsnipes, Black-faced Ibis, Cinereous Harrier, Lesser Horned Owl, Chocolate and Cinnamon-bellied ground-tyrants, Band-tailed Earthcreeper, Austral Canastero, and both Short-billed and Patagonian Common Miners. This extension is also a unique opportunity to see just how an immense and remote estancia functions.

December 15, Day 1: From El Calafate to the Patagonia Plateau. After saying farewell to those not continuing on our extension, we will head east from El Calafate toward the Patagonian Plateau, soon entering

the wildest part of Patagonia, a vast and arid expanse of rolling steppe in Santa Cruz Province. Our destination is a beautifully situated luxury estancia. After our drive, this five-star sheep ranch will look like a true paradise, an oasis of stunning marshes and pools along the Chico River. This a key site for a local specialty, the recently rediscovered and elusive Austral Rail. Breeding Cinerous Harriers grace the air above the reeds, and Upland Geese protect their goslings as pairs of Silvery Grebes fish in the pools. The homemade cuisine here is spectacular, especially the mouth-watering fresh lamb.

NIGHT: Estancia La Angostura, Gobernador Gregores Town

December 16, Day 2: Strobel Plateau Lakes. The Strobel Plateau is a remote area of barren desert dotted with small lakes. It is here that the almost mythical Hooded Grebe survives. We will concentrate our efforts on the lakes that offer the best conditions for finding this spectacular bird. We should be here at the perfect time to witness the grebe's courting display, which is said to be very elaborate. To avoid predation, the birds nest on floating vegetation in small colonies, starting in December. The chicks are initially fed small fish, switching to snails about two weeks after hatching.



Hooded Grebe colony © Hernan Goni

Along the way up to the plateau, we will keep our eyes peeled for many Patagonian species, some of which we may not have seen on the main tour, including the rare Patagonian Tinamou, Rufous-throated Dotterel, Gray-breasted and Least seedsnipes, Magellanic Snipe, Short-billed and Patagonian Common miners, Lesser Horned Owl, Chocolate-vented Tyrant, Cinnamon-bellied Ground Tyrant, Gray-bellied Shrike-Tyrant, and Patagonian and Greater yellow-finches. This is also one of the best areas to look for the unique Magellanic Plover.

Mammals could include herds of Guanaco, the lovely Culpeo Fox, Patagonian Skunk, the poorly known Magellanic Tuco-tuco, and Large Hairy and Pichi armadillos.



Lesser Horned Owl © Andrew Whittaker

NIGHT: Estancia La Angostura, Gobernador Gregores Town

December 17, Day 3: Birding en route to Calafate; Afternoon Flight to Buenos Aires. After a great breakfast, we will bird our way through the stark landscapes on the way back to Calafate. Here we will catch an afternoon flight back to bustling Buenos Aires, followed by the transfer to our charming hotel. If timing makes it possible, some of us may connect with international flights back to the US today.

NIGHT: Hotel Madero, Buenos Aires

December 18, Day 4: Departure Home: Those who spent the night in Buenos Aires will be transferred from the hotel to the airport for their homebound flights.

The precise daily schedule of the main tour and the extension may be altered depending on the timing of our internal flights. Even if the order changes, we will visit all of the regions described here.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

TOUR SIZE: Each tour will be limited to 10 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Andrew Whittaker with the assistance of a local leader



Andrew Whittaker, a senior member of the VENT staff, has led VENT tours since 1993 throughout South and Central America, Antarctica, Europe, Israel, Africa, and Asia. His birding passion began at the early age of seven (thanks to his parents). Andy is a true all-around naturalist, and loves sharing his intimate bird knowledge and fascination with all aspects of the natural world in a fun and enthusiastic way. Andy was born in England, but he considers himself Brazilian, having lived more than 30 years in this mega-biodiverse country, where he first worked for the Smithsonian Institution studying Amazonian rainforest birds in Manaus. Andy is a qualified bander, trained by the late Dr. Clive Minton (fondly known as the father of shorebird studies). A lifelong fascination with bird migration has seen

Andy working around the globe at several top bird observatories: Eilat, Israel; Long Point, Canada; and in the UK at Sandwich Bay and on Fair Isle, Scotland. He has also conducted shorebird research in Borneo in Sabah.

Andy is well recognized for his passionate and intimate knowledge of bird vocalizations and taxonomy, knowledge that has helped him discover several new species (such as the Cryptic Forest-Falcon, in 2002) and rediscover others thought to be extinct. He is an excellent communicator and tour organizer, and loves nothing better than finding and sharing a rare skulker or telling one of his many fascinating and fun bird and travel stories. Andy had the honor of working with Sir David Attenborough in Brazil as a consultant for the prestigious BBC *Life of Birds* series. An authority on Amazonian birds, he has written numerous technical publications on the region's avifauna. At present, Andy is working with Kevin Zimmer on a comprehensive field guide to the birds of Brazil, to be published by Princeton University Press. Andy is an associate researcher at the Museum Goeldi, Belem, and an active conservationist. He loves photography (with many of his images published in books), and is an avid football fan of Birmingham City FC and an orchid lover. Andy lives with his partner in life, Jacqueline, and their dog, Mozart, in Porto Alegre, southern Brazil.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for **Southern Argentina: Spring Magic in Patagonia** is **\$9,195** per person in double occupancy from Buenos Aires. This includes all meals from lunch on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 14, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, all internal flights, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Buenos Aires and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$982**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

The fee for the **Southern Argentina: Hood Grebe Extension** is **\$2,845** per person in double occupancy from Buenos Aires. This includes all meals from lunch on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 4, all lodging as described in this itinerary, all internal flights, ground transportation during the tour, all park entrance fees, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include the flights between your home and Buenos Aires, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates

are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small party supplement may be charged.

The single supplement for the extension is **\$2,845**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person per tour section. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, the deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at <https://ventbird.com>) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 150 days (July 5, 2024) prior to the tour departure dates of the main tour and extension (July 18, 2024).

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT: This tour visits remote locations where immediate access to primary medical care may **NOT** be available. **For this reason, travel insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation is required for participation on this tour.** This coverage is included in the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** program. Through Ripcord, “emergency evacuation” can be purchased as a stand-alone benefit or as part of a comprehensive travel insurance policy. If you choose not to purchase insurance through Ripcord, you are required to obtain it through another provider.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:

Cancellation by Participant:

Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 180 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$500** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months from the date of participant tour cancellation, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 179 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the tour fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre- and post-tour extensions. **For participants’ protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

If participant cancels:

180 days or more before departure date

179 to 151 days before departure date

150 days or less before departure date

Participant’s refund will be:

Participant’s deposit minus \$500*

No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance of the tour fee will be refunded

No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months from the date of participant tour cancellation, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

Cancellation by VENT:

If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement. A “*Force Majeure*” event means any act beyond VENT’s control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with Redpoint Travel Protection as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend its **Ripcord** plan. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most comprehensive travel protection programs available.

Critical benefits of Ripcord include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice**; comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, medical expense coverage, death of pet, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or political or security reasons, waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.*

For a price quote, or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: <https://ripcordtravelprotection.com/ventbird>; or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help and Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, mid-payment, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip cost in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Coronavirus (COVID-19):

In line with the decision made by the federal government (including the CDC), Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy. Redpoint maintains a **Coronavirus FAQ** page on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

Please visit the Coronavirus FAQ page at the following link:

https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international.* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. **Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be held responsible for any air ticket penalties.**

*An air ticket will be purchased by Victor Emanuel Travel on behalf of the traveler with the traveler's consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveler (i.e. voluntary change of plans), the same fee rates apply for the reissue process, in addition to any fees that may be charged by the airline.

BAGGAGE: We ask that you limit your luggage to one large suitcase and one carry-on bag, if possible. As a precaution, we recommend that you pack a change of clothes, your binoculars, a pair of walking shoes or boots, medications, and toiletry items in your airline carry-on bag, in case your luggage is delayed or lost.

On our internal flights, Aerolineas Argentinas is strict about luggage limits, and it imposes a stricter weight limit on domestic flights than on international flights. The domestic limit is currently 15 kilograms/person (35lbs.); hand-carried luggage is limited to 5 kilograms/person (about 11lbs.), but it is seldom weighed and this limit can be exceeded a bit. The overweight charge for checked luggage amounts to a little more than two dollars a pound. We nevertheless recommend that travelers keep their luggage as close as possible to the 15-kilo limit. Please do not bring large carry-on bags. Large 20” and 21” roll-ons will have to be checked. At the present time, small roll-ons (up to about 18” in height) are permitted, but the jets are older ones, with limited overhead space, and travelers with large carry-on luggage may encounter problems. In general, packing lighter is better. Extra baggage can be securely stored in Buenos Aires for those participating in both the main tour and the Hooded Grebe extension. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant.

CONDITIONS: Main Tour: While birding will be heavily emphasized on your trip to Argentina, this program encompasses other aspects of natural history, including spectacular scenery, mammal viewing, stargazing, and doses of botany, as it is spring and the flowering plants are incredible.

We will travel in a small minibus or Coaster.

Walking conditions are generally easy to moderate, as our outings in many areas are along flat roads and trails. This tour isn't particularly strenuous, as most of the areas we visit are fairly flat, but it does involve some moderate to long walks no more than one kilometer. If you are accustomed to using hiking poles, bring at least one; collapsible versions work best for storage in luggage and on minibuses. In Bariloche, the group will get on a ski lift to the high mountains, and down again. It's never really strenuous but walking sticks are useful.

The distances driven in the vast plains of the Pampas and Patagonia are unavoidably long. It may involve 300 kilometers to be driven in one day or so. Those taking the Hooded Grebe extension will drive on a rough road that requires a 4-wheel drive vehicle. It's about three hours to get to the lagoons.

We will enjoy one short, optional pelagic trip on the Atlantic Ocean, departing early in the morning from the port of Mar del Plata city (Buenos Aires province). Our private boat will take us approximately 20 nautical miles offshore; we usually sight our first pelagic species shortly after leaving the harbor. We will chum to attract birds. We do not expect bad sea conditions, but we recommend in any case that a seasickness medicine be taken. The boat has a restroom. We plan to be back in port in time for a late lunch.

For those preferring not to do the pelagic trip, please advise the VENT office in advance so that we may arrange for an alternate excursion.

We also have a very easy short boat trip of a couple of hours to observe Southern Right Whales, in sheltered coastal waters.

To maximize our time in the field, we will enjoy several good picnics.

CLIMATE / CLOTHING: Spring weather in Argentina in December varies widely, from sunny and mild to cold, especially in the far south, or even rainy. You should bring warm clothing including a down jacket (or several warm layers), gloves, and a warm hat. Some days, however, can be quite warm, so we recommend dressing in several layers. Strong wind is likely in Patagonia on at least a few days at this time of year. You should also have a rain jacket. Long underwear may be helpful in southern Patagonia; rain pants can do double duty as both rain protection and an extra layer in place of long underwear on cold days. A hat, sunglasses, and good sunscreen (minimum SPF 30, or zinc oxide for complete sun block) are recommended for protection from the sun. Dress will be casual, including at our meals in Buenos Aires, but you may want a dress or jacket for evenings in Buenos Aires if you plan other activities there.

FOOTWEAR: We recommend a good trail-walking shoe or sturdy hiking boot (waterproof or GoreTex) when in the field. Athletic shoes are acceptable, but they will not keep your feet dry and can become soiled in muddy conditions. A good walking shoe (such as an athletic shoe) may be preferred for down times or when traveling between destinations. Rubber boots are not necessary.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Argentina is required. Visas are not required for entry by United States citizens. Citizens of countries other than the United States should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of 8x or 10x binoculars in good condition. As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medication, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. A belt pack or day pack will be good for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc. Please note that long-distance viewing is the norm over much of this tour. Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if

you have one and would like to bring it, we encourage you to do so, as it will give you more time and more opportunities to view birds and wildlife. **If you plan to digiscope, please be sure to bring and use your own scope.**

Other items include:

- A small flashlight
- **A refillable water bottle (please bring a wide-mouth water bottle, such as the type offered by Nalgene).** In order to reduce plastic waste, our drinking water will be supplied in 2- or 3-gallon containers aboard the buses. The small bottles sold in airports, etc., have small openings and are difficult to refill from large containers.
- A good alarm clock (essential), if you don't use your phone's alarm.
- A waterproof day pack
- A small folding umbrella

ACCOMMODATIONS: Excellent to very good throughout. Good wine is available for purchase at all of our lodgings.

LAUNDRY: Laundry services will be available at all hotel and lodges on the main tour. No laundry services available at Estancia La Angostura on the extension.

INTERNET: Expect Wi-Fi to be available at all hotels and lodges except at the Arelauquen Lodge on the main tour and Estancia La Angostura on the extension.

FOOD: Meals (and wine) in Argentina are very good, especially steaks, pastas, and seafood. Obtaining a plentiful supply of healthy snack foods in Argentina is difficult. While many snack items are available in convenience stores, they are invariably high in carbohydrates and sugar (cookies, crackers, cereal bars, etc.) or high in salt and fat (potato chips, etc.). For those who prefer a healthier selection, we recommend that you bring a good supply of your own, such as dried fruits, trail mix, nuts, and good trail bars.

HEALTH PRECAUTIONS: If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply to get you through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medications in your carry-on baggage, preferably in their original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636), or you can check the website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada, www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on Travel Health).

At this time, no vaccinations are required for entry into Argentina. However, the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta advises us that there is a risk of malaria, though that risk is low on this trip. The CDC also suggests that tetanus and polio immunizations be current and that travelers strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B.

The highest elevation we encounter on this trip is about 4,000 feet (for an hour or two, on one day) in the vicinity of El Calafate; most elevations are from sea level to about 2,000 feet.

INSECT PROTECTION: Insects in general are not much of a problem on this trip, though we may encounter some mosquitoes in wetlands or in forests in the south. We recommend the use of Cutters (roll-on), OFF, DEET (roll-on), or similar repellents.

Insect Repellents – There are insect repellents for the skin and an insect repellent used to treat clothing that should not be applied to the skin.

Insect repellents for the skin are commonly available in three forms:

- DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide): A chemical compound that is marketed under various brand names (OFF!®, Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered in a variety of formulations including sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The formulations will state a percentage of the active ingredient DEET on the packaging. DEET may be applied to exposed skin directly and/or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.
- Picaridin: A synthetic formulation that is derived from piperine, a substance found in plants that produce black pepper.
- Herbal insect repellents: Various mixtures of organic ingredients such as oils from eucalyptus, citronella, cedar, and other herbs. The herbal repellents are more difficult to categorize because of the difference in ingredients from one brand to another. There is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

An insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

- Permanone® (Permethrin) is an odorless spray-on repellent that may be used for **pre-treatment** of clothing, gear, and tents. It should not be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pre-treatment process requires a number of hours to complete and must be done outdoors, so is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment has to be repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.
- Insect Shield® apparel: Clothing pre-treated with Permanone is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

The US EPA offers a search tool to help choose a repellent that is best for a particular situation. For example, some repellents work for mosquitoes, but not for ticks.

<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/which-insect-repellent-right-you>

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION:

- Electricity – 220 volts; European-type two-pin round, or three-pin flat with two of the blades angled. The two-pin round connector is more widespread, but both are in operation in most of the hotels we will stay in. A few hotels may provide outlets that can accommodate standard American-type plugs with two flat pins of similar size (but not those with one flat blade larger than the other).
- Language – Spanish
- Currency – Argentine Peso
- Time – 3 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time

SUGGESTED READING:

Essential Bird Guides

Pearman, M., and J. I. Areta. 2021. *Birds of Argentina and the South-west Atlantic*. Princeton: Princeton UP. Excellent plates and text in this new, first-rate reference to Argentina birds. Without a doubt the best reference for Argentina. This guide is essential for all visiting birders.

Merlin Bird ID. App for your phone with photos, maps, and voices all at hand in the Argentina species pack. Download from App store. Excellent for taking into the field.

General References

- **Bridges, E. L. 1948. *Uttermost Part of the Earth*. London: Hodder and Stoughton. Excellent background on Tierra del Fuego, highly recommended.
- Hilty, S. L. 1994. *Birds of Tropical America: A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding, and diversity*. Shelburne, VT: Chapters. Useful background for Argentina, even though the focus is primarily tropical.
- Hudson, W.H. 2006. *Far Away and Long Ago: A Childhood in Argentina*. Eland Publishing.
- Hudson, W.H. 1988. *The Naturalist in La Plata*. Published by Dover Publications.
- Kricher, J. C. 2017. *The New Neotropical Companion*. Princeton: Princeton UP. Focus is primarily tropical, but travelers may find it of use on this trip.
- Leitner, G. 2001. *Travel Companion Argentina*. 2nd ed. London: Hunter. This and the next guide (and there are others) may be of interest to travelers seeking additional information on Argentina.
- McCloskey, E. 2011. *Argentina*. 2nd ed. Chesham, UK: Bradt Travel Guides.
- **Shipton, E. E. 1973. *The Fatal Lodestone*. S.I.: C. Knight. Long out-of-print but recently republished classic (now presumably available again) dealing with the discovery of sailing routes in the region of Tierra del Fuego and the settlement of the region. This chronicles some of the most remarkable adventures imaginable. Essential reading, not to be missed!

**Essential reading for Tierra del Fuego

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that tips are not expected and are entirely optional. Tips should be given directly to your tour leader; they should not be sent to the VENT office.

RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, “**VENT**”) act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on April 25, 2024, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant's Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant's risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the "**Airline**") is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline's aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

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