



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

**WILD PATAGONIA & CENTRAL CHILE
PUMAS, PENGUINS, CONDORS & MORE!
OCTOBER 29–NOVEMBER 16, 2025**

**SANTIAGO HIGHLIGHTS EXTENSION
ANDES, WETLANDS & ALBATROSS GALORE!
NOVEMBER 14–20, 2025**

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The Puma reaches its greatest population density in Chile's breathtaking Torres del Paine National Park. © Andrew Whittaker

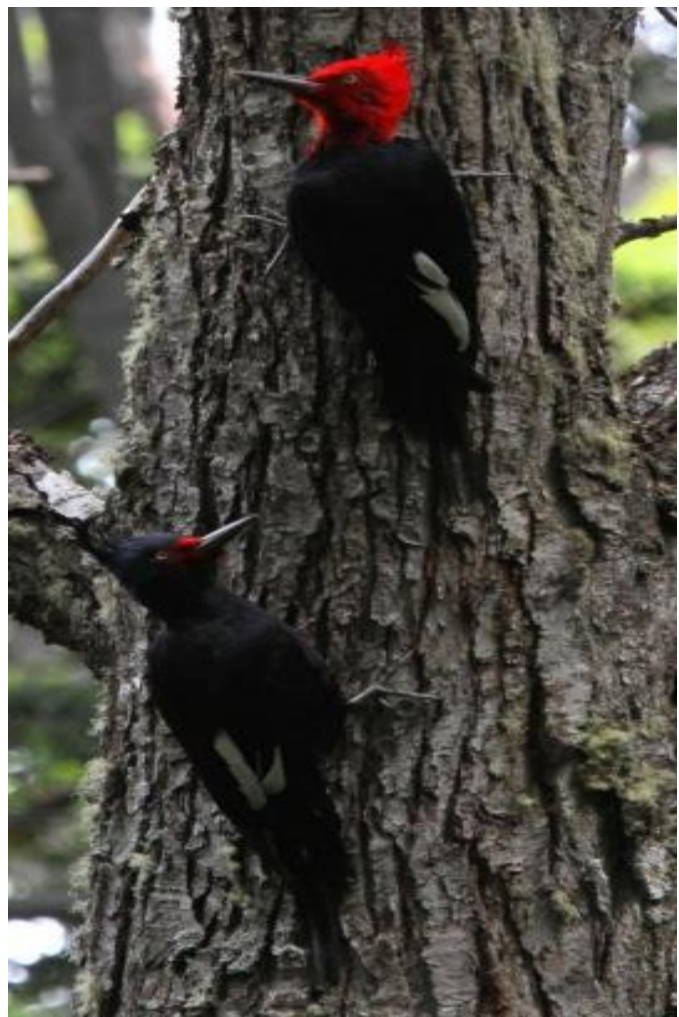
A Puma hunting Guanaco against a backdrop of snow-capped spires, the raucous antics of a King Penguin colony, a pair of Magellanic Woodpeckers in a towering southern beech forest, fine wine in a comfortable lodge: Where else but Chile!

This tour showcases the majestic scenery and abundant wildlife of what is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful countries in the world. From Santiago to the famous Lake District, from lovely Chiloé Island to wild Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, we will seek the special birds, mammals, and vivid landscapes for which Chile is so justly famous.

Stretching some 2,650 miles north to south and averaging only 110 miles across, this is both the longest and the narrowest country in the world. The mighty ice-capped peaks of the Andes dominate the topography, while the Pacific coastline teems with life.

Our visit takes place in the radiant southern spring, when the weather is usually good, colorful wildflowers proliferate, birds are in stunning breeding plumage and singing, and photographic opportunities abound. Among the many special birds we hope to encounter are the Chilean Tinamou, Moustached Turca, Dusky-tailed Canastero, and the colorful White-throated Tapaculo. Close views of the mighty Andean Condor are sure to leave us breathless, and as we pass through the vineyards of the fertile central valley, we may find Spectacled and Torrent ducks and ducklings and enjoy wonderful studies of nesting Burrowing Parakeets.

In Altos de Lircay National Reserve, Magellanic Woodpeckers are often common, White-throated Hawks can be seen hunting, and Green-backed Firecrowns abound at our lodge feeders; both the highly sought Chestnut-throated Huet-huet and the striking Rufous-legged Owl occur here as well. The temperate forests of Chile's Lake District and Alerce Andino National Park are home to an equally rich avifauna, including the very rare Rufous-tailed Hawk, Chilean Hawk, and the endemic Slender-billed Parakeet. We will also pay an exciting visit to a colony of Humboldt and Magellanic penguins, while a comfortable ferry crossing should yield such special seabirds as Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant-Petrel, Magellanic Diving-Petrel, and Red-legged Cormorant.



Magellanic Woodpeckers
© Andrew Whittaker

Tierra del Fuego, South America's Land of Fire, is the home of colorful Dolphin Gulls. In the wetlands between the wild sea and the giant walls of the Paine Massif, Ashy-headed, Upland, and endangered Ruddy-headed geese breed among hordes of other waterfowl. We'll search for the Magellanic Plover, which we have seen on all of our past visits, and for colorful Rufous-chested and Tawny-throated dotterels. Magdalena Island is home to a thriving colony of Magellanic Penguins, and we will have an opportunity to visit a rookery of King Penguins, too, complete with cute fluffy brown chicks.



Cuanaco bushes in Torres del Paine National Park © Andrew Whittaker

As the grandest of grand finales, we'll travel to Torres del Paine National Park, where Pumas, made bold by the lack of hunting and persecution, stalk their prey amid glistening glaciers, turquoise lakes, and hillsides ablaze with scarlet, orange, and yellow wildflowers. We will also enjoy herds of wild Guanaco, flocks of Lesser Rhea, and majestic Andean Condors.

Those eager to experience more of Chile beyond what is offered on the main tour are encouraged to join our optional Santiago Highlights Extension. With a different suite of birds and landscapes our objective, we'll travel from the Chilean capital area to the breathtaking Andes and the rich Pacific Coast in pursuit of a host of range-restricted birds. Regional specialties include Humboldt Penguin, Andean Condor, Stripe-backed Bittern, Gray-breasted Seedsnipe, and the remarkable Diademed Sandpiper-Plover. Other highlights include a pelagic trip in the Humboldt Current and a visit to the house of Pablo Neruda, perhaps Chile's most famous poet.



October 29–30, Days 1–2: Departure from home; arrival in Santiago, Chile. Participants will depart the USA on October 29 and arrive in Santiago on the morning of October 30 into Arturo Merino Benítez Airport (airport code SCL). Most flights from the United States arrive in Santiago between 6:00–10:00 a.m. Upon arrival, please proceed outside of the baggage claim area, where you will be met by a representative of our ground operator who will provide transportation to our hotel, **Sheraton Santiago Hotel & Convention Center**.

After checking in, you will have the rest of the day to yourself, with time to rest following the international flight. Lunch is on your own. This evening, we will meet in the lobby at 6:00 p.m. for a tour welcome and orientation, followed by dinner together.

The hotel features spacious rooms, a restaurant and bar, and a swimming pool among many other amenities. Additionally, the hotel grounds are certainly worth a walk as a number of locally common birds

may be found including Southern Lapwing, Chimango Caracara, White-crested Elaenia, Tufted Tit-tyrant the endemic Chilean Mockingbird, Austral Thrush, Black-chinned Siskin and Long-tailed Meadowlark. In the afternoon, an informal outing on foot to a nearby park may be offered for a chance to see a variety of locally common birds such as Chimango Caracara, White-crested Elaenia, the endemic Chilean Mockingbird, Austral Thrush, and Black-chinned Siskin.

Home to over 6 million people, Santiago is one of South America's most modern and cosmopolitan cities. This vibrant capital stands on a rich inland plain, the Santiago Basin, bounded by mountains on three sides.

Travel notes: We recommend arriving in Santiago a day or more early to minimize the risk of flight misconnections or other travel delays, or simply to be well-rested for the start of our tour. Most flights to Santiago are overnight flights. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with air ticketing and additional arrangements.

NIGHTS: Aboard aircraft, in transit to Santiago (October 29)
Sheraton Santiago Hotel & Conference Center, Santiago (October 30)

October 31, Day 3: The Andes: Yerba Loca Reserve, Farellones, and Valle Nevado. We'll get an early start to our adventure today, leaving the hotel just after breakfast to avoid the city traffic. It is just a short distance out of town that we begin to climb the scenic foothills of the Andes. Each of our stops along the highway holds the promise of a first encounter with the special birds of the Mediterranean-like woodland and scrub known as *matorral*. A variety of raptors may be seen overhead, and an impressive assortment of terrestrial species scamper around beneath the vegetation. Among those ground-dwellers, we will be looking especially for three endemic tapaculos: Dusky Tapaculo, Moustached Turca, and striking but skulky White-throated Tapaculo. The latter two have amazingly loud, musical songs, while the little Dusky Tapaculo utters a trilling *churr* that gives it its Chilean name, Churrin.

We'll also watch for the Chilean Tinamou, the endemic Dusky-tailed Canastero, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Austral Pygmy-Owl, Striped Woodpecker, Chilean Mockingbird, Diuca Finch, and the striking Rufous-tailed Plantcutter, a member of the cotinga family. The cute Fence Degu, an endemic rodent, may also be seen sunning on rock walls.



Long-tailed Meadowlark (male) © Andrew Whittaker

We'll continue to gain elevation into Yerba Loca Reserve. At about 7,200 feet, Yerba Loca is a good place to look for such sought-after species as Striped Woodpecker, Patagonian Tyrant, and Long-tailed Meadowlark. Overhead, we can hope for fine looks at an Andean Condor or a Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle. Among the mammals, we will keep a special eye out for the Culpeo (Andean Fox).

Our final destinations for the afternoon are the mountain town of Farellones and the Valle Nevado, the Valley of Snow. The road to Farellones is marked by some 40 switchbacks before reaching the Valle Nevado, at an elevation of 9,000 feet.

Pullouts at the switchbacks offer excellent birding and breathtaking scenery. Snow-covered Andean peaks surround us, while blue-hued mountain streams ripple down the slopes and millions of hillside poppies blaze a vivid orange. We may also find the turquoise flower spikes of the puya, an impressive bromeliad whose blossoms are a favorite nectar source for Giant Hummingbirds.



Andean Condor (male) © Andrew Whittaker

We'll be looking for a number of very local species here, including Black-winged Ground-Dove, Cordilleran and Sharp-billed canasteros, Scale-throated Earthcreeper, Black-fronted and White-browed ground-tyrants, Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant, Greater Yellow-Finch, Yellow-rumped Siskin, and Band-tailed, Mourning, and Plumbeous sierra finches. These high elevations are also home to the White-sided Hillstar, an amazing hummingbird, and we will pay particular attention to the Rufous-banded Miners as we try to pick out their rarer look-alike, the Creamy-rumped Miner. In good weather, we should have exceptional studies of Andean Condors, the largest of the Americas' flighted birds, at their daytime roost and in flight.

With luck, we may encounter a “Magellanic” Great Horned Owl or the comical Coruro, a chunky rodent with big yellow teeth, endemic to Chile.

NIGHT: Sheraton Santiago Hotel & Conference Center

November 1, Day 4: Santiago to Talca. Today we will head south through a rich agricultural landscape, famous for its excellent vineyards. With a climate similar to that of California and Bordeaux, this part of Chile produces grapes of the highest quality; the cabernet sauvignons, chardonnays, merlots, and sauvignon blancs grown here are especially renowned.

Our way south toward the city of Talca takes us between shimmering volcanic peaks to the east and the coastal mountains to the west. We will stop for lunch about 30 miles southeast of Talca, then pay a visit to Colbún Lake, a reservoir on the Maule River that provides water for agriculture and for hydroelectric power. Colbún’s shoreline, open water, and surrounding vegetation are also home to a fine variety of birds. Among the many possibilities are the local Chiloé Wigeon, Spectacled Duck, Black-faced Ibis, Andean Gull, Chilean Pigeon, and, best of all, a superb colony of colorful Burrowing Parakeets, big and bright and noisy as macaws.



Colorful Burrowing Parakeets breed along river banks. © Andrew Whittaker

As we continue to our secluded forested lodge, we will watch the river for Torrent Ducks, often in attendance with the cutest of ducklings; in the southern subspecies found here, adult males are all black beneath. The final stretch of our drive takes us up through forested foothills to the tiny community of Vilches and our lovely family-run lodge. We’ll spend two nights in this forested hotel complex, with birds right at our doorstep.

NIGHT: Hotel Picamaderos, Vilches

November 2, Day 5: Altos de Lircay National Reserve. The Altos de Lircay National Reserve, also known as the Vilches Protected Area, is a 37,000-acre preserve created in 1996 to protect the sensitive vegetation, wildlife, and other natural wonders of the precordillera of San Clemente. By any measure, this ancient mountain range is a spectacular place, its magnificent *Nothofagus* Forest dissected by deep gorges. Much of the park is above tree line, with the highest sector reaching over 7,300 feet, offering stunning views of giant snow-capped volcanoes and of the Lircay River as it flows through a channel of lava.

After breakfast today, armed with a picnic lunch, we will strike out on the reserve's well-kept forest trails and dirt roads, looking for wonderful birds among giant coigüe (genus *Nothofagus*) and roble (genus *Lophozonia*) trees, some covered with an odd orange fungus that, in season, is a local delicacy. Majestic orchids brighten the forest understory.

Our first objective will be to track down the endemic Chestnut-throated Huet-huet (pronounced *wet-wet*); we will turn its loud vocalizations to good purpose as we search for this large and remarkably colorful member of the tapaculo family. Another of South America's truly great birds, the spectacular Magellanic Woodpecker, is fairly common here. We will also keep our eyes peeled for the rare White-throated Hawk, Striped Woodpecker, Austral Pygmy-Owl, Austral Parakeet, Fire-eyed Diucon, Black-chinned Siskin, and Diuca Finch. Blue-tailed Tree Iguanas and lovely Culpeo Foxes often visit the picnic area.



Green-backed Firecrown (male)
© Andrew Whittaker

We will devote the later afternoon to an exploration of the hotel gardens and adjacent woodlands, where we may encounter Chilean Pigeon, Thorn-tailed Rayadito, the nuthatch-like White-throated Treerunner, Magellanic Tapaculo, Tufted Tit-Tyrant, and Patagonian Sierra Finch. Green-backed Firecrowns provide nonstop action at the lodge's hummingbird feeders. After a wonderful dinner, a nighttime excursion may reward us with views of the seldom seen Rufous-legged Owl, a lovely bird often found on the hotel grounds.

NIGHT: Hotel Picamaderos, Vilches

November 3, Day 6: Return to Santiago; flight to Puerto Montt. This morning, we will embark on our return trip to Santiago. As our flight schedule permits, we may find time during our drive to bird a lake where we might see our first Spectacled Tyrant or the striking Band-tailed Sierra-Finch; waterfowl can also be abundant here.

Once in Santiago, we'll proceed directly to the airport for our mid-afternoon flight to Puerto Montt, 600 miles south of the capital city. Our flight path takes us along the spine of the Andes, with snow-clad volcanic peaks as far as the eye can see; Puerto Montt itself is dominated by the volcanoes of Osorno and Calbuco, the latter having blown its top as recently as 2015. On landing at the city's El Tepual International Airport, we will find ourselves in the Chilean Lake District, formed by hundreds of rivers flowing down from the mountains through beautiful forested valleys.



Picture-perfect Osorno Volcano from our hotel © Andrew Whittaker

Thanks to its strategic position at the southern end of Chile's Central Valley and as the gateway to the Chiloé Archipelago, the coastal city of Puerto Montt quickly grew into a permanent settlement after its founding in 1853, during the period of German colonization. In the 1990s and 2000s, Puerto Montt was the second largest salmon-producing center in the world. The city's cultural heritage is a rich combination of indigenous Chiloé, Spanish, and German influences.

The views from our hotel balcony of the picture- perfect Osorno Volcano are truly spectacular.

NIGHT: Hotel Cumbres, Puerto Varas

November 4, Day 7: Alerce Andino National Park. Today we will drive the coastal road to Alerce Andino National Park, arriving early for an exciting morning in the park. On the southern shore of Lake Chapo, Alerce Andino is another of Chile's natural wonders, with enormous mountains, deep valleys, blue lakes, and *Nothofagus* trees dating back to 1,500 or 2,000 years ago, their stunted, twisted shapes reflecting the harsh conditions of southern Chile. The park takes its name from the alerce trees that cover most of its nearly 100,000 acres; though "alerce" is typically translated "larch," the tree is actually a member of the cypress family, the only species in the genus *Fitzroya*, and a key component of the local temperate, or Valdivian, forest.

In our time in these huge forests, we'll seek a marvelous array of tapaculos, their wild and often explosive voices echoing through the valleys. The largest and most spectacular species here, in the tapaculo capital

of the world, are the enigmatic Chucao Tapaculo and the much more secretive Black-throated Huet-huet; dense bamboo thickets are the habitat of the skulking, mouse-like Ochre-flanked and Magellanic tapaculos. Hopefully, this will be the day that we all fall in love with tapaculos.

The supporting cast includes the rare Chilean Hawk, the rare Rufous-tailed and uncommon White-throated hawks, Austral Parakeet, Des Murs's Wiretail, Tufted Tit-Tyrant, the local Patagonian Tyrant, and colorful Torrent Ducks.



The enigmatic Chucao Tapaculo © Andrew Whittaker

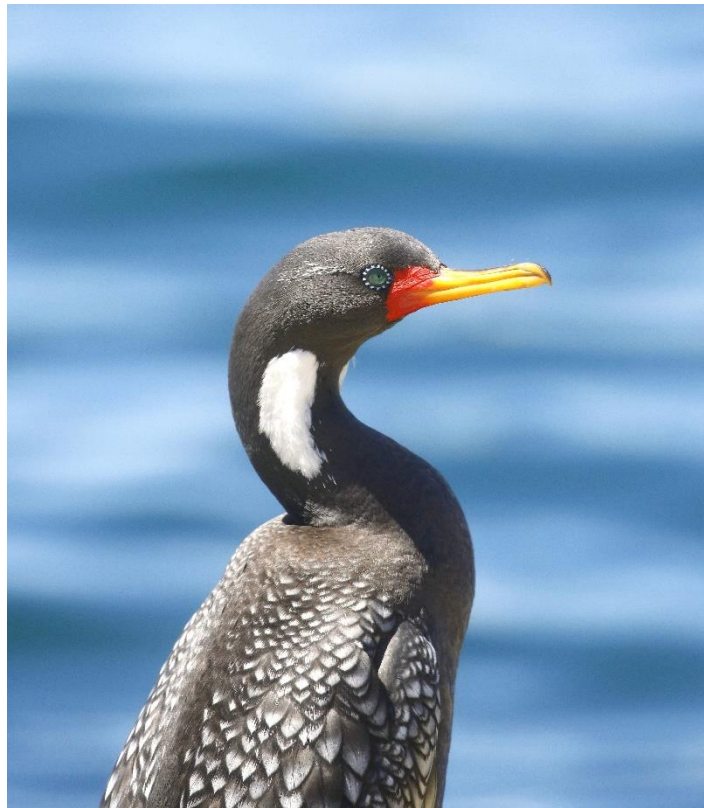
We will enjoy a picnic lunch in the park, where we may well be visited by the local Patagonian Gray Fox. As we follow the coast road back to Puerto Montt, we may have an opportunity to study the subtle differences distinguishing the Blackish, American, and Magellanic oystercatchers, which are often found side by side here. We may also encounter Black-faced Ibis, Ringed Kingfisher, Southern Lapwing, Baird's Sandpiper, Peruvian Pelican, or the colorful Austral Negrito.

NIGHT: Hotel Cumbres, Puerto Varas

November 5, Day 8: Puniuil Bay and the tidal mudflats of Chiloé Island. After breakfast we will depart the hotel for a trip to Chiloé Island and Puniuil Bay, where we will spend the better part of the day. From Puerto Varas, the transfer requires an hour-long drive to the community of Parguas on the coast, from which we'll board a ferry for a crossing of the Chacao Canal, the narrow body of water that separates the mainland from Chiloé Island. The ferry crossing will be approximately 30 minutes and offers a chance for a bit of birding from the ferry deck. Shearwaters, cormorants, waterfowl and penguins are possible. The route from the hotel to the ferry terminal also offers possibilities to spot Slender-billed Parakeet.

Upon arrival in Chacao on Chiloé Island, we'll make our way west to Puniuil Bay. Here, we should encounter our first Kelp Geese, feeding on the bay's abundant kelp, before we board a private boat for an

hour-long excursion around the rocky islands of the bay. Our main objective will be to observe the often-hilarious antics of the highly charismatic Humboldt and Magellanic penguins at their colonies. Nearby rocky cliffs hold breeding cormorants including Magellanic Cormorant and the exquisite Red-legged Cormorant. There is also a good chance of coming across Marine Otters fishing.



The stunning Red-legged Cormorant © Andrew Whittaker

Come lunchtime, we will indulge in excellent seafood empanadas in a restaurant overlooking the beach. This afternoon we will bird our way back to Puerto Montt, visiting bird-rich estuaries and mudflats en route. These rich tidal flats are a vital wintering area for 70% of the world's Hudsonian Godwit population as well as significant numbers of Whimbrel, Baird's Sandpiper, yellowlegs and Red Knot along with lots of waterfowl.

NIGHT: Hotel Cumbres, Puerto Varas

November 6, Day 9: Flight to Punta Arenas with afternoon birding nearby. This morning, we will catch a flight to Punta Arenas, the capital of the country's southernmost region, Magallanes and Antarctica Chilena. Punta Arenas lies at 46° South latitude, where it serves as the gateway to Patagonia. The city's early growth was fueled by waves of immigrants during the gold rush of 1883–1906.

Sheep farming boomed here, too, with the largest company controlling 3,800 square miles of Patagonian Chile and Argentina from its headquarters in Punta Arenas. In 2000, a special "composite" breed was created here; the large, hardy Goldensheep is characterized by superior fertility, leaner meat, and faster lamb growth. On one of our evenings here, we will visit one of the city's best restaurants to savor the delicious local specialty: Golden Lamb, Chilean barbecue style.

In recent decades, Punta Arenas has grown considerably with the increase in tourism and commercial shipping. Since 1977, it has been one of only two free ports in Chile.

If our arrival time today in Punta Arenas allows, we will bird our way from the airport to our hotel overlooking the Strait of Magellan; abandoned piers nearby are alive with breeding Imperial and Magellanic cormorants and Dolphin Gulls.

This afternoon our main target bird here will be the rare and sought-after Magellanic Plover, the sole member of the family *Pluvianellidae*. Unique in almost every regard, the Magellanic Plover is anatomically more like a dove than a shorebird, with striking pink legs, a blazing red eye, a short peg-like bill, and dove-gray plumage. Similar in appearance to the turnstones, and often seen looking under stones, the Magellanic Plover's most frequent foraging method is to stomp around in shallow water with its strong legs while moving in quick circles and pecking at food items brought to the surface. Like doves, these birds secrete crop milk to feed their young. Molecular data, however, confirm that this is indeed a shorebird, likely most closely related to the sheathbills.



The sought-after and unusual Magellanic Plover is the only species in its family.
© Andrew Whittaker

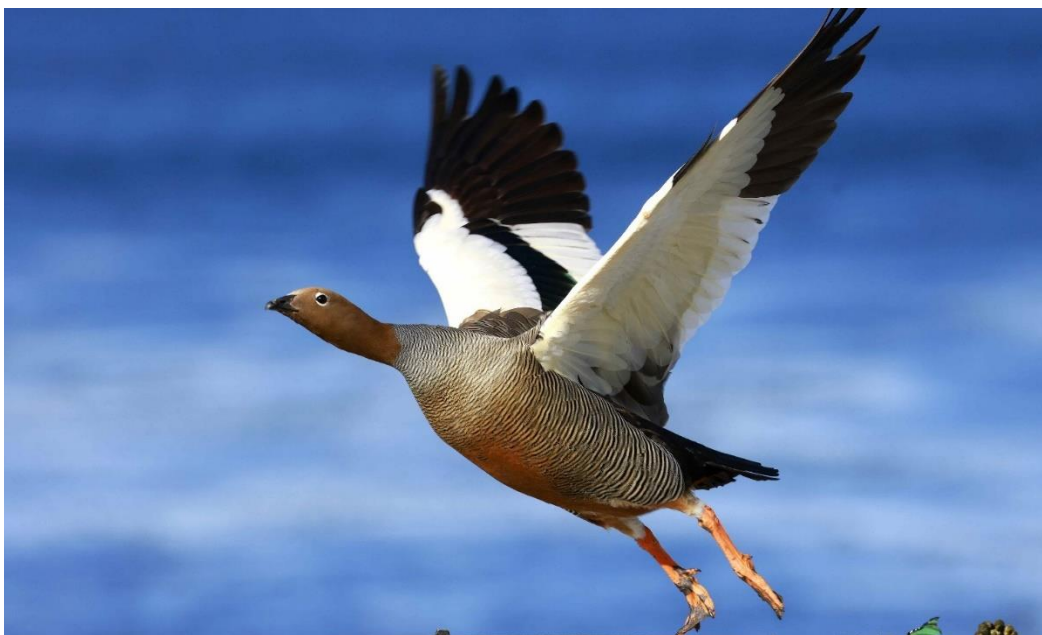
NIGHT: Hotel Cabo de Hornos, Punta Arenas

November 7, Day 10: Magdalena Island penguin colony and San Juan River. We will start the day with a boat trip to Magdalena Island in the Strait of Magellan, home to a thriving colony of Magellanic Penguins. It is an hour to the main island, where a well-designed and well-marked trail lets us walk through the colony without disturbing it. We will gain close-up insights into penguin life, including the birds' strategies for coping with the ever-present Chilean Skuas and Kelp Gulls, which prey on eggs and chicks. We will also enjoy the antics of a large colony of South American Terns in full breeding plumage. Common Miners are often seen as well.



Magellanic Penguins © Andrew Whittaker

After an hour's brisk stroll, we will be served a very welcome hot chocolate, then "set sail" for an islet with a noisy colony of South American Sea Lions. The huge male beach masters will be guarding and fighting for control of their harems. Landing is not permitted here, but we can enjoy the abundant wildlife from a safe distance. The same beaches are also home to Dolphin Gull and the odd Snowy Sheathbill. The sheathbill is rarely seen away from the Antarctic, but we have been successful seeing it on three out of four trips on average. Afterward, we will head back to town for a marvelous meal in a family-run restaurant.



The endangered Ruddy-headed Goose © Andrew Whittaker

Mid-afternoon, we will drive south toward the San Juan River, a rich wetland system that provides chances for a variety of waterfowl. Our target species here is the highly sought-after and endangered Ruddy-headed Goose, but we are also likely to enjoy Upland and Ashy-headed geese, Flightless Steamer-Ducks, Crested Duck, Yellow-billed Pintail, Chiloé Wigeon, and a variety of shorebirds including Magellanic Oystercatcher and Magellanic Snipe. Even Short-eared Owls are possible here. Imperial and Magellanic cormorants breed on the old town pier. Please note that we may not go all the way to the reserve if we are fortunate enough to encounter Ruddy-headed Geese en route.

NIGHT: Hotel Cabo de Hornos, Punta Arenas

November 8, Day 11: Ferry crossing of the strait to Tierra del Fuego and visit to a King Penguin colony.

This morning we'll take our picnic lunches and board a ferry to cross the Strait of Magellan to Tierra del Fuego. This short voyage is essentially an awesome two-hour pelagic trip. With the right winds, this famous channel can be a conduit for seabirds moving between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. We should see scores of Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant-Petrel, White-chinned Petrel, ghostly Southern Fulmars, "Fuegian" Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Magellanic Diving-Petrel, Chilean Skua, and Dolphin Gull. On one crossing, we once were fortunate enough to see Fin and Humpback whales, and even a Southern Rockhopper Penguin on another. More likely is a group of playful Peale's Dolphin.

Arriving on the enchanted island of Tierra del Fuego, the "Land of Fire," we'll pass by brackish lakes ablaze with pink-hued flocks of Chilean Flamingos, the avian emblem of Chile's Patagonia coast.



Another trip highlight is the spectacular King Penguin colony on Tierra del Fuego
© Andrew Whittaker

A good dirt and asphalt road takes us across the remote landscape to Bahia Inútil and a close encounter with a thriving colony of King Penguins; there are more than 130 birds in this colony, which is still increasing. We will enjoy these marvelous birds' fascinating behavior from a blind at close range. Fluffy young birds should be in evidence, products of a breeding cycle longer than that of any other bird: it takes 14–16 months to fledge a single chick. Because of the length of the chick-rearing cycle, adults can rear only two chicks every three years. In the winter, chicks may fast from one to five months. Double-banded Plovers

also breed here, and we should keep a sharp eye out for the Patagonian Tuco-Tuco, an odd subterranean rodent.

Late afternoon will find us in the remote town of Cerro Sombrero. Sandy areas here are home to the local subspecies of Common and Short-billed miners, Buff-winged Cinclodes, Patagonian Yellow-Finch, and maybe our first beautiful Cinnamon-bellied Ground-Tyrant or uncommon striking Chocolate-vented Tyrant, with its long, kestrel-like wings.



The long-winged Chocolate-vented Tyrant © Andrew Whittaker

We'll also keep an eye out for the rare pallid subspecies of Peregrine Falcon. Afterward, we'll enjoy a relaxed evening and a home-cooked Chilean dinner.

NIGHT: Hosteria Tunkelen, Cerro Sombrero

November 9, Day 12: Return to Punta Arenas. After an early breakfast, we'll recross the Strait of Magellan, giving us a chance to spot the stunning Commerson's Dolphin. Once back on the mainland, we will head north on a well-maintained road leading through coastal grassland and barren steppe on our way to Punta Arenas for the night.



Commerson's Dolphins © Andrew Whittaker

The stark wilderness of this Patagonian steppe is truly magnificent. Here, on the arid grasslands in the rain shadow of the Andes, we will enjoy our first looks at herds of wild Guanaco, a member of the camel family. This habitat is just as fascinating botanically, and we hope to run across spectacular carpets of flowering Virgin's Slipper.

The barren steppe is also the breeding ground of stunning Tawny-throated Dotterels. We may also be so lucky as to hear the songs of Least Seedsnipes echoing overhead as they perform their aerial displays, or to encounter the uncommon Austral Canastero serenading us from the stunted brush. Other likely species along our route include the handsome Cinnamon-bellied Ground-Tyrant, and, we may spend time looking for both Elegant-crested and Patagonian tinamous in areas of taller grass.



Tawny-throated Dotterel © Andrew Whittaker

We also plan a stop at a large marsh, where we hope to encounter flocks of the odd Coscoroba Swan, the prized Rosy-billed Pochard, and, hopefully, Silver Teal. We can hope for close views of Silvery Grebes in their lovely breeding plumage, and a variety of shorebirds including Magellanic Snipe, before arriving in Punta Arenas for the night.

NIGHT: Hotel Cabo de Hornos, Punta Arenas

November 10, Day 13: Birding the higher Patagonian steppes and on to Puerto Natales. As we make our way ever nearer Torres del Paine, the scenery will gradually change from grassland to stunted Andean Patagonian Forest. Rising in elevation onto the remote Patagonian steppe, we'll keep our eyes open for hunting Patagonian Hog-nosed Skunk. The botany here is truly fascinating in this harsh environment and we will certainly enjoy many interesting and colorful flowers. Bird-wise we will concentrate on three wonderful Patagonian specialties: the striking yellow-winged White-bridled Finch, the summer visitor Chocolate-vented Tyrant, and Rufous-chested Dotterel.



Rufous-chested Dotterel © Andrew Whittaker

Soon we enter the realm of the snow-capped southern Andes and extensive fjords of this scenically stunning region. We will overnight in the town of Puerto Natales en route to the spectacular national park, sometimes designated “the eighth wonder of the world.” Puerto Natales was founded in 1911 as a port for the sheep industry; today, the town’s most important economic activity is tourism, as the gateway to Torres del Paine; cattle and aquaculture are also significant here. Our hotel has a magnificent view over the fjord to snow-capped mountains, with nearby fjords home to many breeding Black-necked Swans.

NIGHT: Hotel Remota, Puerto Natales

November 11, Day 14: Torres Del Paine National Park. After an early breakfast, we will drive to magnificent Torres Del Paine National Park, where we will be welcomed by snow-covered mountain peaks, incredible turquoise lakes, vast glaciers, and the spectacularly vivid scarlet hues of the fire bush. We'll make our way from view to panoramic view beneath the three granite “towers” of the awesome Cordillera

del Paine, each of them rising to an elevation of more than 9,000 feet above sea level. We'll explore the secluded forest and beaches of Gray's Glacier along a delightful trail, with more chances for Magellanic Woodpecker, Patagonian Sierra Finch, Austral Parakeet and maybe our first migrant Dark-faced Ground-Tyrants. Here, weather is highly changeable due to the immense ice cap, and winds can be strong.

Our comfortable and classy lodge, our home for the next three nights, is on an island in picture-perfect Pehoe Lake, with a backdrop of the dramatic Paine Massif towering over the turquoise waters. The massif's 6,500-foot spires and glaciers glimmer in the sun, while Great Grebes, Flying Steamer-Ducks, and the resident pair of Upland Geese welcome us to our island paradise, in the very heart of the park.

Our accommodation is strategically located with quick access to our main private estancia in the heart of "Puma Land." This afternoon, after a tasty meal at the hotel restaurant, we will continue exploring the park, taking in the awesome views and birds and looking especially for our first Pumas. The sunsets can be truly breathtaking here.

NIGHT: Hosteria Pehoe, Torres Del Paine National Park

November 12–13, Days 15–16: Torres Del Paine National Park and Puma safari. We have two full days to enjoy this incredible location, its special birds, and its wild Pumas. Simply going to a place and expecting to see wild Pumas is a new phenomenon, inconceivable until a decade ago. This is all possible thanks to an excellent tracking system. We will embark on our 4 x 4 "safari" or take a longer hike to follow the hunting cats; we are normally able to observe their behavior from the comfort of vehicles. We have enjoyed a 100% success rate in the past with Pumas, often finding multiple cats on our tours



Puma cubs at play © Andrew Whittaker

The Pumas here, of the subspecies *Puma concolor puma*, are enormous, much larger than their Mountain Lion counterparts in North America (*P. c. cougar*). Adult males, larger and bulkier than females, may exceed eight feet from nose to tail, and they weigh an average of about 260 pounds. They are not as rufous in Chile as in North America, more the color of a Guanaco, which, along with European Hares, is their main prey item here. Because they are protected and have never been hunted, the Pumas here have no fear of humans, and we can anticipate seeing them at close range, engaged in a variety of behaviors, including actively hunting, caring for cubs, and with luck, even feeding on a kill. The Puma is the apex predator here, able to run as fast as 43 miles per hour. They can jump as far as 20 feet from a standing position and leap 8 feet into the air—and have been known to jump 40 feet horizontally and almost 16 feet vertically.

Famous for its astonishing scenery, with photo opportunities at every bend in the road, Torres del Paine also hosts special birds. We will venture to the myriad lakes, ponds, and reed-fringed pools of the east side of the park, seeking waterfowl and the recently rediscovered Austral Rail. Other birds of the area include Andean Condor, Cinereous Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Silvery Grebe, Red-gartered Coot, Spectacled and Andean ducks, Magellanic Snipe, and “Austral” Grass Wren.



Silvery Grebes displaying © Andrew Whittaker

We will also keep our eyes open for small flocks of migrating Dark-faced Ground-Tyrants or resident Austral Canasteros. On one morning, we’ll travel farther afield, into remote foothills outside the park where we can search for the highly local Band-tailed Earthcreeper (once thought to be an Argentine endemic, but recently recorded in Chile), Sharp-billed Canastero, the rare Gray-bellied Shrike-Tyrant, Patagonian Mockingbird, Ochre-naped Ground-Tyrant, and Yellow-bridled Finch. More common residents include Austral Pygmy-Owl, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Crested Caracara, Chilean Flicker, Cinnamon-bellied Ground-Tyrant, Rufous-banded Miner, Scale-throated Earthcreeper, Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant, Long-tailed Meadowlark, Gray-hooded Sierra Finch, and Greater Yellow-Finch. We could be lucky enough to spot the rare elk-sized Southern Huemul Deer in the nearby forest. Other mammals we hope to encounter in the park are the Humboldt’s Hog-nosed Skunk, Culpeo (Andean Fox), and with luck, the odd Patagonian Hairy Armadillo.



A Guanaco at Torres del Paine National Park, the Puma's favored prey © Andrew Whittaker

NIGHTS: Hosteria Pehoe, Torres Del Paine National Park

November 14, Day 17: Torres Del Paine National Park and return to Punta Arenas. We'll bird our way out of the park this morning and drive to Puerto Natales for a wonderful lunch and some time to shop. Afterward, we will drive on to Punta Arenas, with time for some late afternoon birding along the coast. We will have great opportunities for close-up photography and great looks at a wide variety of waterbirds, with Chilean Flamingo, White-tufted Grebe, various geese, Red Shoveler, Flying Steamer-Duck, Magellanic Snipe, and Red-gartered Coot among the possibilities. This evening, we'll gather for a final checklist session followed by dinner.

NIGHT: Hotel Cabo de Hornos, Punta Arenas

November 15, Day 18: Santiago and departure, or continue to the Santiago Highlights Extension. Depending on departure times, we will have a relaxed few hours of morning birding around Punta Arenas; among the options are a return visit to the Reserva Canquen Colorado or a drive south of Punta Arenas. Time permitting, we'll have lunch at a splendid French restaurant in town before catching our flight to Santiago.

Those continuing on to the extension:

On arrival in Santiago, we will transfer to **La Quinta by Wyndham, Santiago Airport** where a day/night room has been reserved in your name. Upon arrival at the hotel, we will break until dinner, at which time we will discuss plans for the following day.

Those not continuing on to the extension:

Depending on international flight departure times, those not continuing on the extension will likely stay at the airport to wait for departing flights later in the evening. If the flight from Punta Arenas to Santiago is scheduled for earlier in the day, we will go to an area hotel for the use of a day room and dinner followed by transfer back to the airport. International flights to the USA generally depart late at night or just after midnight, arriving in the United States the following morning (November 16).

NIGHT: Aboard aircraft in transit

November 16, Day 19: Arrival home. Flights that departed Santiago the previous evening will arrive in the USA this morning.

**SANTIAGO HIGHLIGHTS EXTENSION
ANDES, WETLANDS & ALBATROSS GALORE!
NOVEMBER 14–20, 2025**



Diademed Sandpiper-Plover © Andrew Whittaker

This exciting opportunity will appeal to those who want to see more of Chile beyond what is offered on the main tour, and to those who seek a shorter, stand-alone trip.

The breathtaking valley known as El Yeso is home to a number of Chile’s endemic birds, including Crag Chilia and Moustached Turca. One of the most beautiful of all shorebirds, the Diademed Sandpiper-Plover, breeds along high-elevation streams. We will also be looking for singing Gray-breasted Seedsnipe, White-sided Hillstar, and Rufous-tailed Plantcutter—and for our first Andean Condors, one of the largest flying birds in the world.

The shores of the Pacific Ocean and the nutrient-rich Humboldt Current offer equal doses of exceptional scenery and birding. From the city to the coast, this part of Chile abounds in range-restricted birds. We’ll seek such remarkable birds as Humboldt Penguin, Peruvian Pelican, Inca Tern, and Peruvian Booby. Among these are several endemics, including Dusky Tapaculo, Seaside Cinclodes, Chilean Mockingbird, and Dusky-tailed Canastero. In the rich Maipo Estuary and Laguna Cartagena Marshes, we may encounter Stripe-backed Bittern, the

recently split Ticking Dorodito, Many-colored Rush Tyrant, Seaside Cinclodes, or the rare Black-headed Duck.

The highlight of our extension will be a pleasant half-day boat trip out to the famous Humboldt Current. The seas here—usually calm at this season—are simply teeming with life, including a stellar mix of seabirds unique to the southern Pacific. As many as five species of albatrosses are possible, including the silvery Salvin's, Black-browed, Northern Royal, Buller's, and even the rare Chatham's Albatross. Peruvian Diving-Petrel, an assortment of neat shearwaters and storm-petrels, and Westland, Juan Fernandez, and Masatierra petrels, though uncommon, are also possible on this comfortable pelagic excursion.

Most of our tours yield views of Marine Otters and South American Sea Lions, while other possibilities include Sperm Whale and Dusky and Chilean dolphins.

Our tour includes a short visit to the house of Pablo Neruda, the beloved “national poet” of Chile, who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1971.

November 14–15, Days 1–2: Departure from home; arrival in Santiago, Chile. Participants will depart the USA on November 14 and arrive in Santiago on the morning of November 15 into Arturo Merino Benítez Airport (airport code SCL). Most flights from the United States arrive in Santiago between 6:00–10:00 a.m. Upon arrival, please proceed outside the baggage claim area, where you will be met by a representative of our ground operator who will provide transportation to our hotel, **La Quinta by Wyndham, Santiago Airport**.

After checking in, you will have the rest of the day to yourself, with time to rest following the international flight. Lunch is on your own. This evening, all participants, both those finishing the main tour and those newly arrived, will meet in the lobby at 6:30 p.m. for a tour welcome and orientation, followed by dinner.

The hotel features spacious rooms, a restaurant and bar, and a swimming pool among many other amenities.

Home to over 6 million people, Santiago is one of South America's most modern and cosmopolitan cities. This vibrant capital stands on a rich inland plain, the Santiago Basin, bounded by mountains on three sides.

Travel notes: We recommend arriving in Santiago a day early (November 14) to minimize the risk of flight misconnections or other travel delays, or simply to be well-rested for the start of our tour. Most flights to Santiago are overnight flights. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with air ticketing and additional arrangements.

NIGHTS: Aboard aircraft, in transit to Santiago (November 14)
La Quinta by Wyndham Santiago Airport, Santiago (November 15)

November 16, Day 3: El Yeso Valley. We'll leave Santiago after an early breakfast, headed south and east through rich farmland and the Maipo River valley. As we start to gain altitude, we'll pass through the valley's picturesque “capital,” San José de Maipo. Following the river, we have a good chance of finding the

stunning Torrent Duck, at this season often with ducklings. Once at our destination, El Yeso Valley, we will bird our way up a rough and rocky road.



The endemic Crag Chilia © Andrew Whittaker

Our first stop will be an attempt at the endemic Crag Chilia, a local inhabitant of steep-sided, rocky valleys. Here, too, we will find the first of several tapaculos, the endemic and very loud Moustached Turca. These large, chunky ground-dwellers hop and run quickly over the rocky ground, foraging like towhees as they move along: this is bold behavior for a tapaculo. In damp meadows, we'll seek out Yellow-rumped and the rare Thick-billed siskins, Mountain Parakeet, White-sided Hillstar, Giant Hummingbird, and Chilean Flicker. We will keep our eyes open on rocky outcrops for the Southern Mountain Vizcacha, a large half-squirrel-half-wallaby-like rodent.



Gray-breasted Seedsnipe © Andrew Whittaker

The scenery becomes even more spectacular as we climb higher and emerge into a huge glacial valley, a wonderful natural amphitheater. Stunning snow-capped peaks and immense scree slopes line the valley sides. The still waters of turquoise lakes mirror the breathtaking scenery, making for a photographer's dream! It is here that we'll set about the day's main task, finding the enigmatic and often confiding Diademed Sandpiper-Plover, one of the world's most beautiful shorebirds. A few pairs nest here each year

along the crystal-clear streams and saline edges of high-elevation bogs. We will carefully and deliberately work our way through the area until we succeed in finding our quarry. The search for the sandpiper-plover will bring the added pleasure of singing Gray-breasted Seedsnipe in their vertical flight displays. We often encounter both Andean and Upland geese here as well.



Reservoir in El Yeso Valley © Andrew Whittaker

Our picnic lunch will be set in scenery glorious even by Chilean standards. Our explorations will turn up a fine variety of other target species, among them Crested Duck, Andean Condor, Mountain Caracara, White-sided Hillstar, Sharp-billed and Cordilleran canasteros, Buff-winged and Gray-flanked cinclodes, Scale-throated Earthcreeper, Rufous-banded Miner, and possibly its highland counterpart, the Creamy-rumped Miner. In grassy areas, we will learn how to distinguish the Cinereous, Spot-billed, and White-browed ground-tyrants. Wherever a supply of seeds is to be found, we should expect Gray-hooded and Plumbeous sierra finches.

By early to mid-afternoon, we'll retrace our route out of the valley and back to Santiago, with stops to look for any expected species that have evaded us. We'll arrive at the hotel in the late afternoon, with time to freshen up before dinner.

NIGHT: La Quinta by Wyndham Santiago Airport, Santiago

November 17, Day 4: Santiago to the Maipo Estuary; Pablo Neruda House; Concón via Laguna Cartagena. Setting our sights on coastal environments, we'll head from Santiago for points west. Our first destination is the Maipo River Wetland and Estuary, where we will spend most of the morning. In the afternoon we will work our way north to the coastal communities of Viña del Mar and Concón by way of Laguna Cartagena. In between we will take in a bit of history with a stop at the home of Pablo Neruda, Chile's most famous and beloved poet.

About an hour and forty-five minutes west of Santiago exists one of Chile's most important bird refuges, the Maipo River Wetland and Estuary. This area, where the Maipo River flows into the Pacific Ocean, is of such great conservation importance that it has been made part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN). In an area of 345 acres are a sand bar, estuary, grasslands, marshes, shrublands, dunes, and beach—a vital nesting area for gulls, terns, and skimmers, and a sanctuary for wintering shorebirds from North America.

We will spend a couple of hours at this site, where the reed-margined lakeshore provides cover for the dazzling Many-colored Rush Tyrant. We will make a special effort to see the recently described Ticking Doradito, which should be newly arrived and in song. The Dusky Tapaculo, a Chilean endemic, is here, too, and the drab Wren-like Rushbird's unbirdlike metallic clicking will be a constant background noise. We also hope to see Collared Plover, the unique desert-nesting Gray Gull, hordes of Black Skimmers freshly arrived from the Amazon, the rare Snowy-crowned Tern, Correndera Pipit, and boreal migrants such as Hudsonian Godwit, Whimbrel, Red Knot, Sanderling, and Baird's Sandpiper.



Many-colored Rush-Tyrant © Andrew Whittaker

The well-kept trails of Laguna Cartagena Reserve offer close-up views of an abundance of waterfowl, and the photographic opportunities here are excellent. The many secluded pools are ideal for viewing species typical of reedbeds and of open water alike. We have chances here for Red Shoveler, Chiloé Wigeon, White-

cheeked and Yellow-billed pintails, Silvery and White-tufted grebes, the elegant “White-backed” Black-necked Stilt, Chilean Swallow, Common Diuca Finch, and Yellow-winged Blackbird.

In complement to our birding endeavors, our day will include a stop at one of the homes of Pablo Neruda, a man often referred to as the national poet of Chile. A writer from the age of 13, Neruda established himself early on as a person of prodigious talent, writing poems covering many themes. His verses about birds and nature represent some of his most endearing works, but a number of Neruda’s most important—and searing—pieces were rooted in his political views. Neruda’s success and popularity with the pen ultimately led him into the world of politics where he worked as a diplomat in more than one administration. Neruda was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1971. The great Colombian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez declared Neruda “the greatest poet of the twentieth century, in any language.” Neruda’s involvement with the Communist government in Chile, and his subsequent association with the socialism of Salvador Allende made him *persona non grata* in the years of the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in the early 1970s. The cause of Neruda’s death in 1973 has long been a source of controversy. Neruda had three houses, all of which now operate as museums. One of these is on the coast, and which we will visit.

During his career, Pablo Neruda wrote several poems about his favorite Chilean foods, so we will have lunch at Pablo Neruda’s restaurant, where we will enjoy Neruda’s favorite, delicious dishes.



Chiloe Wigeon © Andrew Whittaker

Our next stop will be at a small marsh where we have a good chance to see the retiring Stripe-backed Bittern, a bird we’ve had great success with on previous tours. Another species found here includes the wonderful Plumbeous Rail.

We’ll work our way north along the coast, with lunch at a picturesque restaurant; famous for its excellent seafood, the restaurant is also a great spot to see the endemic Seaside Cinclodes.

We’ll reach the lovely coastal resorts of Viña del Mar and Concón in midafternoon. The first settlers of this area were the native “changos,” fishermen who dominated the region as high as the valley of Peuco before the arrival of the Spanish. Today, this is a tourist destination par excellence, attracting visitors from all around the world and well known for its lovely gardens, beaches, and high-rise buildings; wealthy Santiago residents commute here for weekends.

Our hotel for the next two nights overlooks coastal rocks and the sea, where we can enjoy the resident Red-legged Cormorants and Inca Terns, perhaps the most beautiful members of their respective families. Outside, we often have luck in finding Gray Gulls or the cute Marine Otter. The hotel layout is such that sunsets may be viewed from the outdoor deck.

NIGHT: Radisson Blu Accua, Concón

November 18, Day 5: Half-day Pelagic Trip; Cachagua, and Return to Concón. Today we will enjoy an action-packed (and optional) half day offshore in the Humboldt Current, which surges north from Antarctica. Taking us into the most nutrient-rich waters in the world, with an abundance of ocean life, this is truly the crème de la crème of pelagic trips.

After an early breakfast, we'll embark on our private boat (with a bathroom) for five or six hours of nonstop excitement. Spring, when the seas are typically very calm, is the perfect time to go offshore. No place on earth offers more productive seabirding than the Humboldt Current, where any trip can turn up a wonderful cross-section of sub-Antarctic seabirds and warm-water petrels. On a "good" day, the number of birds out here reaches the thousands!



The Salvin's Albatross is always the most common of the albatross. © Andrew Whittaker

Our objectives will include Pacific specialties and southern-tier pelagic birds. Among the many possibilities are a marvelous variety of albatrosses, including the lovely Salvin's (the most common), Black-browed, the immense Northern Royal (whose 12-foot wingspan has to be seen to be believed), the less common Buller's, or even the rare Chatham Albatross.

Other species seen in these waters include Northern Giant-Petrel, Pink-footed and Sooty shearwaters, Wilson's and the rare Elliot's storm-petrels, the sought-after Peruvian Diving-Petrel, and Westland, White-chinned, Juan Fernandez, and Masatierra petrels (the last two rare). Chumming from the back of the boat should attract a tremendous flock following us, affording great views and superb photographic opportunities. Closer to shore, we can expect Inca Tern, Peruvian Booby, and the gorgeous Red-legged Cormorant. Marine mammals can also be good here, and with a little luck, we might see Dusky and

Common Dolphins or South American Fur Seals; even Humpback and Sperm whales are occasionally found here.

We'll be back at the dock in time for a tasty seafood lunch in a nearby restaurant. Afterward, we'll drive the short distance to a mixed colony of Humboldt Penguins and Peruvian Pelicans. There is also a good chance of seeing the playful Marine Otter. We will return to our hotel to rest up and enjoy a good dinner.

NIGHT: Radisson Blu Accua, Concón

November 19, Day 6: Batuco Lagoon Nature Reserve; return to Santiago; departures for home. This morning we'll leave the hotel early for a trip to the freshwater marshes of Batuco, near Santiago. Amid the hundreds of waterbirds, we hope (depending on water levels) to find the rare Black-headed Duck, the only obligate brood parasite among the waterfowl. A remarkable range of birds serve as host species, from gulls to caracaras and even Snail Kites, incubating the duck's eggs. Other birds of special interest we hope to see include Coscoroba Swan, Andean Goose, Great Grebe, Red Shoveler, Yellow-billed Pintail, Yellow-billed Teal, all three species of coot, Cinereous Harrier and Burrowing and Barn owls.

We expect to arrive back in Santiago and **La Quinta by Wyndham, Santiago Airport** in the mid-afternoon, where day rooms have been reserved. In the evening, we'll gather for a final field checklist session and a farewell dinner before transferring to the airport. International flights to the USA generally depart late at night (or just after midnight), arriving in the United States the following morning.

DAY ROOM: La Quinta by Wyndham, Santiago Airport

November 20, Day 7: Arrival home. Flights that departed Santiago the previous evening will arrive in the USA this morning.

TOUR SIZE: The main tour and the extension will each be limited to 12 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: This tour will be led by **Rafael Galvez** and **Fernando Díaz**.



Rafael Galvez has been birding and illustrating birds since childhood, a dual passion that developed when his family moved from Peru to South Florida. Always with a sketchpad in hand, he has traveled throughout the U.S., Latin America, and Eurasia in pursuit of birds. He served several years as a board member of the BirdLife International affiliate in the Republic of Georgia, developing educational and conservation programs. He gained knowledge of the Caucasus region while directing a series of records and documentary shorts on the ancient chants of the Georgian nation. During that period, he also produced retrospective books and catalogs on the works of Russian realist painters. He has combined his love of art, education, and birds while collaborating in several publications, including a field guide to *Raptors and Owls of Georgia (Caucasus)*, which he illustrated and coauthored. After working with

raptor research along the Black Sea, he returned to South Florida to spearhead a new phase for the Florida Keys Hawkwatch migration monitoring project, where he has participated as director. As chair of citizen science and IBA monitoring at Tropical Audubon Society in Miami, he has reached out to underserved communities by providing opportunities for the greater appreciation of birds and Florida habitats. Currently, he lives in Homestead, spends much time in the Everglades, serves on the Florida Ornithological

Society's Records Committee, and is on the Leica Sport Optics Pro Staff. He loves sharing his passion for birds with audiences of all ages, and has been a guide and teacher for over 15 years. You can find some of his latest sketches and articles about painting in the field at his blog, GalvezBirds.com.

Fernando Díaz, or "Feña," showed a special interest at an early age in the birds of his neighborhood. He



grew up birding in the fields and wetlands of Lampa, a few miles from Santiago de Chile, where he developed his bird observation abilities. Feña has strong skills in recognizing birds by song. His first serious approach to bird study was as a volunteer participant in waterfowl censuses and bird banding. This was the catalyst that led him to leave a position as landscaper to pursue his true passions, birds and nature. Feña has traveled extensively in most of the habitats of Chile and several countries in South America, always birding and studying birds. He also spent five months banding birds in the U.S. and Canada. He enjoys spending time birding in the field, especially in the high Andes of Chile, where he co-leads a study of the charismatic Diademed Sandpiper-Plover. Feña is also one of the reviewers for eBird-Chile, and

he is involved in several other bird projects with the Chilean NGO Red de Observadores de Aves de Chile (the Chilean Birders' Network). Feña leads bird trips in Chile, Argentina, and Brazil, where he enjoys showing and teaching tour participants about birds and all other aspects of nature.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the Wild Patagonia & Central Chile trip is **\$19,425** per person in double occupancy from Santiago, Chile, which includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 to dinner on Day 18, internal flights in economy class (Santiago–Puerto Montt ; Puerto Montt–Punta Arenas; Punta Arenas–Santiago), hotel accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, boat excursions as described, guide services provided by the tour leaders, and all tips to hotel, lodge, and transportation staff.

Please Note: Domestic airfares are included in the tour fee. At the time of itinerary publication, the approximate cost of the air tickets is \$850. VENT reserves the right to assess a surcharge should costs increase significantly.

The fee for the Santiago Highlights Extension is **\$4,895** per person in double occupancy from Santiago, Chile, which includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 through dinner on Day 6, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, boat excursions as described, guide services provided by the tour leaders, and all tips to hotel, lodge, and transportation staff.

Tour fees do not include airfare from your home to Santiago and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based on group tariffs. If the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may be charged.

The single supplement for Wild Patagonia & Central Chile is **\$2,400**. The single supplement for Santiago Highlights Extension is **\$600**. 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 these tours, please contact the VENT office. The initial deposit for these tours is **\$1,000** per person per tour. A second deposit for the main tour of **\$3,000** is due 210 days prior to departure (April 1, 2025). If you prefer to pay your deposits using a credit card, the deposits must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your initial deposit by check 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 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 prior to the tour departure date (June 1, 2025, for the main tour; June 17, 2025, for the extension).

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.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:

Cancellation by Participant on Wild Patagonia & Central Chile:

Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 210 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 209 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. **For participants’ protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

<u>If participant cancels:</u>	<u>Participant’s refund will be:</u>
210 days or more before departure date	Your deposit(s) minus \$500*
209 to 151 days before departure date	No refund of the deposits, but any payments on the balance will be refunded
150 days or less before departure date	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 Participant on the Santiago Highlights Extension:

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, 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. **For participants’ protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

<u>If participant cancels:</u>	<u>Participant's refund will be:</u>
180 days or more before departure date	Participant's deposit minus \$500*
179 to 151 days before departure date	No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance of the tour fee will be refunded
150 days or less before departure date	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.

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://redpointtravelprotection.com/plan/ripcord/>; 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/.

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.

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.

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 request that you limit your luggage to one medium or large bag (duffels or roller bags are best) and one carry-on bag, if possible. Soft-sided luggage is recommended.

The main tour includes three internal flights aboard LATAM. LATAM is strict about luggage limits, and imposes a more restrictive weight limit on domestic flights than on international flights. For checked luggage, the limit is currently one bag at 23 kilograms (50 lbs.) per person; for carry-on luggage, the weight is limited to 5 kilograms (about 11 lbs.) per person. The overweight charge for checked luggage amounts to a little more than a dollar per kilogram. In truth, weight allowances are not always strictly enforced; however, we recommend that travelers adhere to the stated limits. **Please do not bring large carry-on bags.** At present, smaller roll-ons up to about 18" in height are permitted, while anything over that size will probably have to be checked. In general, packing lighter is better. Extra baggage can be securely stored in Santiago for those participants combining tours. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag.

Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security, we recommend that you check the website of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for the most updated information: <http://www.tsa.gov/>.

CLIMATE & WEATHER: These tours will operate during the austral spring, when the weather can vary markedly. The expansive north-south breadth of the tour means we are certain to encounter a diversity of conditions. We're more likely to experience warmer, sunnier conditions farther north, such as around Santiago, and cooler conditions in Patagonia. Moreover, temperatures and conditions will vary according to elevation. The coastal regions will be more moderate in temperature while the mountains will be cooler, especially in the early morning and at night, when temperatures can drop significantly.

Around Santiago, temperatures may range from the 60s to low 80s (°F); from the 50s to low 70s in the Andes; and in Patagonia, from the upper 30s to upper 60s.

Please note that **conditions in Chile in the October/November period can run the spectrum from sunny and warm to overcast, windy, and cold.** If the spring is late in arriving, participants should be prepared for cold temperatures, heavy overcast, strong wind, and possible rain, particularly in the Andes and in Patagonia. Snow is also possible (which did occur on our 2023 tour).

CLOTHING: This program is a very casual birding and natural history trip. We suggest you bring primarily field-type clothing and be prepared to dress in layers, as it will certainly be cold at times in Patagonia, especially early in the morning. Casual attire will be appropriate for all occasions. The following items are recommended:

- **Pants:** A couple of pairs of pants are essential. Many people prefer lightweight pants made of cotton or other material, but denim, though not as comfortable, is certainly acceptable. Lined thermal pants are great against the cool winds sometimes encountered in Patagonia or on our ferry crossings.

- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI carry field clothing that many birders find appealing. Pants and shirts made of lightweight durable and dull colored materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular.
- **T-shirts (long- and short-sleeved)** – Simple cotton shirts for wearing under warmer outerwear.
- **Jackets** – A warm, water- and wind-proof jacket is essential for the Andes, especially the south, and for Patagonia.
- **Rain Pants:** Can do double duty as both rain protection and an extra layer in lieu of long underwear on cold or windy days.
- **Warm, waterproof gloves and mittens** – Strongly recommended. Although Chile warms up quickly in the spring, cold weather is very much a possibility, particularly in Patagonia with wind chill.
- **Warm Socks** – Thin cotton or polypropylene socks are a good choice, in combination with a few pairs of wool socks. It is important to have clean, dry socks when in the field.
- **Hats, scarves, and gaiters** – A hat for protection from the sun is essential, while a warm pull-down hat and scarf or neck gaiter will come in handy in windy conditions.
- **Outerwear** – A warm jacket is strongly recommended. A polar fleece is recommended when a jacket may not be necessary. It is important to come to Chile well-prepared with insulation against cold temperatures.

FOOTWEAR: For footwear, we recommend a good trail-walking shoe or sturdy hiking boot (waterproof or Gore-Tex) when in the field. Athletic shoes are acceptable, but 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.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is available at all hotels we stay at more than one night, but will be at an extra charge to the participant.

EQUIPMENT: One of the most important aspects of having an enjoyable travel experience is being prepared with proper equipment. The following items will come in handy during your trip to Chile.

- **Backpack** – good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment during all land excursions
- **Notebooks and pens**
- **Travel alarm clock**
- **Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection**
- **Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions** –Sunscreen of at least SPF 30 is strongly recommended.
- **Personal toiletries**
- **Water bottle** –Please bring your favorite water bottle as it helps to reduce waste.
- **Cameras, lenses, memory cards, and extra batteries**
- **Collapsible walking stick** – A highly recommended item for those who have trouble walking.
- **Folding stool** – Recommended for those who have trouble standing for more than 10 or 15 minutes at a time. The typical folding stool is small, lightweight and portable, consisting of three aluminum legs connected by a central bolt, with a sturdy but pliable material seat.
- **Tissue packs**

BINOCULARS & SPOTTING SCOPES:

Binoculars – We strongly recommend good binoculars of 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 magnification. Please DO NOT bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like “minis” because they are small and lightweight, but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light-gathering power. Trying to find a bird in your binoculars using minis is like trying to read a book through a keyhole. You will be very frustrated, and even if you do manage to get the bird in your binoculars before it flies, you will have a poor view. You will find that 8x32 or 8x42 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Spotting Scopes – Your tour leader(s) will have scopes available for group use throughout the trip. If you wish to do digital scoping, as this is an excellent tour to do so, please feel free to bring your own.

CONDITIONS:

Main Tour: While birding will receive heavy emphasis, this program encompasses other aspects of natural history including scenery, mammal viewing, star-gazing, and doses of botany (the flowering plants can be incredible). The scope of the tour and the planned range of activities necessitates travel by multiple means, including bus, coaster and/or Sprinter; airplane, of which there are three internal flights; and auto ferry. Accommodations range from good to excellent. In all situations, we strive for “best available.” The Hosteria Pehoe in Tierra del Fuego National Park is heated by a log fire if it is cold. Please note that while this lodge sits in a premier location for scenery and logistical planning, the rooms are only of average to good quality. The food is good to excellent throughout.

We try to minimize the amount of time we spend in the vehicles, but there will indeed be one or two days with long drives (with some birding stops) in Patagonia.

Walking conditions are generally easy, as our activities in most of the areas we visit are along flat roads and trails. There are some gradual climbs in both Altos de Lircay and Torres del Paine National Parks. No activities will take place above 3,300 feet elevation, and we have never had any problems with altitude sickness.

Water and snacks will be available at all times.

Puma Excursions: Our excursions to view wild Pumas entail driving to various points along roads either in the park or on an adjacent private property, then potentially walking from one to three miles across open and rolling grassy terrain interspersed with short, stunted bushes. These excursions are not overly difficult, and we will make frequent stops to scan the surrounding terrain, especially if the Pumas are hunting. This activity also involves stopping to sit or stand quietly as we observe the animals engaging in undisturbed behavior such as sleeping, playing with cubs, or attending a kill. **Please note: Leaving the road for Puma observations will certainly require physical hiking and is therefore optional.**

Extension: The travel conditions are similar to those for the main tour. All activities take place within a few hours of Santiago. Accommodations and meals are good to excellent throughout, and walking will be on mostly flat and even terrain. There are no internal flights on the extension, and we’ll travel by small bus or coaster for the duration of the trip. Reaching the Yeso Valley consists of round-trip travel from Santiago to the mountains and return. It is a long day, with 5.5–6 hours of travel time in the bus (2.5–3 hours each way). We will leave the hotel early (by 6:30 a.m.) and return in the late afternoon. Upon arrival in the valley, we will spend several hours birding the various micro-habitats there in search of a variety of specialty and widespread birds, principally the Diademed Sandpiper-Plover. The elevation of the Yeso Valley is 2,980 m ~

9,780ft. Our pelagic trip of five to six hours is on a larger boat, appropriate for the open ocean, with a bathroom. Water and snacks will be available at all times.

On both tour sections, we emphasize that no one will be subjected to physical demands that exceed their capabilities. All walking will be done at a slow pace, with the exception of the Puma hiking. Meals will also be good to excellent, and we will be able to enjoy high quality Chilean seafood on more than one occasion, as well as lamb barbeque and French cuisine in Punta Arenas on the main tour. **Those who are not fit for light to moderate physical activity, including those with physical disabilities that affect mobility and balance or other conditions associated with poor health, are advised not to join the trip.**

Special Note: This tour is intended as a natural history extravaganza, with virtually no time included for exploring the country's historical and cultural attractions. Participants with an interest in enjoying more of Santiago or visiting other parts of the country should come early or stay after the tour ends. Santiago is a European-flavored blend of colonial and modern architecture, reflected in its many churches, museums, theaters, and parks. Some of the city's famous landmarks you can visit on your own are the beautiful horse track Club Hipico, the Pre-Columbian Art Museum, and the summit of San Cristobal Hill, where an enormous statue of the Virgin Mary overlooks the city.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:

PASSPORTS

A passport is required for entry into Chile and must be valid for the duration of your stay. Please check the expiration date on your passport. You will also want to make sure that you have at least two blank pages in your passport for stamps. A tourist card is issued at the international port-of-entry.

If you need a passport, you should get it well in advance of the tour departure date. Allow four to six weeks to obtain a passport. For additional fees, a passport can be issued on an expedited basis. In the United States this can be done at the nearest passport office, many post offices, or the county clerk's office. You may also visit <http://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en.html> for information on how to get or renew a passport.

As a safety measure, photocopy the first two pages of your passport. Keep the photocopies in a safe place, so if your passport is lost you will have proof of identification. Your passport should be signed and easily available at all times. You will need it for check-in at the airport on your first day of departure, so **do not pack it in your checked luggage.**

VISAS

Visas are not required for U.S. and Canadian citizens for entry into Chile for a stay of up to three months. Note that the "reciprocity" fee that formerly applied to all U.S. and Canadian citizens entering Chile has been eliminated. Rules and regulations pertaining to non-U.S. citizens may vary; please check with the consulate or embassy of Chile.

CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS: Your trip to Chile includes all necessary expenses. You will want to bring enough cash to cover personal expenses not included in the program, such as gifts, laundry, special gratuities, meals on your own, and personal items. It is best to carry small denominations of cash as many places we visit may be unable to provide change for large bills. While U.S. dollars may be accepted in more populous areas, it is always convenient to have a supply of local currency for such items. It is best to acquire local currency before leaving home, or at the airport or a bank upon arrival in Santiago. Most places accept credit cards, especially Visa and MasterCard.

Should you extend your vacation in Chile beyond what is offered in the program, you'll want to obtain local currency. Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

The official currency of Chile is the Chilean Peso (CLP). You can check the latest currency conversion rate by visiting "XE—The World's Favorite Currency Site" at <http://www.xe.com/>.

ELECTRICITY: The electrical current in Chile is 220V (110-120V in the U.S.). Most electrical outlets are of the European standard socket "Type C or Type L." These outlets are ungrounded, with openings for two round pins. A less common outlet features openings for three flat blades, with two of the blades angled. Both types are in use in most of the hotels we will stay in. A few hotels may provide plug-in adapters that can accommodate standard American-type plug-ins with two flat pins of similar size (but not with one flat blade larger than the other). Many appliances now are dual-designed to operate on European electrical voltages, but you definitely should bring adapters and an all-purpose transformer if there is any doubt whether your appliances are suitable for higher voltage.

INTERNET/WI-FI: Internet and Wi-Fi service is available at all of the hotels.

LANGUAGE: Spanish is the language primarily spoken in Chile.

TIME: Chile is on Chilean Standard Time (CLT) and is 2 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST).

HEALTH: VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which includes vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases. Among these so-called Routine Vaccinations are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers), and Varicella (Chickenpox). You should also be up-to-date with Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations.

As of this writing, no major shots or inoculations are required for entry into Chile.

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

Typhoid – VENT recommends vaccination against Typhoid, a bacterial disease endemic to Chile, caused by *Salmonella typhi*. It is transmitted through consumption of contaminated food and water, typically when someone who is infected uses the bathroom and does not wash their hands. Symptoms may include high fever, weakness, stomach pain, headache, diarrhea or constipation, cough, and loss of appetite.

COVID-19: We continually emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. Although VENT no longer maintains any of its COVID-era prevention protocols, we strongly recommend best practices for protecting yourself and your fellow travelers against COVID-19 illness. These measures include receiving the primary series vaccinations for those eligible, staying "Up to Date" with COVID-19 booster shots, wearing high filtration N-95 or KN-95 masks when in airports and on airplanes, and avoiding risky social settings in the lead-up to your tour. These recommendations are firmly rooted in CDC guidance regarding recommendations for avoiding COVID-19.

Sun Exposure – The sun’s ultraviolet rays are more dangerous in Chile than many other places in the world, due to the long daylight hours in a far southerly destination. The sun’s ultraviolet rays are damaging to the eyes and skin with prolonged exposure. Anytime you are outdoors, you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. Severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors, and be sure to bring an ample supply of high-SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultraviolet-blocking, polarized sunglasses.

Biting Insects – Biting insects are not a serious problem in most places we visit on this tour, and there are no chiggers at all; however, we may encounter some mosquitoes in wetlands around Santiago or in some of the forests in the south. To protect yourself, we recommend wearing long-sleeved shirts and pants and applying insect repellent when necessary. Lotions are preferable to sprays, as they are less obtrusive to others and tend to come in smaller, more easily packed bottles. Cutter and OFF! are leading brands.

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>

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers’ Information Line (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). You can check the CDC website at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html (click on Travel Health).

SUGGESTED READING: A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

Birds: Either of the following field guides are highly recommended for this tour.

Jaramillo, Alvaro. ***Birds of Chile***. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003.

This excellent guide has long been the standard for bird identification in Chile. It is arguably the best all-around field guide to the birds of this country, featuring excellent plates, text, and interesting taxonomic notes. It is also lightweight and easily portable.

Cifuentes, Gonzalo E. Gonzáles and Daniel E. Martínez Piña. ***Field Guide to the Birds of Chile***. Helm Field Guides. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021.

An excellent newer guide showing new additions to the country's avifauna. Plates are excellent, especially non passerines. Text good, too, and updated showing all vagrants recently recorded. It's lightweight and easily portable.

Other Natural History Reference:

Chester, Sharon. ***A Wildlife Guide to Chile***. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008. Excellent read and a perfect all-around natural history guide. Full of information and good illustrations; coverage ranges from plants, animals, fish, cetaceans, and butterflies to the country's various habitats, zones, and weather types.

Hilty, Steven L. ***Birds of Tropical America: A Watcher's Introduction to Behavior, Breeding and Diversity***. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005.

This wonderful resource was written by VENT tour leader Steve Hilty. Even though the book's focus is primarily on the tropical forest ecosystem, it conveys information that applies to any South American destination. Highly recommended.

History/Non-fiction:

Bridges, E. Lucas. ***Uttermost Part of the Earth: The First History of Tierra del Fuego and the Fuegian Indians***. London: Overlook/Rookery Publishing, 2007. (Earlier editions from other publishers are also available).

Excellent background on Tierra del Fuego; essential reading for those on the main tour.

Shipton, Eric Earle. ***Tierra del Fuego: The Fatal Lodestone***. Readers Union, 1974.

Long out-of-print but recently republished, this classic work recounts the history of the discovery of sailing routes in the region of Tierra del Fuego and of the settlement of the region. Part historical narrative and part autobiography, Shipton chronicles some of the most remarkable adventures imaginable. Essential reading for those on the main tour.

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 January 29, 2025, 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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