

# PATAGONIA

## ARGENTINA AND CHILE

January 7 - 19, 2021\*

13 Days / 12 Nights

**\$9975\*\***

\* Exact dates are tentative subject to lodge and local guide availability. Tour will take place in early January.

\*\*Small-group surcharges will apply for groups smaller than 10

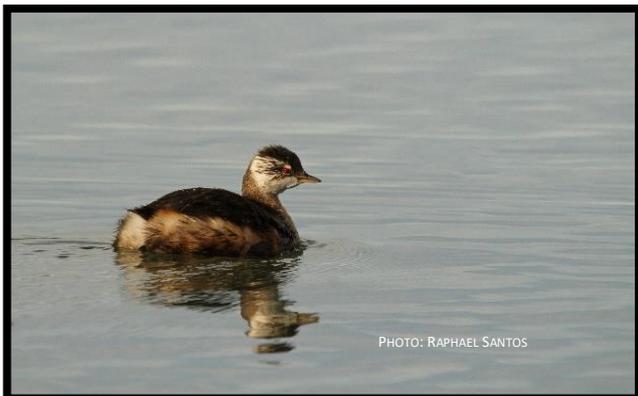


Patagonia is most definitely a contender for the most beautiful place in the world, boasting stunning vistas at every turn, paths untrodden by the masses, towering snow-capped mountains, and a multitude of lakes in many colors. Patagonia's mountains and glaciers, crystalline lakes, battered shores and abundant wildlife are just a few things that draw people to one of the furthest and most untouched places on earth. When most people think of Patagonia, the first things that come to mind are stunning scenic vistas, dramatic mountain landscapes and mammals such as foxes, guanacos and pumas, but the birds of Patagonia are equally impressive, surprisingly abundant, and relatively easy to spot among the region's open plains and sparse foliage.

## DETAILED ITINERARY

**Day 01:** Domestic flight from Buenos Aires to El Calafate. Transfer to the town (20-minute drive) to Patagonia Queen Hotel. This afternoon will be short, and we will have time just to drop our luggage in the room, take gear and go straight for waterfowl. The Argentinian Lake is located right in front of the town and we will be exploring this impressive lake for a few hours. As we drive along Paseo de La Costanera (which travels along the lake shore) we will look for some target species such as Black-necked Swan, Coscoroba Swan, Magellanic Plover, Austral Blackbird, Patagonian Mockingbird, Upland Goose, White-tufted Grebe, Crested Duck, Red Shoveler, Cinnamon Teal, Chiloe (Southern) Wigeon, Yellow-billed (Speckled) Teal, Yellow-billed Pintail, Ruddy Duck, White-winged Coot, Tufted Tit-Tyrant and others. Dinner in El Calafate, a nice little touristic town known for good restaurants, bars, casinos, souvenir shops and great atmosphere. We will have some time to enjoy the town before the next day's transfer to El Chaltén.

**Accommodation: Patagonia Queen Hotel (D)**



Clockwise from the top left corner: 1) Black-necked Swan, 2) Coscoroba Swan, 3) Chiloe (Southern) Wigeon, 4) Ruddy Duck and White-winged Coot 5) White-tufted Grebe and 6) Crested Duck.

**Day 02:** Early breakfast and transfer to El Chaltén. You will remember those beautiful mountains full of snow you saw from the window of your room in El Calafate - we are heading straight to those



mountains. It is easy to understand why this location is known as the Hiking Capital of Argentina. The little town was recently created as part of a geopolitical strategy that put an end to the border conflicts with Chile over Lago del Desierto. The drive from El Calafate to El Chaltén takes about 3 hours (214 km) along a straight road that crosses a remote area north of Viedma Lake. After a quick check at El Chaltén's visitor center, we will hike up one trail to look for Andean Condors. From there it is possible to

see the Mount Fitz Roy, which is the iconic image used in photos and postcards of this location. This is one of the shortest trails around here, and after this walk we will have a quick lunch in town to save important birding time. In the afternoon, we will be birding in a different forested habitat where the main targets are Black-throated Huet-huet, Magellanic Woodpecker, Striped Woodpecker, Chilean Flicker, Austral Parakeet, Great Shrike-Tyrant, Rufous-tailed Plantcutter, Plumbeous Sierra-Finch, White-throated Treerunner, Thorn-tailed Rayadito, Greater Yellow-finch, Spectacled Duck and few others.

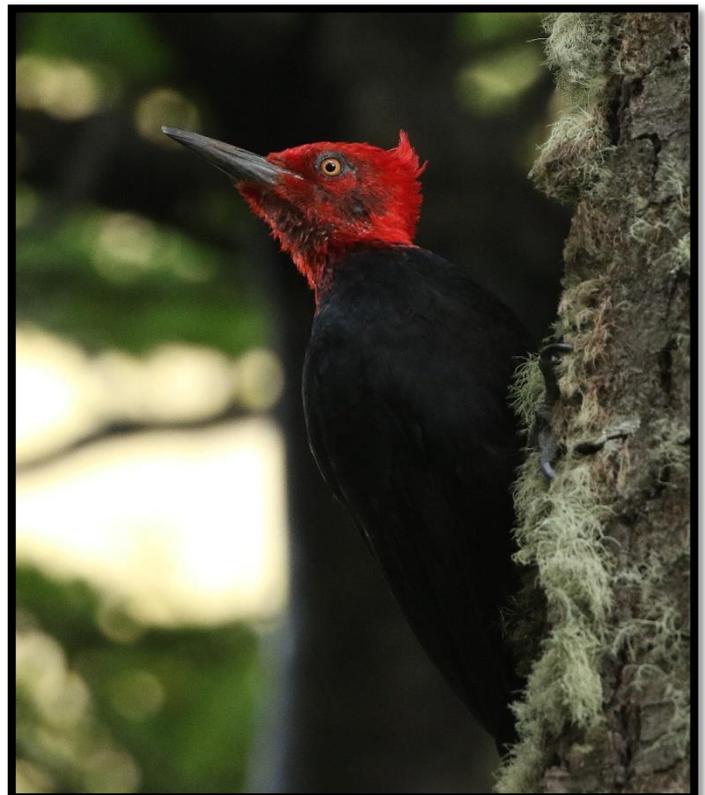
**Accommodation: Fritz Roy Hosteria (BLD)**

**Day 03:** Another full day in El Chaltén to explore the trails and look for the birds we missed during the first day. It's important to spend more than a single day in El Chaltén because the weather there can change quickly, sometimes bringing strong wind with dark clouds and cold temperatures.

**Accommodation: Fritz Roy Hosteria (BLD)**

**Day 04:** We will enjoy some early morning birding before we drive back to El Calafate with birding en route. Along the way we will stop to photograph interesting birds like Black-chested Buzzard Eagles sitting on fence posts or on the rocks. We will also stop for guanacos, a South American camelid that is related to the llamas and alpacas. We can also stop for Andean Condor, Cinereous Harrier and other birds we might spot along the drive. After lunch in El Calafate, we will explore the surroundings of this town and all the habitats available in the landscape. Some of the target birds of this day are Patagonian Tinamou, Elegant Crested Tinamou, Ashy-headed Goose, Flying Streamer-Duck, Two-banded Plover, Plain-tailed Tit-Spinetail, Austral Negrito, Spectacled Tyrant, Correndera Pipit and some others. Back to El Calafate to have dinner.

**Accommodation: Patagonia Queen Hotel (BLD)**



*Magellanic Woodpecker*

**Day 05:** We will have an early breakfast to allow time to explore one of the most impressive places in the world, the Perito Moreno Glacier. It will take us most of the morning, birding en route, to get there. Target birds of the day include Magellanic Woodpecker, Magellanic Tapaculo, Spectacled Duck, Plain-mantled Tit-Spinetail, White-throated Treerunner, Scale-throated Earthcreeper, Band-tailed Earthcreeper, Cinereous Harrier, Austral Parakeet, Thorn-tailed Rayadito, Wilson's Phalarope, Correndera Pipit, Ashy-headed Goose, Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant, Cinnamon-bellied Ground-Tyrant, Ochre-naped Ground-Tyrant, Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant, Austral Negrito, Tufted



Tit-Tyrant and others. After lunch we will go for the main attraction of that region, the Perito Moreno Glacier in Los Glaciares National Park. This stunning mass of condensed ice spans 121 square miles and is still growing despite the falling blocks of ice. It is more than 70 meters high and four kilometers long – just impressive! If you wait for a while, you'll likely witness huge chunks of the ice mass fracture off and crash into the water, creating a massive, reverberating roar. There are walking paths that allow you to check out the glacier from a few different viewpoints, as well as a boat that takes you on a 45-minute trip around the base. There are also trekking tours that take you out to walk on parts of the glacier itself, surrounded by the beautiful Patagonian scenery of forests and mountains. Both of the optional excursions (boat trip and hiking on the top of the glacier) are not included in the tour price and it would be necessary to book it in advance. Please contact your guide if you would like to do it instead of birding activities. After the whole walk along the boardwalks, we will keep birding inside Los Glaciares National Park, especially for some target birds such as Magellanic Woodpecker, Magellanic Tapaculo, White-browed Ground-Tyrant, Patagonian Sierra-Finch, Chilean Flicker, Black-chinned Siskin and a few others. The lake by the glacier is a regular location for Spectacled Duck and chances are good out there. The drive back to El Calafate (80km) takes one hour and a half. It's important to drive back slowly during dusk or at night because there are many common hares running across the road. The bright light from the cars usually blinds them while they run, which is why we often see hares killed by cars along all the way. Dinner in town.

**Accommodation:** [Patagonia Queen Hotel \(BLD\)](#)

**Day 06:** We will have an early breakfast and then transfer to Chile with birding enroute (Laguna de Los Escarchados). We will make a few stops along the way for Black-chested Buzzard Eagle, Red-backed Hawk, Hooded Grebe (with a lot of luck), Least Seedsnipe, Tawny-throated Dotterel, Chocolate-vented Tyrant or just for some landscape shots, which are stunning. This drive takes about four hours through Esperanza (along paved road) and almost three hours if we take a short cut along a dirt road (Ruta 40). The short cut is not recommended during rainy days because the road gets too muddy.

After passing Cancha Carrera, we must stop at the Argentinian immigration office in Paso Río Don Guillermo. With some luck we will spend just 40 minutes showing them our passports and papers, but if we park the car behind a bus full of tourists it could take a while. Please, don't bring fruits, bread or something similar because nobody is allowed to cross the border carrying food. If you have some snacks, please keep it inside the luggage. Cerro Castillo is the name of the little village located at the Chilean side of the border, our base for the next three days. We will have



breakfast and dinner at the lodge with packed lunches for the full-day excursions for the next three days, so you should bring snacks for the long days. We will be looking for wildlife in Torres del Paine National Park, where we hope to see Lesser Rhea and Andean Condor, the main target birds for this area. Today, we will have lunch in the village before driving to the park. A non-stop drive from Cerro Castillo to the lodge (Estancia Laguna Amarga) would take one hour and a half (Ruta Y-150 and Y-156) but we will spend the whole afternoon birding and looking for pumas along this route. At the end of the day, we'll drive back to Cerro Castillo to have dinner. Prepare yourself for the unforgettable experience you will have the next day.

**Accommodation: El Ovejero Hotel (BLD)**

**Day 07:** Early breakfast and the search for pumas begins near Torres del Paine National Park. We will spend the whole day scanning the landscape for the main target of this spot: pumas. These cats are shy, and they can easily hide themselves inside the golden-colored grass or dark bushes called "*mata negra*" despite the short vegetation and open habitat. During the search we will also look for birds, of course, and some expected species to find around here are Andean



Condor, Austral Canastero, Long-tailed Meadowlark, Fire-eyed Diucon, White-throated Caracara, Dark-faced Ground Tyrant and many others. Quick stop at noon to have lunch near Laguna Amarga, and right after lunch we'll go back to the grasslands to further enjoy our first day looking for pumas. Once we find a puma, we will need to wait for the right moment to photograph it. Sometimes it takes hours, so prepare yourself to skip lunch if necessary (again, bring snacks!). This area is huge,

and there are several other attractions to check, such as the woodland around Refugio Pudeto, Salto Grande Waterfall, Lago Grande and Lago Grey. At the end of the day, we'll drive back to Cerro Castillo to have dinner at the hotel.

**Accommodation: El Ovejero Hotel (BLD)**

**Day 08:** Early breakfast to spend one more full day exploring this magnificent region in Southern Chilean Patagonia. We will have another day focused on pumas. We will be driving along some roads while puma trackers hike up to the hills to spot them from there. They have radios and we stay in touch with them all day long. If they find a puma, the whole group will move toward the location. We will have a day similar to the previous one – birding while we search for pumas. All the guanacos walking with those beautiful snowy mountains in the background will provide us with very good photograph opportunities. It is even better when pumas start to follow them, just waiting the right moment for the attack. We will take time to savor this moment before it's time to drive back to Cerro Castillo.

**Accommodation: El Ovejero Hotel (BLD)**



*Puma photographed in Torres del Paine National Park.*

**Day 09:** Early breakfast to explore Torres del Paine National Park itself. Everyone is impressed with the landscape we can see through the windows while we drive across this conservation area. Torres del Paine National Park offers many trails and different spots to look for wildlife. Even a whole month wouldn't be enough to cover all the possible spots. The upper part of the mountains is explored by hikers and climbers, but the grasslands at the bottom part are more productive for birders. We will be birding all day long with the main target birds being Austral Pygmy-Owl, White-throated Caracara, Sharp-billed Canastero, Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant, Ochre-naped Ground-Tyrant, Mourning Sierra-Finch, Austral Thrush and many others. The area around Laguna Amarga



*Laguna Amarga*

is always one of the best choices to look for birds, but we can also explore all the way to Hotel Las Torres. A specific expedition for the Torrent Duck can be done to photograph this iconic bird from the Andes. This day represents the last chance for pumas and other bird species that we're still missing. It's

time to find the species we've missed or try for better shots of those we have seen. Austral Rail is a good bird to get near Lago Sarmiento, and we will try for it. Once again, we will drive back to Cerro Castillo at the end of the day.

**Accommodation: El Ovejero Hotel (BLD)**

**Day 10:** Early transfer from Cerro Castillo to Punta Arenas. The drive takes four hours, but we will spend more time on the road to stop at a few locations to bird for a while. Upon arrival at Punta Arenas, the main Chilean city in Patagonia, we will explore the famous Strait of Magellan.

**Accommodation: Hotel Plaza (BLD)**

**Day 11:** We will have an early breakfast to take the ferry across the Strait of Magellan. After a two-hour trip across the channel, we will be heading to a location called Porvenir at the northern part of the main island of Tierra del Fuego where we will check the King Penguin colony. We will spend some time at Pinguino Rei Park to start the 6-hour drive to Ushuaia.

**Accommodation: Hotel Albatroz (BLD)**



*Lesser Rhea*

**Day 12:** Another early breakfast to explore the Southernmost tip of South America. We will have one full day in Ushuaia to look for some target birds such as Kelp Goose, Ashy-headed Goose, Flightless Streamer-Duck, Magellanic Penguin, Magellanic Cormorant, King Cormorant, Imperial Cormorant, Magellanic Oystercatcher, and few others.

**Accommodation: Hotel Albatroz (BLD)**

**Day 13:** Morning birding (if possible) before we head to the airport. Domestic flight back to Buenos Aires to take the international flight back to the United States.



*Guanacos, the main prey for Pumas, are common mammals in Torres del Paine National Park.*

## Possible extensions:

- One more day in Ushuaia to explore other islands by boat
- Antarctica - from few days up to a week. Tourist ships depart all summer from Ushuaia, Argentina, and take roughly 48 hours to reach Antarctica.
- Antarctica - a second option to visit Antarctica is via a 2-hour flight from Punta Arenas, Chile, to King George Island where you board a ship.

If you are interested in extending your trip, please contact us well in advance so our guide can create a customized itinerary for you.

If multiple people are interested in visiting Antarctica, we will develop some sample itineraries for the group to consider after we know how many people want to go and we've had a chance to discuss their preferences.

## Included in the tour price:

- All lodging
- All meals as indicated on the itinerary (BLD)
- Private transportation throughout the tour
- 2 days at Estancia (private property) for puma viewing
- Entrance fee for all parks and private reserves
- Ferry across the Strait of Magellan
- Visit to King Penguin Colony
- Bottled water (1 liter per day)

## NOT included in the tour price:

- International and domestic flights
- Beverages other than water (1 liter per day, extra must be purchased)
- Airport transfers (this is due to varied arrival schedules and might be included)
- Travel insurance (HIGHLY recommended)
- Personal costs such as laundry, phone calls, souvenirs, snacks, etc.
- Tips for driver and guides

## PAYMENT INFORMATION:

Deposit of \$1500 with registration. Balance is due on or before September 7, 2020.

Checks should be made payable to ***Cheepers! Birding on a Budget*** and mailed with the registration form to:

**Cheepers! Birding on a Budget**  
**Post Office Box 385**  
**Spring Valley, OH 45370**

## Cancellation policy:

**Cancellation should be made in writing (email or snail mail)**

More than 6 months prior to departure – full refund of deposit

Between 4 and 6 months prior to departure – 50% refund of deposit

Less than 4 months prior to departure – No refund of deposit

**If cancellation occurs after full payment is made, a refund will be given only if the vacant spot is filled.**

## **Trip insurance is highly recommended.**

You can compare insurance coverage and prices at the following websites:

[www.quotewright.com](http://www.quotewright.com)

[www.insuremytrip.com](http://www.insuremytrip.com)

*Cheepers! Birding on a Budget LLC reserves the right to make changes in the itinerary if the need should arise due to unforeseeable circumstances such as weather, landslides, and other natural phenomena, as well as suggestions by local guides in order to take advantage of an unusual birding opportunity.*