



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Argentina

The Best of Argentina

29th September to 9th October 2012 (11 days)



This birding adventure, from the wetlands near Buenos Aires to the mighty Iguazu Falls rainforest, covers an incredible diversity of habitats. We will begin by exploring the rich pampas grasslands, after which we will cross the Paraná River into Entre Ríos province where we will search for specialities in the thorny woodlands and wet grasslands. The tour then continues to Corrientes province where we will make our base at a lovely lodge on the 'Esteros del Ibera', one of the largest marshland ecosystems of the country. After exploring the Ibera lagoon we continue to the province of Misiones, searching the last remaining patch of native Araucaria forest in the San Pedro region. We then proceed to the Urugua-i State Park, providing us with the more restricted species of the hillier areas, after which we will conclude at the impressive rainforest-covered Iguazu Falls. This is a very comprehensive tour that is suitable for those who enjoy easy and accessible birding, travelling in comfortable vehicles, and staying in cosy lodges and hotels along the way!

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

DETAILS

Tour Dates	29th September to 9th October 2012 (11 days)
Tour Price	US\$3,580 * £2,250 * €2,550 * ZAR24,500 per person sharing US\$410 approximate cost of domestic flight (Tour price fixed in US\$, other rates subject to exchange rate fluctuations)
Tour size	Limited to 8 participants and 1 Rockjumper leader

THE ITINERARY

29th September	Buenos Aires to Escobar
30th September	Escobar to El Palmar
1st October	El Palmar to Colonia Pellegrini
2nd October	Iberá Marshes
3rd October	Colonia Pellegrini to Ituzaingó
4th October	Ituzaingó to San Pedro
5th October	San Pedro to Puerto Esperanza
6th October	Urugua-í Park
7th October	Puerto Esperanza to Iguazú
8th October	Iguazú National Park
9th October	Iguazú to Buenos Aires

THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

Day 1, 29th September: Buenos Aires to Escobar. After arrival at Buenos Aires International Airport, we transfer to the nearby Costanera Sur Nature reserve for our first taste of the Argentine Pampas birdlife. This reserve is located within the boundaries of Argentina's capital city, not far from the business district. We will walk along some of the numerous trails in order to explore different Pampas and riverine habitats such as grasslands, lagoons, marshes and forest. Some of the local bird species include Whistling Heron, Silver Teal, Roadside Hawk, Snowy-crowned Tern, Wattled Jacana, Guira Cuckoo, Sulphur-bearded Spinetail, Freckle-breasted Thornbird, Rufous Hornero, Many-coloured Rush-Tyrant, Masked Gnatcatcher and Yellow-billed Cardinal. After a wonderful introduction to the birds of Argentina, we will then travel northwards to Escobar where we will spend the night at a local hotel and enjoy a delicious welcome dinner.

Day 2, 30th September: Escobar to El Palmar. We will make an early start this morning to bird in the Otamendi National Park. This 3,000 hectares reserve sits on the shores of the Paraná River just north of Buenos Aires, and is included in the international list of Important Bird Areas. It takes in three of the main bird habitats in Argentina: Pampas grasslands, thorny woodland and the Parana River Delta. Possible highlights to be found in Otamendi include both



Straight-billed and Curve-billed Reedhaunters, Diademed Tanager, as well as more widespread species such as White-tufted Grebe, Southern Screamer, Long-winged Harrier, Giant Wood Rail, White-tipped Dove, Checkered Woodpecker, Chotoy Spinetail, Warbling Doradito and Great Pampa-Finch.



We will leave Otamendi around mid morning and then drive to Ceibas. This is an area located across the Paraná River in the Province of Entre Ríos. Its abundant birds make it really enjoyable for birders the world over, and its dense thorny forests and marshlands are home to an incredible number of species. These include Greater Rhea, Red-winged Tinamou, Savanna Hawk, White-fronted and White Woodpeckers, Scimitar-billed Woodcreeper, Brown Cacholote, Lark-like Brushrunner, Short-billed Canastero and Tufted Tit-Spinetail. Depending on the road conditions, we will try and visit a nearby birding spot where rare birds such as Saffron-cowled Blackbird and Black-and-white Monjita can be spotted. After exploring this area we will continue our drive north to the region of El Palmar National Park, where we will spend the night in a nearby lodge.

Day 3, 1st October: El Palmar to Colonia Pellegrini. El Palmar National Park is a small but very diverse reserve that was created primarily to protect a relict of Argentina's Mesopotamia Savannah. This shelters the last pure stocks of Yatay, a palm that used to cover a vast area in the lowlands of the country's northeast. Besides the savannah, there are some small lagoons and a nice gallery forest on the coast of the Uruguay River. Here we can expect to see birds such as Ringed Teal, South American Snipe, Yellow-billed Tern, Spot-winged Pigeon, Blue-crowned Parakeet, Burrowing Owl, White-spotted Woodpecker, Chicli Spinetail, Grey Monjita, Tawny-headed Swallow, White-rimmed Warbler and Green-winged Saltator. After spending our morning in El Palmar, we will drive north to the Iberá Marshes.

This is a long drive but offers some excellent birding opportunities *en route*, especially the last 100 kilometres where several species of seedeaters come to nest during spring and summer. Chestnut, Rufous-rumped, Tawny-bellied and Dark-throated Seedeaters can all be seen here at this time of the year. We will spend the following two nights in a lodge at Colonia Pellegrini, a village located in the heart of Esteros del Iberá Reserve.

Day 4, 2nd October: Iberá and Colonia Pellegrini area. The Iberá Marshes are amongst the most extensive wetlands in Argentina, covering roughly one fourth of the country's Mesopotamis. Some places in Iberá are virtually inaccessible due to a lack of good roads, thereby creating a naturally protected sanctuary for wildlife. The area is also home to a wide array of waterfowl, and its swamps, open water lagoons and woodlands are certainly a birder's paradise. These we will thoroughly explore while searching for its diverse and colourful avifauna.

We will spend today in the vicinity of Iberá Lagoon and Colonia Pellegrini, where birding is particularly spectacular. In the morning we will take a boat tour on the lagoon to search for species that may include Stripe-backed Bittern, Rufous-sided Crake, Donacobius, Long-tailed Reed-Finch, Yellow-rumped Marshbird, Yellow-headed Caracara and eight species of heron! This is also a great opportunity to view



mammals such as Marsh Deer, Capybara and Southern River Otter, and reptiles like Spectacled Caiman and Yellow Anaconda. The local grasslands can also produce some really special birds, including Strange-tailed Tyrant, Lesser Grass-Finch and Marsh Seedeater. An afternoon walk through the forest will give us a chance for Striped Cuckoo, Narrow-billed Woodcreeper, Rufous-browed Peppershrike and Purple-throated Euphonia, among many others. Mammals are also present here, and it is not uncommon to find Black-and-gold Howler Monkey and Grey Brocket Deer, to name but two. We will end our day by exploring the “Espinal.” It is in this thorny woodland that we expect to find one of the rarest birds of Argentina, namely Yellow Cardinal.



Day 5, 3rd October: Colonia Pellegrini to Ituzaingó.

Today we will leave Colonia Pellegrini for Ituzaingó in the northern part of Corrientes province. Birding along this road is very rewarding as we will be crossing a good part of the Iberá Marshes, as well as grasslands and lagoons. We therefore have another opportunity to see any of the species we may have missed over the last few days, as well as a few additions. We expect to check into our hotel in Ituzaingó in the late afternoon.

This evening we will go birding to Rincón de Santa María Reserve. This small 300-hectare site is

privately owned and was created after the construction of one of the largest hydro-electrical stations on the Paraná River; the purpose being to protect part of the native habitat and several species of rarer birds. Some of the birds we will search for include Lesser and Wedge-tailed Grass-Finches, Blue-billed Black-Tyrant, Striped Owl, Least Nighthawk, and a very localized resident in the area, Sickie-winged Nightjar.

Day 6, 4th October: Ituzaingó to San Pedro. We will start our birding today by visiting Rincón de Santa Marta again in the early morning. Our goal is to find some of the area’s unique birds, including Ochre-breasted Pipit, Sharp-tailed Tyrant and the very rare Black-masked Finch. After this we will continue driving towards the Province of Misiones, where we will bird the surroundings of Posadas (its capital city), and also dedicate time to search the wet grasslands of Profundidad. There are a number of target species that we will look for here, including Saffron-cowled Blackbird, Streamer-tailed Tyrant and Plumbeous Seedeater. Late in the afternoon, after driving through the grasslands of Misiones, we will arrive in San Pedro where we will spend the night in a local hotel.

This evening we go visiting a nearby provincial park called La Araucaria. This protects a relict of the Paraná Rainforest with a large patch of *Araucaria angustifolia*, a species of monkey-puzzle tree. Here we will make a special effort to see the very rare and localized Vinaceous-breasted Amazon. A small population of this special parrot roosts inside the reserve, so our chances are very good. We will end our birding day looking for two species of owls; these being Stygian and Striped.



Day 7, 5th October: San Pedro to Puerto Esperanza. We will pay a second visit to La Araucaria this morning, and focus on finding some highly localized specialties such as Canebrake Groundcreeper and Araucaria Tit-Spinetail. Thereafter we will leave for Puerto Esperanza where we spend the following two nights. We expect to check into our



hotel late in the afternoon, after which we will drive to the nearby Urugua-í Provincial Park. Here we expect to arrive in the early evening, giving us time to enjoy some local owling. Among the special species we expect to see are Tawny-browed and Rusty-barred.

Day 8, 6th October: Urugua-í Park. This provincial reserve was created to protect an area of roughly 60,000 hectares of the Misiones Hilly Forest, and sits around 600 meters above sea level. This makes it quite unique for the area as most of the province's forests are found at lower altitudes. This particular ecosystem has a very dense understory of bamboos, highly attractive for a good number of species that we won't be able to see around Iguazú. We will therefore spend a full day here exploring the reserve's different habitats.



The riverine forest along the Uruzú River is excellent for birds, including Black-fronted Piping-Guan, Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper and Streamside Warbler. The bamboo stocks host Spotted Bamboo-Wren, Planalto Tapaculo, Dusky-tailed Antbird, Bertoni Antbird and Speckle-breasted Antpitta, among many others. Green-chinned Euphonia is also possible here; as is Black Hawk-Eagle. The very rare Greenish Tyrannulet is a resident in Urugua-í, and our chances of seeing it are very good. On our way back to Puerto Esperanza in the early evening we will try to find some night dwellers such as Buff-fronted Owl and

Long-trained Nightjar.

Day 9, 7th October: Puerto Esperanza to Iguazú. This morning we will leave Puerto Esperanza and drive up to the north-eastern corner of Misiones. The most remarkable natural wonder of this province is Iguazú National Park with its unparalleled waterfalls. The park protects the vast majority of one of the most important forests south of the Amazon: the Interior Atlantic Forest. This hosts dozens of unique orchid species, small primates, rare bats and several endemic birds. Here the Iguazú River falls 70 meters, forming a fan of cascades with more than 250 individual waterfalls!

Here we will enjoy the falls to their fullest by strolling the park's walkways and stopping at their many lookouts, where we will behold some spectacular views. These trails have been built at different levels, and visitors have a chance to see the falls from both above and below. A narrow gauge train takes us from the park's entrance to the start of the trails, and then onto the most spectacular fall of them all – the Devil's Throat, which we will visit late in the afternoon.

A myriad of colourful birds live in Iguazú, including Surucua Trogon, Red-ruffed Fruitcrow, Blue Manakin, five species of Euphonias, and several species of Tanagers, all of which are commonly found here. We can also expect to see thousands of Great Dusky Swifts and several species of forest raptors, while the forest canopy is home to noisy flocks of Parrots, Parakeets, Antwrens, and five species of Toucans.

The lower layers of this rainforest are inhabited by birds that include Black-Fronted Piping-Guan, Spot-backed Antshrike, Black-Billed Scythebill, and twelve species of Woodpeckers! The magic of the forest is further accentuated by the distinctive calls of species such as Solitary Tinamou, Spot-winged Wood-Quail, Tufted Antshrike and Southern Antpipit.

After concluding our visit to this spectacular park, we will then transfer to the nearby city of Puerto



Iguazú. Here we will spend the last two nights of our tour at a local hotel on the cities' outskirts, right on the edge of a lovely patch of rainforest.

Day 10, 8th October: Iguazú National Park. Today we will return to the park to explore some of its other trails, including Macuco – the only one that runs through a patch of forest away from the falls. This remarkable trail is where we have our best chance to find Brown Capuchin Monkeys. Birding here is also very rewarding, with White-bearded Manakin being resident in a small patch of



bromeliads at the trail's entrance, Blue Manakin very common along the trail, and the forest floor home to Short-tailed Antpitta and Spot-winged Wood-Quail. Southern Antpipit and Rufous Gnateater are easily seen skulking in the understory; while higher up the trees spectacular birds including Black-throated Trogon and Robust Woodpecker are commonly spotted.

We return to Puerto Iguazú in the afternoon, and will then visit a private house where a hummingbird feeder normally attracts at least seven species of these flying jewels at any given moment! Black Jacobin, Planalto Hermit, Black-throated

Mango and Violet-capped Woodnymph are some of the birds we will enjoy watching and photographing here, as well as others like Bananaquit, Blue-naped Chlorophonia and Epaulet Oriole.

Day 11, 9th October: Iguazú to Buenos Aires. This morning we will pay our last early-morning visit to Iguazú National Park in order to explore the area of road 101. Here there is an open swampy sink and another forest trail away from the visitor's area. Special birds we will search for include Tufted Antshrike, Spot-backed Antshrike, Blond-crested Woodpecker, Olive Spinetail, Streamside Warbler, Scalloped Woodcreeper, Bay-ringed Tyrannulet, Cream-bellied Gnatchatcher, Red-breasted Toucan and Black-breasted Plovercrest. After our final birding in Iguazú we will then transfer to the local airport, where we will catch our return flight to Buenos Aires.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

The fee for the **Best of Argentina** tour is **US\$3,580** * £2,250 * €2,550 * ZAR24,500 per person sharing. (**Please note:** The price does NOT include the domestic flight as mentioned in the itinerary. As a general guideline, we suggest you budget +/- **US\$410** per person. We can book this flight on your behalf at no extra charge).

The single supplement cost for this tour is **US\$350** and will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBT cannot provide you with a rooming partner although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

This includes:

- All meals from lunch on day 1 to lunch on day 11;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees;
- Extra activities as mentioned in the itinerary; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).



The tour fee does not include:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights (see above);
- Any drinks;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we now quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold (US\$), and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 3 months before the tour.) Approximate flight and single supplement rates have been converted to US\$ but are also subject to exchange rate movements.**

b) **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration (a minimum of 6 paying participants) a small party supplement will have to be charged.**

c) **Furthermore, these costs are subject to major foreign exchange fluctuations and unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**

d) **Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

Tipping:

As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, porters and restaurants) are included on this tour. However, this does not include your Rockjumper leader. If, therefore, you feel that he has given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip him.

Special Note

- Much of our time is spent in vehicles, as we do have to cover long distances in order to get to the best areas for birds and animals. The more luggage you pack the less room there is in the vehicle, so it is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg for check in luggage and 8kg for hand luggage.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include ANY airfares. It is also important to note that there are two airports in Buenos Aires: Ezeiza Ministro Pistarini International Airport (EZE) and Jorge Newberry Airport (AEP), which is the domestic airport. Both the international and domestic airports cater for internal flights within Argentina. These airports are completely separate and the drive between them usually takes approximately 1 hour; however, in peak traffic this can take up to 1½ hours. It is therefore essential that you confirm with your travel agent the airport code in order to be sure which airport your flights arrive at and depart from.

The tour will depart from Ezeiza Ministro Pistarini International Airport (Buenos Aires) on day 1 **at noon**; kindly arrive in advance of this time on this day or arrive the day before. Further meeting details in this regard will be forwarded to you in due course. The tour will conclude at Iguazú airport on day 11. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

Buenos Aires is the main port of entry for international flights in Argentina and is well serviced by all of the world's major airlines. We have the capacity to advise you on the best route according to



your preferences, but your local travel agent will best be able to book these flights for you. We can, however, book the domestic flight on your behalf.

NB: please DO NOT book your international flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.

Photo credits: Black-throated Mango (A. Riley), Many-coloured Rush Tyrant (D. Shackelford), Capybara (S. Bellingham), Burrowing Owl (J. Rossouw), Streamer-tailed Tyrant & Black-fronted Piping Guan (A. Riley), Red-ruffed Fruitcrow (T. Boucher), White-bearded Manakin (L. Segura) & Iguazu Falls (A. Riley).

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