



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Argentina: Patagonia Extension *9th to 14th October 2012 (6 days)*



Magellanic Penguins by David Shackelford

Those who decide to do the Patagonia extension will have the opportunity to see some of the most spectacular scenery in Argentina. The wind swept steppes and endless barren shores of the Atlantic side of the mighty Patagonia absolutely thrive with wildlife, and it is here that almost half of Argentina's endemic birds can be found. We will also visit the Valdés Peninsula, home of the Sea-Lion-hunting Orcas, the largest nesting colonies of Magellanic Penguins on Earth, as well as several unique bird and marine mammal species.

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

DETAILS

Tour Dates	9th to 14th October 2012 (6 days)
Tour Price	US\$1,980 * £1,240 * €1,410 * ZAR13,500 per person sharing US\$520 approximate cost of domestic flights (Tour price fixed in US\$, other rates subject to exchange rate fluctuations)
Tour Size	Limited to 8 participants and 1 Rockjumper leader

THE ITINERARY

9th October	Buenos Aires to Trelew
10th October	Trelew to Puerto Pirámides
11th October	Peninsula Valdés
12th October	Puerto Pirámides to Las Grutas
13th October	San Antonio – Las Grutas area
14th October	Las Grutas to Trelew and fly to Buenos Aires

THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

Day 1, 9th October: Arrival in Trelew. We arrive at Trelew in the late afternoon after flying in from Iguazú via Buenos Aires. Before transferring to our hotel we will bird the city's sewage ponds. Here we will find an incredible array of waterfowl, including Black-necked and Coscoroba Swans, White-winged, Red-fronted and Red-gartered Coots, and seven species of ducks.

Day 2, 10th October: Punta Tombo to Valdés Peninsula. This morning we will drive south along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean in order to visit Punta Tombo. It is here that around half a million Magellanic Penguins gather every year to breed in the roughly 200,000 active nests! This is a very special place, and as the visitor's trail passes through a high density Penguin area, we will be able to view and photograph these birds at very close range.



Besides the penguins, there are also many other exciting birds here. These include a highly restricted Argentine endemic – Chubut Steamer Duck, an array of seabirds and shorebirds that include Blackish Oystercatcher, Dolphin Gull and Brown Skua, and several passerines such as Cordilleran

Canastero, Scaly-throated Earthcreeper and Patagonian Mockingbird, to name but a few.

From Punta Tombo we will drive back to the north, this time following a different road that will take us to the Valdés Peninsula. Here we will spend the following two nights in the small village of Puerto Pirámides situated on the shores of the Nuevo Gulf. The Valdés Peninsula is a marine mammal's paradise, and those wishing to do so will be able to watch Southern Right Whales on a boat tour this afternoon. We will also bird the surroundings of Puerto Pirámides in search of species such as the endemic Rusty-backed Monjita, Band-tailed Earthcreeper and Patagonian Canastero; and also some interesting steppe dwellers that include Elegant Crested Tinamou, Short-



billed Pipit and Common Diuca Finch.

Day 3, 11th October: Valdés Peninsula. We will spend the whole day birding and searching for mammals on the Valdés Peninsula. In the morning we will drive towards the area of Salina Chica, one of the three natural depressions that exist inside the Valdés. Here we will try our best to find one of the rarest birds in Argentina, the Austral Rail. This elusive and highly sought-after species was thought to be extinct for almost 50 years, and was only recently rediscovered. We have a good chance of finding some other very distinctive species of the Patagonian steppes on the way there, including Darwin's Rhea, Darwin's Nothura, Common Miner and Long-tailed Meadowlark. We should also find some interesting land mammals that include Guanaco, a wild relative of the Llama, Mara or Patagonian Cavy, an overgrown long legged version of the Guinea Pig, and if we are lucky, Patagonia Grey Fox, Humboldt's Hog-nosed Skunk and Hairy Armadillo.



On arrival at the South Atlantic coast we will make several stops for Southern Elephant Seals and Sea-Lions, but especially to thoroughly search the ocean for the most spectacular cetacean of them all – the mighty Orca! Here we also have excellent chances for seabirds, including Southern Giant Petrel, Cayenne Tern and four species of Cormorants and Shags: Neotropic, Rock, Imperial and King.

Day 4, 12th October: Valdés Peninsula to Las Grutas. We will spend the morning birding the surroundings of Puerto Piramides in search of any birds we might have missed in this area, and then start our way northwards to San Antonio Oeste and Las Grutas where we will spend the last two night of the tour. This part of Patagonia is also a dry brushland, but with its higher rainfall the vegetation is denser and higher than in the Valdés. In fact, it belongs to a different eco-region called the Monte, which has a few more bird species than the Patagonian Steppe. On arrival at Las Grutas we will no doubt be greeted by flocks of Burrowing Parrots, as these are very common here. After checking into our hotel, we will then go birding along the coast where we will look for birds that include the endemic Sandy Gallito and Carbonated Sierra Finch, as well as Hudson's Black Tyrant, Greater Wagtail-Tyrant and White-tipped Plantcutter, to name but a few.



Day 5, 13th October: San Antonio Oeste and Las Grutas. We will start early this morning to bird the surroundings of San Antonio. Our first stop will be just outside the city boundaries where we will try for another Argentine endemic, White-throated Cacholote. Here we also have a good chance for Black-crowned and White Monjitas, Grey-hooded and Mourning Sierra Finches, and Vermillion Flycatcher.

We will then drive eastwards to search for the elusive Yellow Cardinal (in case we missed it during the main tour), as well as Pale-breasted Spinetail, Plain-mantled Tit-Spinetail, Short-billed Canastero and the endemic Cinnamon Warbling Finch. Time permitting, on arrival at Las Grutas we will again bird the surroundings for any birds we might have missed before. Late in the evening we will return to our hotel before setting off for a farewell dinner at a local restaurant.



Day 6, 14th October: Las Grutas to Trelew and depart. This morning we depart from Las Grutas for Trelew airport, from where we will catch a flight to Buenos Aires where the tour will conclude.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

The fee for the **Patagonia Extension** is **US\$1,980** * £1,240 * €1,410 * ZAR13,500 per person sharing. (**Please note:** The price does NOT include the domestic flights as mentioned in the itinerary. As a general guideline, we suggest you budget +/- **US\$520** per person. We can book these flights on your behalf at no extra charge).

The single supplement costs for the **Patagonia Extension** is **US\$250** 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 dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 6;
- 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 and will conclude on day 6 in Buenos Aires at Jorge Newberry Airport (AEP). 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 flights 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: Dolphin Gull (A. Riley), Burrowing Parrot (D. Shackelford) & Long-tailed Meadowlark (L. Segura).

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