

# SOUTHERN ARGENTINA

## DECEMBER 1–12, 2007

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*Argentina is an immense country and it offers some of the finest wildlife experiences in the world. Because of its size and the fact that it contains so many different habitats, it is impractical to combine them all into one natural history or birding experience. With this in mind, we offer three separate trips to Argentina: one to Northeastern Argentina which focuses on the rich variety of habitats and birds in the pampas, wetlands and forest north to Iguazu Falls. The second focuses on birds in the spectacularly scenic northwestern region of Argentina. The last samples several regions in Patagonia and end in the dramatic and unforgettably beautiful region of Tierra del Fuego. The three trips are designed so they can be combined into a month long odyssey or they can be taken separately.*

*The Southern Argentina trip focuses on two broad areas in Patagonia and on the fabled region of Tierra del Fuego. In the northern reaches of Patagonia we'll visit a scrub-desert, in appearance not unlike the Chihuahuan desert of the American southwest, but the wildlife couldn't be more different. Here we will be walking among a colony of half a million penguins, searching for Burrowing Parrots and strange camel-like animals called Guanacos and odder still, Maras or Patagonian Cavies which seem to recall giant rabbits in miniskirts. There are many interesting desert birds here, ranging from canasteros to cacholotes and a few secretive marsh-dwellers as well, and in lagoons we should see flamingos and large concentrations of waterfowl, all of which seems to defy first impressions of this flat, arid and rather monochromatic land of low bushes. The second area of Patagonia we'll visit is far to the southwest—vast rolling grassland pushed against snowy mountains and here we find some of the grandest and most scenic terrain anywhere on the continent. Amidst high plains grasslands and in nearby southern beech (*Nothofagus*) forests, the air is cool and the birds less numerous but almost everything is different here—most of these birds are found nowhere else but in these southern forests and plains—and there are others such as the Andean Condor and lovely Upland Geese and the hardy little Austral Negrito that, in their abundance, seem to epitomize this beautiful but stark region. Our spring visit will be a good time for botanists too and with luck we could see three or four species of orchids that grace this region. The last area we visit is Tierra del Fuego and it hardly needs any introduction. Dubbed the land of fire by early explorers because of the fires native built along the shores, this stark, cold region of beech forest and snowy peaks has only a few birds but they are almost all found nowhere else but here. The trip concludes with an exciting boat trip on the Beagle Channel that promises albatrosses, petrels, cormorants, diving-petrels, steamer-ducks, geese, and, with any luck, two species of penguins.*

*Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego are unforgettable regions, each of them rich in history and strong in visual images. Once seen they are not forgotten.*

**December 1-2, Days 1-2. Fly USA to Buenos Aires.** You should plan your flights to arrive Buenos Aires, Argentina (Aeropuerto Internacional Ministro Pistarini, airport code EZE) between 8-10:00 AM on the morning of Day 2. After clearing customs and immigration, you will be met by our ground operator and transferred to our hotel. Participants arriving on other flights may either take a taxi to the hotel or arrange a private transfer through our office at an additional charge.

## Southern Argentina, Page 2

After a rest, there will be a short afternoon trip to a marsh within the city limits of Buenos Aires (not far from our hotel). This area teems with waterbirds, including White-tufted Grebe; Black-necked and Coscoroba swan; Fulvous Whistling-Duck; Masked Duck; Lake Duck; Silver and Speckled teal; Rosy-billed Pochard; Brown (Yellow-billed) Pintail; Red Shoveler; Common Moorhen; White-winged, Red-gartered and Red-fronted coots; Cinereous Harrier; Common Stilt; Brown-hooded and Gray-headed gull; Snowy-crowned Tern; and more. We have even seen the rare Ringed Teal and Black-headed Duck here occasionally, as well as the South American Painted-Snipe! There is usually a variety of small land birds as well, among them Eared Dove; Picui Ground-Dove; Monk Parakeet; Nanday (Black-hooded) Parakeet (introduced); Guira Cuckoo; Green-barred Woodpecker; Rufous Hornero; Sulphur-bearded Spinetail; Wren-like Rushbird; Freckle-breasted Thornbird; Small-billed Elaenia; Many-colored Rush-Tyrant; Spectacled Tyrant; Cattle Tyrant; Fork-tailed Flycatcher; Gray-breasted Martin; White-rumped Swallow; Chalk-browed Mockingbird; Rufous-bellied Thrush; Masked Gnatcatcher; Blue-and-yellow Tanager; Great Pampa-Finch; Long-tailed Reed-Finch; Saffron Finch; Hooded Siskin; Black-capped Warbling-Finch; the lovely Black-and-rufous Warbling-Finch; Yellow-billed Cardinal; Rufous-collared Sparrow; and Yellow-winged Blackbird.

NIGHT: Hotel Lafayette, Buenos Aires

### **December 3, Day 3: Morning flight to Trelew; afternoon drive to San Antonio del Oeste and Las Grutas.**

This will be primarily a travel day although we may have time for some birding close to the hotel late this evening. The San Antonio and Las Grutas area has proved to be one of the most exciting birding spots in all of Patagonia. At least five rarely seen Argentine endemics are present here: Darwin's Nothura; Sandy Gallito; White-throated Cacholote; Yellow Cardinal; and Carbonated Sierra-Finch. Irregularly a sixth endemic, the Cinnamon Warbling-Finch, also can be found here. The area also boasts a tremendous roost and nest site of Burrowing Parrots (local and persecuted in many places) and many other "high quality" species, and splendid aquatic habitats. The Yellow Cardinal, a rare and rapidly declining species, is listed as endangered in the ICBP Red Data Book, and the Sandy Gallito is local and infrequently seen. It also must rank as one of the most charming little birds imaginable, running rapidly like a wind-up toy, climbing up through bushes, popping up to sing, then climbing down again, and racing off across the sand, although it has proven difficult to see on a number of occasions.

NIGHT: Hotel Portovenere, Las Grutas

**December 4, Day 4: Full day in the San Antonio del Oeste and Las Grutas area.** We plan to visit several areas in the vicinity of San Antonio del Oeste and Las Grutas today and will concentrate specifically on seeing some of the endemic and near-endemic species of this interesting area. Here in this northern portion of Patagonia the vegetation is quite similar to what one would see in the Chihuahuan Desert of southwestern New Mexico and extreme eastern Arizona and a few of the plant genera are even the same, i.e. there is one species of Larrea (Cresotebush) in the Chihuahuan desert and two here in northern Patagonia. Also, both areas are home to many interesting birds. In addition to the species mentioned under day 3, we also will be searching for Elegant-crested Tinamou; Least Seedsnipe; Spot-winged Pigeon; Lesser (Magellanic) Horned Owl (rare); Short-eared Owl (also rare); Checkered Woodpecker; Band-tailed and Scale-throated earthcreeper; Lesser, Patagonian, and Short-billed canastero; Least Shrike-Tyrant; Black-crowned and Rusty-backed monjita; Greater Wagtail-Tyrant (here at southern end of range); Yellow-billed Tit-Tyrant; White-tipped Plantcutter; Patagonian and White-banded mockingbird; Golden-billed Saltator; Common Diuca-Finch; and Ringed Warbling-Finch (surprisingly common). The rare Hudson's Black-Tyrant breeds here although the similar-looking White-winged Black-Tyrant is also present. There are often-good mud and tidal flats exposed where we can see many aquatic species, especially White-rumped and Baird's sandpiper, and gulls, terns, and the lovely Two-banded Plover.

NIGHT: Hotel Portovenere, Las Grutas

**December 5, Day 5: Las Grutas to the Valdez Peninsula and Puerto Piramides.** We will spend a short time in the Las Grutas area this morning searching for species not found the previous day but we will leave soon for the drive south to the Valdez peninsula where we will spend the afternoon and evening. We will continue on to Trelew late this evening and plan on a very late arrival back at our hotel. This will be a long driving day but we

have several spectacular sites on today's itinerary. The wildlife of the Valdez peninsula is perhaps the most unusual, and in many ways least familiar, of any fauna in Argentina. In addition to the possibility of seeing Southern Right Whales, and occasionally Orcas, from the overlook at Punta Pyramides this is a fairly reliable location for the Snowy Sheathbill which winters here. At this time of year, however, most of them have migrated southward although there is usually one or two still present, as well as a variety of cormorants, terns, and oystercatchers. A few Southern Sea Lions are usually present along the beach, although the breeding season is largely finished by this time of year. Nearby scrub, grassland, dune and wetland habitats harbor numerous interesting Patagonian species such as Elegant Crested Tinamou; Variable Hawk; American Kestrel; Patagonian Canastero; Plain-mantled Tit-Spinetail; Rusty-backed Monjita; Austral Negrito; Short-billed Pipit; Patagonian Yellow-Finch; and often a few surprises as well. We also often see Maras and distant groups of Guanacos here, usually our first of several sightings of these two interesting Patagonian mammals. Evenings can be particularly good for mammal-watching and it is possible to see a number of other species along the roadsides including Patagonian Hog-nosed Skunks; armadillos; even the weasel-like Grison occasionally.

NIGHT: Hotel Libertador, Trelew

**December 6, Day 6: Punta Tombo.** Our destination today will be Punta Tombo, a narrow peninsula about two hours south of the city of Trelew. Punta Tombo is the breeding site of a colony of nearly one and a half million Magellanic Penguins. For obvious reasons, the park service permits access to only a small portion of the colony. Nevertheless, it is an impressive spectacle, and photographic opportunities are superb for both the penguins and other wildlife in the colony or along the adjacent seacoast. Skuas frequently patrol back and forth over the colony, while Elegant Crested Tinamous and Least Cavies forage in nearby shrubby areas. Other species frequently seen among the colony include Scale-throated Earthcreeper; Long-tailed Meadowlark; Lesser Canastero; and Patagonian Yellow-Finch. Giant Petrels; Rock and Imperial cormorant Two-banded Plovers; Dolphin Gulls; and South American Terns are often seen on or near the rugged cliffs at the edge of the colony. There should be an excellent opportunity to study the White-headed Steamer-Duck, described in 1980 as a separate species, but still taxonomically controversial. It occurs only in the vicinity of Punta Tombo.

Watching carefully as we drive to and from the penguin colony also may produce views of some of Patagonia's more spectacular large birds and mammals, such as Lesser Rhea, Guanaco, and Patagonian Cavie. The latter, sometimes known as mara, is most remarkable in both appearance and behavior, and was once described by a National Geographic writer as looking like "a rabbit wearing a miniskirt." Other birds along the road include Yellow-billed Tit-Tyrant; several canasteros; Plain-mantled Tit-Spinetail; Mourning Sierra-Finch; and the local and often difficult to find Carbonated Sierra-Finch. Oddest of the group may be the peculiar subspecies of Rufous-collared Sparrow here. It has a mostly gray head.

Depending upon our flight schedule we may also visit the Trelew sewage lagoons just a short distance east of town. The lagoons usually host tens of thousands of waterfowl. Although we may have previously seen many of these species of waterfowl in the pampas, this will give us another chance to catch up to any species we might have missed as well as to see large numbers of Chilean Flamingos. Two species that could be new are White-cheeked Pintails and Andean Ruddy-Duck although most of the Oxyura ducks here are Lake Ducks. Other species, often in large numbers, could include Silvery and White-tufted grebe; Red Shoveler; Crested Duck; Silver Teal; Kelp and Brown-hooded gull; and coots.

NIGHT: Hotel Libertador, Trelew

**December 7, Day 7: Morning flight to Calafate followed by afternoon birding near town.** Calafate, a small but bustling resort town lies about an hour and a half to the east of Los Glaciares National Park, the centerpiece of this area. Our activities today, however, will depend upon flight schedules but may include an afternoon at a small but very productive lake near the town of Calafate or a drive further into the steppe scrub of the region in search of the difficult-to-find Patagonian Tinamou. This is a region of high plains grassland and low scrub and it is often windy and we have found that on windy afternoons our success in finding the tinamou is low, so weather and wind will also be a factor in our activities. At a nearby lake we have a good chance of seen Andean

## Southern Argentina, Page 4

Ruddy-Duck; Lake Duck; Red Shoveler; Yellow-billed Pintail, Chiloé Widgeon, one or more kinds of coots, Cinereous Harriers and a variety of gulls and shorebirds, as well as the ubiquitous Austral Negrito. Well also be searching for the locally-distributed Magellanic Plover, as shorebird that is so unusual in many ways that it is often placed in a family of its own.

NIGHT: Hotel Michelangelo (or other hotel), Calafate

**December 8, Day 8: The Far Southern Andes.** Los Glaciares National Park is perhaps Argentina's most spectacular national park. We plan to spend most of our day here, including visiting the park's most famous glacier, Perito Moreno. Newly-constructed park trails permit a breathtakingly close approach to this enormous glacier. It is a photographer's paradise, and usually we are able to witness huge chunks of ice calving into the lake. Amidst this raw and rugged "Alaskan" landscape live a host of exciting birds, including Black-faced Ibis; Chilean Flamingo; Upland Goose; Flying Steamer-Duck; Black-chested Buzzard Eagle; Austral Parakeet; Austral Pygmy-Owl; Chilean Flicker; Thorn-tailed Rayadito; Dark-bellied Cinclodes; Fire-eyed Diucon; Rufous-tailed Plantcutter; Austral Thrush; Austral Blackbird; Patagonian Sierra-Finch; Black-chinned Siskin. The rare Bronze-winged (Spectacled) Duck also nests in marshy wetlands higher up and is occasionally seen here as well. In the past we have seen up to 25 Andean Condors in a single day in the vicinity of the park including several very close up feeding at carcasses. The park is an excellent locality for Magellanic Woodpeckers and we have almost always been able to locate them here.

In beautiful high country grasslands outside the park, both Least and occasionally Gray-breasted seedsnipe can be found. The broad-but-shallow braided streams often teem with many kinds of waterfowl, canasteros, ground-tyrants, sierra-finches, and occasionally the rare Great Shrike-Tyrant. At this time of year many species are beginning to nest or already have young. On calm mornings, songs and courtship displays of a number of species can be heard or seen. Throughout we will be watching for Patagonian Tinamou, one of the more difficult species to find here, as well as Cinnamon-bellied Ground-Tyrant, Gray-hooded Sierra-Finch and the ubiquitous Rufous-collared Sparrow.

The number of species in the Calafate area is not large and includes several species that occur in Tierra del Fuego. Nevertheless; we have found that because of the raw beauty, the sweeping vistas, and abundance of wildlife, the Calafate area is considered by many to be one of the highlights of the trip. As an added bonus, hotel accommodations and food at Calafate are excellent.

NIGHT: Hotel Michelangelo, Calafate

**December 9, Day 9: Calafate to Rio Gallegos and on to Ushuaia.** We will spend a short time around Calafate searching for additional Patagonian species and hoping that the wind and weather is favorable for our activities before beginning the drive southeastwards across southern Patagonia towards Rio Gallegos. The land around Rio Gallegos is rather flat and bleak -- Patagonia in one of its purer forms -- and if the day is typical we will experience some of the famous Patagonian winds. The vegetation around Rio Gallegos, though now considerably modified (damaged) by overgrazing, consists of low, well-spaced shrubs varying to grasslands (formerly tall but now very short in most areas). A sampling of bird life on our transect across this south Patagonian steppe could include Upland Goose; Crested Duck; Chiloé Widgeon; Black-necked Swan; Magellanic Oystercatcher; Long-tailed Meadowlark; and the commonest little passerine of all, the Austral Negrito.

Once we reach Rio Gallegos we will mount a search for some of the special birds of the region including, Lesser Rhea; Least Seedsnipe; Rufous-breasted Dotterel; Chocolate-vented Tyrant; Short-billed Miner; Austral Canastero; and Gray-hooded Sierra-Finch. Most of these species can be found relatively close to town. We will also be watching for the now rare and local Black-throated (White-bridled) Finch although we are not always successful in finding it because the grasslands here have been so heavily overgrazed by sheep that little of the tall grass habitat favored by this species still exists in this area. We frequently see Patagonian Foxes on this drive as well. Our time will be relatively limited this afternoon and soon we will board a plane for our late

afternoon flight to Ushuaia, which takes us across the Straits of Magellan and over Isla Grande, a spectacular flight when the weather is good.

NIGHT: Hotel Albatross, Ushuaia

**December 10, Day 10: Tierra del Fuego National Park and Beagle Channel boat trip.** We have two full days to explore the region of Ushuaia, situated as the southern end of Isla Grande or Tierra del Fuego. Isla Grande, part of the larger region known as Tierra del Fuego or "Land of Fire," is a spectacular region of rolling grasslands, snowy mountains, glaciers, and beech forests. Marston Bates (The Land and Wildlife of South America, 1964) wrote of Tierra del Fuego:

"Few areas of the world are more inhospitable than the southern tip of South America, a cloud-racked land of such enormous frustration to the men who charted it that they gave its various parts bitter names like Deceit Island, Port Famine, Anxious Point, Desolate Bay, and Useless Bay. Hardly an hour goes by when the wind is not blowing, and few days pass without rain, sleet or snow. Cool sodden summers help preserve the ancient glaciers that give parts of the south their scarred look. Despite its mountainous climate, this land of winter, poised perpetually on the brink of spring, is not without a sullen beauty."

The diversity of birds in Tierra del Fuego is low, but most of them are found nowhere else in the world but here and in a few adjacent parts of southern Patagonia and Chile. Birds that we should see include the spectacular south temperate geese: the Kelp, Upland, and Ashy-headed; Magellanic Woodpecker; Dark-bellied Cinclodes; White-throated Treerunner; Thorn-tailed Rayadito; Magellanic Tapaculo; Rufous-tailed Plantcutter; Fire-eyed Diucon; Austral Thrush; Austral Blackbird; Patagonian Sierra-Finch; and Black-chinned Siskin. Another specialty, the Yellow-bridled Finch, is also possible for those prepared to hike. Most years we have been successful at locating this much-sought species. It takes considerable effort, however, as at this time of year the species has moved up into the mountains to nest. As in Patagonia, the cold oceanic waters surrounding Tierra del Fuego are richer in food than the land. Consequently, many interesting seabirds may be seen from the shorelines and on the Beagle Channel boat trip.

On our first day we will visit a municipal dock facility where we hope to see the White-throated Caracara, a species that is quite local here. In addition there are always hundreds of gulls, cormorants, skuas and other species present. Mid-day we will board a catamaran for an afternoon and evening boat trip on the Beagle Channel. We'll visit several important island breeding colonies of cormorants and get a fine panorama of the entire eastern half of the Beagle Canal from Ushuaia to the Haberton Ranch located near the eastern end of the channel. We will also call at the historical Haberton Ranch, situated well to the east of Ushuaia. This ranch was founded by Thomas Bridges in 1871. Bridges, a peripatetic missionary, entrepreneur, and scholar of the Yahgan language, was one of the first foreign settlers to be given a land grant by the Argentine government and his ranch remains today a sterling example of his bold vision and dedication to the settlement of this wild region. Our route today also visits a small breeding colony of Magellanic Penguins at the southeast end of the channel, and for the last decade a small founding colony of Gentoo Penguins has also nested here. This trip is very scenic with a sweeping array of snow-clad mountains from start to finish and a fine overview of the wildlife of the Beagle Channel.

The Beagle Channel, named after the ship commanded by Captain Fitzroy that passed through here in 1832 with naturalist Charles Darwin aboard, provides probably the finest and most comfortable way possible to see this harsh, unforgiving land. Today we have the opportunity to relieve the famous 1832 passage through the channel's cold green waters. Though some wildlife has diminished in numbers (whales are seldom seen in the channel now), we will see Kelp Geese; Upland Geese; good numbers (even flocks) of Flightless Steamer-Ducks; occasional Flying Steamer-Ducks; tiny Magellanic Diving-Petrels scattering across the water and Black-browed Albatrosses. King, Blue-eyed and Rock cormorants, as well as Magellanic Penguins; Chilean Skuas and Dark-bellied Cinclodes are also present. Other possibilities include Snowy Sheathbill (most migrate southward to breed by the beginning of December), Black and Magellanic oystercatcher; Southern Fulmar; and Blackish Cinclodes. The seas within the channel are usually rather calm and will almost certainly be so within the numerous bays where we stop. There will be one opportunity to get off the ship and walk around when we visit

## Southern Argentina, Page 6

the Haberton Ranch. Our late-afternoon return, with the lights of Ushuaia and the afternoon sun streaming over the mountains and onto the bay, provides a lovely conclusion to the day. The following morning we will visit Tierra del Fuego National Park in the morning and, time permitting, a highland basin (via ski lift) in the afternoon where, in addition to searching for the Yellow-bridled Finch and Ochre-naped Ground-Tyrant, we will have unparalleled views of the Beagle Channel and the southern end of Tierra del Fuego.

On one of the last two nights we are in Ushuaia we will offer, weather permitting, a late night owling trip into Tierra del Fuego National Park to search for the Rufous-legged Owl. Because the weather is often rainy and because of the late departure hour and time required to search for this bird, we offer this as an option. The cost of this excursion (which can last from 9:30 or 10:00 pm until after midnight) is not included in the trip price.

NIGHTS: Hotel Albatross, Ushuaia

**December 11-12, Day 11-12: Ushuaia; to Buenos Aires.** This morning, you will be free for sight-seeing in Ushuaia to do shopping, resting, or take a walk along the nearby beaches and harbor where there are always numbers of gulls and waterfowl. We will check out of our hotel mid-morning or a bit later for the short drive to the airport to catch our flight to Buenos Aires, continuing to our international flights later tonight. You should schedule your departing flights between 10-12:00 PM on Day 11 for arrival in the U.S. early the next morning.

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

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour will be limited to 14 participants.

**TOUR LEADERS:** Steve Hilty plus a local guide from Argentina

**Steve Hilty** is the senior author of *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia*, and the recently published *Birds of Venezuela*, both by Princeton University Press. Other credits include *Birds of Tropical America*, *A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity*, which has just been republished by the University of Texas Press. He has also written a number of scientific papers on birds and plants, and is presently preparing the text and species accounts for the tanagers for a forthcoming volume of the acclaimed *Handbook of Birds of the World*, published by Lynx Press in Barcelona. Steve holds a Ph.D. in zoology from the University of Arizona and has worked at the Arid Lands Department at the University of Arizona, as a consultant to The Nature Conservancy, and as a stockbroker. He is currently a research associate at the University of Kansas Museum of Natural History. Since 1975, he has led tours throughout North and South America, and co-led trips to India, the Orient, and Australasian regions. With three decades of experience in South America and a wide range of natural history interests, he brings a unique breadth of expertise to his Neotropical tours. At night he often turns his binoculars towards the skies for stargazing. Steve lives in Kansas City with his wife, Beverly. They have two college age daughters.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for the tour is **\$5190** per person in double occupancy from Buenos Aires, Argentina. This includes all meals from lunch on Day 2 to Lunch on Day 11, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Buenos Aires and return, internal Argentina flights\* as stated in the itinerary, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

- Participants arriving from the Northwest Argentina tour will receive a discount of \$185 from the price of this tour.

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\* Internal flights will be charged separately and will be approximately \$895 for this tour.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$445**. 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.

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Refunds are made according to the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, the deposit less \$125 per person is refundable. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions, as well as any transfers from one tour to another. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself.***

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$125.
Fewer than 120 days before departure date	No refund available.

**TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE:** Application forms for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. We **strongly recommend** that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available, however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering. Contact the VENT office prior to registration for details.**

**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.**

**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. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. The tour schedule depends closely on internal flights, which may change from the itinerary listed. If so, the itinerary will be altered, with all of the special regions still being visited.

**BAGGAGE:** We request that you limit your luggage to one large suitcase and one carry-on bag, if possible. As a precaution, we recommend you pack a change of clothes, your binoculars, a pair of walking shoes or boots, medications, and toiletry items in your airline carry-on bag, should your luggage be delayed or lost. Argentine airlines are quite strict about weight limits our Argentina tours include a number of internal flights which still use 44 pound weight limit. Therefore, this is VERY IMPORTANT to avoid excess baggage charges to you on our several internal flights. Excess luggage can be stored securely at the Buenos Aires hotel.

**CLOTHING:** Weather in Argentina in October, November and December can vary widely from sunny and mild to very cold and rainy. We may encounter snow, rain and wind. You must bring very warm clothing, including a down jacket or parka, gloves, a warm hat, and long underwear. Good raingear and rubber boots or shoes are essential. A hat, sunglasses, and suntan lotion or sunscreen is recommended for protection from the sun. Dress will be casual, but you may want a dress or jacket for our evenings in Buenos Aires.

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

## Southern Argentina, Page 8

**EQUIPMENT:** You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc.). As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. Other items should include a flashlight, water bottle or small canteen, and alarm clock.

**HEALTH PRECAUTIONS:** If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, 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.

At this time, no vaccinations are required for entry into Argentina. However, the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta advise us there is a risk of malaria. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus and polio immunizations, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B. We will be at elevations of up to 13,000 feet, so please check with your doctor in advance if you have a history of problems in high elevations.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 877-FYI-TRIP (394-8747) or you can check their website at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel). Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html) (click on travel health).

**INSECT PROTECTION:** Insects are not a serious problem, though we may encounter large numbers of mosquitoes in some of the forests on the Southern tour. We recommend the use of Cutters (squeeze bottle), OFF, or similar repellents.

### **MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION:**

Departure Tax – \$19 USD (November 2006) subject to change without notice

Electricity – 220 volts; European type two-pin round or three-pin flat

Language – Spanish

Time – 1 hour ahead of Eastern Standard Time

**SUGGESTED READING:** Our website, [www.ventbird.com](http://www.ventbird.com) offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from this store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You may also visit such other online stores such as [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), and for those out-of-print or hard-to-find titles, [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) or [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com) which specializes in ornithology books.

### ***Birds:***

Erize, Francisco, Jorge R. Rodriguez Mata and Maurice Rumboll. *Birds of South America: Non-passerines: Rheas to Woodpeckers*. Princeton University Press, 2006. NEW (and will be useful in Argentina).

Harris, Graham. *A Guide to the Birds and Mammals of Coastal Patagonia*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1998.

Harrison, Peter. *Seabirds: An Identification Guide*. Houghton Mifflin, 1991. Considered by many to be the best of the seabird books.

Jaramillo, A. *Birds of Chile*. Princeton University Press, 2003. **Excellent plates and a good supplement for travelers in Argentina.**

Narosky, T., and D. Yzurieta. *Guide to the Birds of Argentina and Uruguay*. **Best pocket-sized reference to Argentina birds.**

Ridgely, R.S., and G. Tudor. *The Birds of South America. Vol.1: The Oscine Passerines*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989.

- Ridgely, R.S., and G. Tudor. *The Birds of South America. Vol. 2: The Suboscine Passerines*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994. This and previous volume are bulky for travel, but have superb, up-to-date references and have excellent plates. Highly recommended.
- Rumboll, Maurice and Martin R. de la Pena. *Birds of Southern South America and Antarctica*. Princeton, 2001. **Another useful book for Argentina. We recommend participants bring both this book and the Narosky book (above).**

**General References:**

- Bates, M. (ed.). *The Land and Wildlife of South America*. New York: Time/Life Nature Library Book, 1964. Good section on Argentina.
- Bridges, E.L. *Uttermost Part of the Earth*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1948. Excellent background on Tierra del Fuego.
- Hennessy, H. 1999. Insight Guide Argentina. Also see G. Leitner's Travel Companion Argentina and other more mainstream guides to travel in Argentina.
- Hilty, S.L. *Birds of Tropical America: A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity*. Shellburn, VT: Chapters Publ. Ltd., 1994. Useful background for Argentina although focus is primarily tropical.
- Hudson, W.H. *Birds of La Plata*. New York: AMS Press, 1968. Good background. Originally published 1923.
- Hudson, W.H. *The Naturalist in La Plata*. The classic study of the Argentina Pampas. New York: Dover, 1988. Good background. Originally published in 1923.
- Hudson, W.H. *Far Away and Long Ago. A childhood in Argentina*. London: Eland Books, 1984. Good background. Originally published in 1918.
- Kricher, J.C. *A Neotropical Companion: An introduction to the animals, plants and ecosystems of the New World tropics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989. Useful background for Argentina even though the focus is primarily tropical.
- Shipton, Eric. *The Fatal Lodestone*. An out-of-print classic on Patagonia and a chronicle of one of the most remarkable adventures of all. Not to be missed.

**TIPPING:** Tipping (restaurants, 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 such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

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