

CENTRAL CHILE & PATAGONIA

OCTOBER 18-30, 2008

©2008

Stable, modern, and safe, delightful Chile is a traveler's dream. On this multi-dimensional trip, participants will travel by land and by sea, experiencing the majestic beauty and sensational birdlife of the central Chilean Andes and the Patagonia region of southern South America.

Featuring a surprisingly mild climate, evocative Andean scenery, and rugged coastline, central Chile offers tremendous, and often easy, birding in a relatively compact area. Our trip will kick off with two and a half days of birding amid the mountains and coast away from the capital, Santiago, where a wealth of exciting austral (southern) bird species is reliably found. Field trips to the Farellones ski area just outside the city and to the breathtaking El Yeso Valley further afield promise a host of special birds that includes Andean Condor, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Giant Hummingbird, the endemic Moustached Turca, and the incomparable Diademed-Sandpiper Plover—and all while under the spell of towering snow-capped peaks, windswept crags, and gleaming white glaciers. An exciting excursion to Chile's dramatic coast promises a rewarding day of birding, one that will see us in pursuit of such South American specialty birds as Peruvian Booby, Peruvian Pelican, Magellanic Oystercatcher, Inca Tern, and, especially, the increasingly vulnerable Humboldt Penguin.

From Santiago we'll fly to Punta Arenas, gateway to world-renowned Tierra del Fuego and the icy waters of the Strait of Magellan. We'll explore the huge expanses of open steppe here, near the bottom of the world, in addition to experiencing the stupendous beauty of Torres del Paine National Park. Avian delights abound, with the ostrich-like Lesser Rhea, Great Grebe, Magellanic Penguin, Imperial Shag, Black-necked Swan, Dolphin Gull, Magellanic Woodpecker, and an absolutely dazzling array of waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, ground-tyrants, rayaditos, cinclodes, and sierra-finches all competing for our attention.

For an unforgettable grand-finale to our time in Chile, we will embark on an invigorating 3-night cruise through the maze of inter-island fjords and waterways that characterize southern-most Chile. Our ship, the Via Australis, offers superb amenities and cuisine and is the perfect vessel for this short voyage. From her decks, you will enjoy magnificent glacier-sculpted landscapes as we navigate the bays and channels of Tierra del Fuego, visiting such legendary locations as the Beagle Channel and Strait of Magellan. And not to be missed, a stop at Cape Horn will leave us exhilarated by the beauty and historical importance of South America's most legendary outpost.

October 18, Day 1: International flight to Santiago, Chile. Flights from the United States bound for Santiago depart the evening of October 18th and arrive Santiago the morning of October 19th.

NIGHT: Aboard aircraft in transit to Santiago

Central Chile & Patagonia, Page 2

October 19, Day 2: Arrival in Santiago; afternoon in the Andes. Participants need to arrive Santiago sometime this morning. Upon arrival in Santiago, you will be met by your local leader or other representative and transferred to our hotel in Santiago for a three-night stay. Participants will have some time to settle into their rooms before reconvening for lunch and a short tour orientation and welcome.

Set in the shadow of the majestic Andes, Santiago is a European-flavored blend of colonial and modern architecture, reflected in its many churches, museums, theatres, and parks. The birding just outside this capital city is generally outstanding and one may build an impressive list in just a few hours.

We'll depart the hotel after lunch for an afternoon birding outing into the mountains about an hour away. Our destination is Los Farellones ski area, situated at about 7,000 feet in a scenic valley surrounded by towering mountains. As this area offers an easy and exciting introduction to the birds of central Chile, we'll make several stops in different habitats as we work our way up the mountain. The lower slopes are an excellent first stop, where Chilean Flicker, Giant Hummingbird, and Chilean Mockingbird are found. Rocky, brush-covered slopes host the elusive Chilean Tinamou and Crag Chilia, as well as Chile's most spectacular tapaculo, the Moustached Turca. Rocky outcrops are the favored habitat of Great and Black-billed shrike-tyrants and several species of ground-tyrants—two types of peculiar ground dwelling flycatchers. Below the ski area we'll enjoy magnificent views of the surrounding mountains and valleys. Situated far above Santiago, the crystal clear air is exhilarating, but not cold. At this altitude we'll scan the skies for our first Andean Condors, Mountain Caracaras, and Aplomado Falcons, while areas of low vegetation may host the bizarre Rufous-tailed Plantcutter and several species of sierra finches.

We'll return to Santiago in the late afternoon in time to get cleaned up for dinner.

NIGHT: Hotel Leonardo da Vinci, Santiago

October 20, Day 3: Birding the Yeso Valley. We will depart the hotel this morning for a day trip to the Yeso Valley in the heart of the spectacularly beautiful Andes. We will be in search of one of the world's most elegant shorebirds—the Diademed Sandpiper-Plover—but the entire day should be filled with fantastic birding and stupendous alpine scenery. Our route will see us traveling southeast from Santiago through the Andean foothills and eventually up to the head of the Yeso Valley. The road parallels a gorge created by the Rio Yeso, where we'll have excellent chances for spotting our first Torrent Ducks. We'll also make scheduled stops along the roadside to scan the crag-rimmed ravines for the endemic Mustached Turca and Crag Chilia.

Moving farther up the valley puts us amid some of the most beautiful mountain scenery on the South American continent. Here, above tree-line, we'll find ourselves ringed by towering ridges covered under brilliant white remnant winter snows and glaciers. Melt water from the spring runoff creates dramatic rushing streams and rivulets all along the roadside. At the top of the valley lies El Yeso Reservoir, an enormous expanse of turquoise-blue water nestled amid snow-covered crags. In this alpine country we are destined to enjoy some of the finest birding of the whole tour. The grasslands, bogs, and streams on the north side of the reservoir offer the best birding in the area, especially for our main target species, the elegant Diademed Sandpiper-Plover. The grasslands and streams around the reservoir offer ideal habitat for this species, certainly one of the most elegant shorebirds in the world. But beneath these towering ridges, we should also enjoy a fine assortment of other Andean species, including Andean Condor, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Gray-breasted Seed-snipe, Gray-flanked Cinclodes, Magellanic Tapaculo, Greater Yellow-Finch, Yellow-rumped Siskin, and Gray-hooded and Mourning sierra-finches.

NIGHT: Hotel Leonardo da Vinci, Santiago

October 21, Day 4: Birding from the Central Valley to the coast. After spending the prior two days in the mountains, we will travel to the coast today to experience an entirely different class of birds. Our destination is the small coastal village of Cachagua and our route takes us west from Santiago via the Central Valley. Moving toward the coast, we are bound to see a number of lower elevation bird species along the highway and in the

fields. We will make a few stops en route to view some of the more widespread expected species. Among the possibilities are White-tailed Kite, Variable Hawk, Chimango Caracara, Southern Lapwing and the endemic Chilean Mockingbird.

Upon arrival at Cachagua, we will visit a particularly productive section of beach known for its prolific numbers of seabirds and shorebirds. We should have little trouble locating some of the more widespread species, such as Peruvian Pelican, Peruvian Booby, Guanay Cormorant, Red-legged Shag, and Blackish Oystercatcher. We will make a special effort to locate the lovely Inca Tern, a species many birders consider the world's most beautiful tern. Colored a deep charcoal-gray, with a bright red bill and flowing yellow "whiskers," these elegant birds grace the offshore waters of central Chile in small numbers. The peculiar and endemic Chilean Seaside Cinclodes is also found here and we'll carefully check the boulder-strewn beach for this most maritime of Chile's passerines. Perhaps of greatest interest of this location is its close proximity to a breeding colony of Humboldt Penguins, a vulnerable species whose entire world range is restricted to scattered islands along the coasts of Chile and Peru. We will take time to observe the penguins around their breeding burrows and as they arc through the surf, coming and going from their offshore fishing grounds.

Two mammal species of particular interest may also be found here, South American sea-lion and marine otter. The otter, in particular, is high on our wish list. Found locally only along the western coast of South America, this animal is unfortunately in sad decline due primarily to overfishing and habitat destruction.

Back in Cachagua, we will search for a variety of land birds in and around the gardens and trees of the little town. Three species we especially hope to encounter are the Giant Hummingbird (the world's largest hummingbird), the jewelsque Green-backed Firethroat, and the strange, but attractive, Rufous-tailed Plantcutter.

A final stop at a coastal wetland may give us our first chance of locating Plumbeous Rail as well as a bird many consider to be the darling of Chile's landbirds, the Many-colored Rush-Tyrant. This dynamic little sprite is an improbable mix of bright yellow and black and sports a cobalt-blue eye.

NIGHT: Hotel Leonardo da Vinci, Santiago

October 22, Day 5: Fly to Punta Arenas; Torres del Paine National Park. Today marks the beginning of the next part of our adventure! We will take an early flight from Santiago to Punta Arenas, with our next destination being world-renowned Torres del Paine National Park. Our arrival in Punta Arenas also signifies our entry into Patagonia.

The name Patagonia was first coined by Ferdinand Magellan in reference to the native peoples he encountered on his voyage through the region in the 1500s. The term is now used to include a massive area of land, most of which belongs to Argentina, that defines all of southern South America. It is a land of wet steppe, extensive grassy plains, and rugged ice-locked mountains—in all, a land of true primal beauty. Torres del Paine National Park is the most prominent single location within Chilean Patagonia. Famous worldwide for its awesome panoramic beauty, the park encompasses an extraordinary collection of alpine lakes and streams, extensive beech forest, and gorgeous Andean scenery. Within the park, the "Torres," solid granite spires, are emblematic of the park's outstanding scenery.

To get to the park we will travel out of Punta Arenas, taking time to bird the coastal ponds and brackish lagoons along the way. The lagoons present ideal habitat for the Chilean Flamingo, a bird we should have little trouble locating, in addition to a suite of special South American waterfowl. Most people who come to South America come for the seabirds and special birds of the rainforest. Waterfowl tend to be overlooked, which is unfortunate, because South America is home to some of the most impressive and beautiful collections of swans, geese, and ducks in the world. As we travel, we will search for the spectacular Black-necked Swan, Coscoroba Swan, and several species of geese (Upland, Kelp, and Ashy-headed) found only around the tip of South America. Ducks will be well-represented too with sightings of Spectacled Duck, Chiloe Wigeon, Yellow-billed Pintail, Red

Central Chile & Patagonia, Page 4

Shoveler, and Silver and Speckled teal all expected. We may also encounter foraging parties of Black-faced Ibis along the way.

Pausing along the coast, the dramatically named Last Hope Inlet is home to a substantial number of Imperial (Blue-eyed) Shags; Dolphin and Kelp gulls; and Chilean Skuas. Our route will also take us by the high cliffs of Puerto Natales where Andean Condors are often found.

We should arrive at Torres del Paine in the mid- to late afternoon.

NIGHT: Hostería Las Torres, Torres del Paine National Park

October 23, Day 6: Torres del Paine National Park. Our time today will be dedicated to sightseeing and birding in the national park. One of the park's many highlights is Lago (Lake) Grey, a gorgeous body of water lying at the foot of the Grey Glacier. The journey to Lago Grey provides splendid vistas of a landscape of towering mountains, glaciers, wetlands, steppes and forests. We will take our time birding out to the lake and around the shoreline itself. Aside from boasting tremendous natural beauty, the habitats found here harbor a number of species restricted to the southern latitudes. Torrent ducks frequent the frothy glacier-fed rivers while the beech forests harbor a diverse group of Patagonian specialty birds including Magellanic Horned Owl, Austral Pygmy-Owl, Chilean Flicker, Striped Woodpecker, Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant, Thorn-tailed Rayadito, and the snappy White-throated Treerunner. The ultimate prize is the Magellanic Woodpecker, one of the largest and most beautiful woodpeckers in the world.

In the steppe-covered parts of the park, we may find a host of other species more closely affiliated with shrubs and bunch grasses, including Lesser Rhea, Least Seedsnipe, Bar-winged Cinclodes, and Patagonian Mockingbird to name a few. Small wetlands throughout the region host several grebe species, including Great, Silvery, and White-tufted grebes; Andean Duck; and even the recently rediscovered and rarely-seen Austral Rail.

As we move around the park, herds of camel-like guanaco are seen fairly easily. This interesting mammal has the most southerly distribution of any *camelid*.

NIGHT: Hostería Las Torres, Torres del Paine National Park

October 24, Day 7: Torres del Paine to El Calafate, Argentina. Today we will travel north from the national park to El Calafate, Argentina in anticipation of our flight the following morning. We will interrupt our travel with frequent stops for birds and to observe more of the beautiful montane habitats and upland steppe of the southern Andes. Aside from the spectacular scenery, we will immerse ourselves in an overall exploration of this region, focusing on finding more of the special birds of this corner of Patagonia. Among the species we hope to encounter are some of the more striking and memorable ones in the area. Cinereous Harriers and rare White-throated Caracaras occasionally frequent these high grasslands and Blackish and Gray-flanked Cinclodes; Yellow-bridled Finch; Patagonian Sierra-finch; and Long-tailed Meadowlark all forage amid rocky pastures while Chilean Swallows dot the skies in pursuit of their seemingly invisible prey.

NIGHT: Hotel Kau Yatún, El Calafate, Argentina

October 25, Day 8: Flight to Ushuaia; Embark M/V Via Australis. Early this morning we will fly from El Calafate to the Argentine city Ushuaia, capital city of the southern-most Argentine province, Tierra del Fuego. With 65,000 inhabitants, Ushuaia is a thriving port city set amid spectacular surroundings on the southern coast of Tierra del Fuego. Ringed by snow-capped mountains and overlooking the Beagle Channel, Ushuaia provides an exciting and picturesque embarkation point for our voyage.

Following lunch in town, we will have time for a short excursion either to Tierra del Fuego National park or the nearby ski area. Both of these areas lie only a short distance from town and both offer opportunities to

experience excellent birding in an alpine setting. Among the possibilities are more southern South American waterfowl such as Chiloe Wigeon and Upland Goose; several species of cinclodes; Fire-eyed Diucon; White-crested Elaenia; Thorn-tailed Rayadito; White-throated Tree-Runner; sierra-finches; and many others.

We'll board the *Via Australis* late this afternoon and enjoy a welcome cocktail reception with the captain. We'll then begin our cruise, traveling down the Beagle and Murray channels toward Cape Horn. With a fresh perspective gained from being aboard the ship, we'll find ourselves surrounded on all sides by dramatic mountain scenery, with many of the higher peaks still locked under retreating winter snow. Seabirds fill the air and water around us. Chilean Skuas and Dolphin Gulls are common while Magellanic Oystercatchers and Flightless and Flying steamer-ducks inhabit the rocky coastline. We'll also encounter the first of many other seabirds, watching especially for Magellanic Diving-Petrel.

NIGHT: Aboard M/V *Via Australis*

October 26, Day 9: Cape Horn and Wulaia Bay. Today will begin with an auspicious start as we land at legendary Cape Horn, the southern-most point of South America. In actuality Cape Horn is not the name of the island, but rather represents the southern part of Isla Hornos, a sheer 1,394 foot high rocky promontory. This mythical place is known as the "End of the Earth" and its surrounding waters are famous, or rather infamous depending on one's perspective, to every type of traveler who has ever passed through the region. The island sits as a national park entirely within Chilean territorial waters and was declared a World Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 2005. Weather permitting, we will make a landing here to visit the famous monument to all the mariners who have rounded the famous cape, and that takes the form of a flying albatross.

Though bird diversity is not high on such a remote windswept outpost as Isla Horna, we may locate such "Fuegian" specialties as Striated Caracara and Blackish Cinclodes. Other species possible at Cape Horn include Chilean Hawk and Correndera Pipit.

Toward mid-day we'll reboard *Australis* and retrace our steps northward toward Wulaia Bay. The return journey up the Murray Channel takes us between other major islands of the archipelago, where the seabirding is often excellent. From the ship's viewing decks we could spot our first Magellanic and Rockhopper penguins; Black-browed and Gray-headed albatrosses; Southern Giant-Petrel; Cape Petrel; and Magellanic Diving-Petrel.

Marine mammal viewing can also be very good, with such species as Peale's, Commerson's and Chilean dolphins; Burmeister's porpoise; South American Sea-Lion, and southern fur-seal all possible.

We'll go ashore at Wulaia Bay, once the site of one of the region's largest indigenous settlements. Now it is best known for the fantastic beauty of its vegetation and geography.

NIGHT: Aboard M/V *Via Australis*

October 27, Day 10: Sailing the western coast of Tierra del Fuego. Today will be one of sheer enjoyment as we navigate the fjords and channels of western Tierra del Fuego en route to Günter Plüschow Glacier. The journey is lengthy and allows an entire day for viewing the region's extravagant beauty. Photographic opportunities will be plentiful as are the opportunities for wildlife viewing. Many of the seabirds and mammals we encounter will be similar to those listed above, but with increased chances for such new species as White-chinned Petrel; Sooty and Manx shearwaters; and Southern Fulmar.

In the afternoon we'll arrive at the Günter Plüschow Glacier, named for the German aviator who took the first aerial photographs of the Darwin Mountain Range. Günter Plüschow is actually a tidewater glacier, where the ice flows directly into the sea. All around us lies scenery of considerable beauty, with ice in the water and glacial meltwater streaming down the cliff face on either side of the glacier. Photographic opportunities are endless. In the sheltered bays in this part of Tierra del Fuego we should see Crested Duck; large numbers of Flightless and Flying steamer-ducks; and Kelp Goose. Humpback whales often frequent these waters, sightings of which will be high on our "wish lists."

Central Chile & Patagonia, Page 6

We'll then sail to Chico Sound, where we'll disembark in Zodiacs to observe majestic Piloto and Nena glaciers.

NIGHT: Aboard M/V Via Australis

October 28, Day 11: Magdalena Island; Punta Arenas; Disembarkation. The chief activity this morning is a landing at Magdalena Island, home to a large Magellanic Penguin rookery. Here, we'll observe another of nature's impressive spectacles where tens of thousands of pairs have returned to start their brief but hectic reproductive cycles. We'll take time to observe the fascinating courtship and pair bonding rituals on display as well as viewing scores of penguins coming and going from the icy water surrounding us. Besides penguins, this site also serves as a breeding ground for Imperial Shag; Rock Cormorant; Dolphin and Kelp gulls; Chilean Skua; and South American Tern.

We'll reboard *Australis* toward late morning and make the relatively short sail to Punta Arenas. Disembarkation will take place this afternoon followed by a flight back to Santiago.

NIGHT: Hotel Leonardo da Vinci, Santiago

October 29, Day 12: Birding Lampa; Return to Santiago; Departure for home. Today marks the final day of our time together in Chile. Since return flights to the United States do not depart until late this evening, we will have a full day in the field.

Outside Santiago, we'll make a stop in the high brush country at La Dormida pass northwest of the city. Here we'll have chances for some extra landbirds. Though the possibilities are extensive, we'll watch for Chilean Tinamou, Chimango Caracara, Plain-mantled Tit-Spintail, Dusky-tailed Canastero, White-throated Tapaculo, Fire-eyed Diucon and many others.

From La Dormida, our next destination is Lampa, situated further to the northwest. Outside the town is a large reed-fringed marshland with open water. As the habitat here is extensive we will take our time searching for a number of species associated with water and marsh that we've not yet encountered. Among the more enticing possibilities are Painted and South American snipes, Cocoi Heron, Stripe-backed Bittern and Plumbeous Rail. The lovely Rosy-billed Pochard, Chiloe Wigeon, and other waterfowl also occur here and will likely be seen. Other birds occurring in and around the marshlands are the retiring Wren-like Rushbird and Red-gartered and Red-fronted coots.

We will have dinner together this evening before transferring to the airport for return flights to the United States, which depart Santiago late this evening.

NIGHT: Aboard aircraft in transit home.

October 30, Day 13: Arrive home. International flights departing Santiago on the night of October 29th arrive home, or in another airport for transfer to connecting flights, on October 30th.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 16 participants

TOUR LEADERS: Claudio Vidal and David Ascanio

Claudio Vidal lives in Punta Arenas, the most southerly city in Chile. Claudio has been bird-watching since the age of 12. He is very keen on pelagic birdlife and marine mammals occurring in the Humboldt Current, Patagonia, and Antarctica. Claudio leads bird-watching and natural history tours throughout Chile. He is currently working on a field guide to the birds of Chile with other Chilean birders, and is author of the recently published *Birds of Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego and Antarctic Peninsula*. He is involved in several nature-based tourism projects in Chile, and the new editorial challenges of his company, Fantastico Sur.

David Ascanio, a Venezuelan birder and naturalist, has spent the last 22 years guiding birding tours throughout his native country, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, Guyana, northern Peru, western Ecuador, and Panama. He is especially interested in bird vocalizations, and has a private library containing sounds of more than 70% of all the birds of Venezuela, including some which are the only ones known to science. David speaks excellent English and combines superb birding skills with an astonishing command of bird vocalizations. He has published several manuscripts about the birds of the *llanos* (plains) and the tepui endemics for which he has become an authority. He is an excellent communicator, has a great sense of humor, and is tireless in helping others find birds and wildlife. These traits have made him the most popular naturalist/guide in his country.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$5,995** per person in double occupancy from Santiago, Chile. This includes all meals beginning with lunch on Day 2 to dinner on Day 12, accommodations as stated in the itinerary (including AA Cabins on *M/V Via Australis*), ground transportation and transfers during the tour, domestic flights Santiago / Punta Arenas / Santiago and Punta Arenas / Ushuaia*, park entrance fees, tips for porters and at restaurants, a daily bottle of mineral water per person, and guide services provided by the tour leaders.

The fee for the tour does not include airfare from your home to Santiago and return, airport departure taxes, travel insurance, passport fees, alcoholic beverages, gratuities to staff and crew on *M/V Via Australis*, entrance tax to Chile, excess baggage charges, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for the tour is **\$895**. 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.

***Please Note: The domestic airfares (roundtrip Santiago / Punta Arenas and one way from Punta Arenas to Ushuaia) are included with your tour fee. At the time of this publication, the approximate cost of these air segments is \$500, but is subject to change without notice until the time of ticketing. Victor Emanuel Nature Tours reserves the right to assess a surcharge for any increases in airfare that occur after March 17, 2008.**

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for Central Chile & Patagonia, please complete the application form and return it with a deposit of **\$1000 USD** 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: If cancellation is made 120 days or more before departure date, the deposit less \$400 is refundable. If cancellation is made between 120 and 90 days before departure, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 90 days before departure date, no refund is available. **We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself.**

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 VENT. Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to assist you in making air arrangements. Airline tickets carry restrictions due to the airfare used. You may find that your ticket cannot be reissued or exchanged for another air carrier or routing. Cancellation penalties and change fees may be assessed for any changes to the ticket. These charges are solely your responsibility. First- and business-class travel is available on some flights. **All requests for travel assistance (air tickets, additional hotels, etc.) must be received no later than 60 days prior to departure date. Within 60 days, arrangements must be made on your own.**

CONDITIONS:

Participants on this tour will travel from sea level to about 8,000 feet.

Walking conditions are generally not difficult throughout the tour route, yet it is important to pay close attention to footing and walking conditions. The diversity of topography in Chile guarantees that you'll experience a variety of terrain, from soft sand, to wet grass, to coarse gravel, to rocky landscapes, occasionally uphill. Walks to penguin rookeries or other bird colonies may involve short treks over loose gravel. On island landings during the cruise, tall grasses are often slick with recent rain. Conditions at Cape Horn could range from sunny and clear to very windy and rainy. We emphasize that nobody will be subjected to physical demands that exceed their capabilities. All walking will be done at a slow to moderate pace.

While cruising, you'll have options to join your leaders on the viewing decks for wildlife watching, or remain below decks and relax in the library, the passenger lounges, or your cabin. The sea is generally at its calmest during the austral summer, but rough conditions are not expected since the scope of this cruise is limited to the protected waterways of far southern Chile's innumerable offshore islands. Please note that inclement weather of any nature may preclude a landing at Cape Horn; most cruises are successful in this endeavor, however.

Lectures - During the cruise, there will be interesting lectures on the wildlife, geography, and history of this legendary region given by the expedition staff. Lectures will take place on board and on land. Among the topics covered are:

- **Geography and Navigation routes** – Learn about the geographic environment where your cruise sails and each one of the channels, fjords and glaciers that making this route a unique and mysterious place at the end of the earth.
- **Flora and Fauna** – Enjoy a beautiful audio-visual exhibition of the different species making up the Magellan forest. You'll learn some of the common trees and flowers you will likely encounter at different landings. Become acquainted with expected species of seals, sea-lions, and dolphins.
- **Beagle Channel** – Learn about the importance of Captain Fitzroy, who carried out the first expedition to this region. In 1830, he discovered the Beagle Channel, named for his brig, the *Beagle*.
- **Strait of Magellan** – Know the history of discovery of the southernmost inhabited region in the world and the explorations that followed the discovery, where Spanish navigators, English corsairs, scientists and others arrived at this inhospitable place.
- **Glaciology** – Learn about the beginning of this impressive phenomenon, its extension, rate of displacement, types of glaciers and their colors, with surprising images of this mass of ice covering Patagonia.
- **Native people** – Hear of the ethnography and theories on the inhabiting of the South American continent and the first contacts with region's indigenous peoples.

The Ship – *Via Australis* is a modern, elegant cruise ship featuring 64 cabins, with low beds, private facilities, and panoramic windows. There are two lounges—the Yamana Lounge, equipped with an open bar, small

library, and enough seating capacity to host multi-media lectures, and the Sky lounge, also equipped with an open bar. Both lounges offer comfortable seating, cozy decorations and panoramic views of the beautiful scenery at all times. A game room is located on the third deck while the promenade deck offers a tremendous location from which to view the spectacular natural surroundings. A gift shop provides on-board shopping opportunities while the bridge is open to passenger visitation.

Technical information -

Gross tonnage	2716 (GT)
Built	2005
Decks	4 decks.
Lounges	2 lounges and one dining room.
Length	72.30 m, 236 ft.
Draft	3.30 m, 10.83 ft.
Breadth	13,4 m, 44 ft.

Dining – The window-lined Patagonia dining room comfortably seats all passengers at leisurely single seatings for all meals, with tables unassigned. Exquisite regional and international cuisine also feature Chilean and Argentine wines.

Zodiac Landing Craft – Expedition cruise ships carry fleets of Zodiac landing craft. Developed as a means for gaining access to places where larger vessels cannot go, Zodiacs are employed to bring greater intimacy to your travel experience. Each craft is constructed of high performance plastimer fabrics and outfitted with a powerful motor, and designed to withstand the challenging conditions of the harsh Antarctic environment. During your cruise you'll make numerous excursions to shallow bays and landings on isolated beaches, coming face-to-face with an assortment of wildlife. Each craft holds as many as 10 passengers. Although flat-bottom design allows for direct on-shore landings, passengers will need to walk through shallow surf on some occasions.

Extra time in Santiago – The focus of this tour is on experiencing Chile's outstanding natural history. But Santiago ranks among the finest, most modern cities South America has to offer, as it contains a wealth of interesting cultural and historical sites. Participants with an interest in seeing more of Chile's capital city are encouraged to come early or stay after the tour. A sampling of the more interesting places to visit includes the beautiful horse-racing 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.

ELECTRICITY: Throughout Chile, the standard electric current is 220 volts (AC). Outlets are designed for European-style plugs with two round pins. Adapter plugs and converters are necessary for North American appliances such as computers, cell phones, and electric razors. We recommend the purchase of these items before departing the United States.

CLIMATE & WEATHER: This tour focuses on two distinct regions of Chile: the central and the far south. Our tour is scheduled during the middle of the Austral spring, a transition time from the rainy season to the dry season. Given the considerable length of the country, it is difficult to make generalizations that apply to all areas. Altitudinal differences are dramatic in Chile as well, and certainly affect local conditions.

Most of the population lives in the lowlands of Central Chile, whilst the southern part of the country is rugged and densely forested with a cool wet changeable climate.

Central Chile has a Mediterranean climate with warm and virtually rainless summers, whilst the winters are mild and moderately wet. At Santiago, the daily average maximum temperature is around 80° (F) in November.

Central Chile & Patagonia, Page 10

Along the coast daily temperatures will be in the low to mid 70s. In the Andes above the city, temperatures range from the upper 50s to middle 70s under sunny skies.

The southern part of Chile has a changing and sometimes unpredictable climate. It tends to be wet year-round and where annual precipitation can be as high as 200 inches, much of which falls as snow in the higher mountains. Yet parts of the far south, especially the eastern parts, are arid steppe and actually receive far less precipitation. On the coast, summers are cool and cloudy with an average daily maximum temperature of 47°. Wind is a frequent companion when in the south.

Overall, participants should expect a mostly dry trip with mild to warm daytime temperatures in the Santiago area and cool, sometimes cloudy conditions prevailing while in Patagonia. Light to heavy rain is possible in the far south. While aboard *Via Australis*, participants should expect similar conditions as when on land, but with increased chances for cool, blustery weather and morning and evening temperatures possibly approaching freezing.

BAGGAGE: The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. Some airlines have significantly lowered their weight allowances for checked and carry-on baggage, some to as little as 50 lbs per bag. **Please consult your airline to find out specific weight restrictions.**

We request that you limit your luggage to one medium 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

CLOTHING: As this trip combines land-based birding field trips with expedition-style cruising, you will want to pack a mix of clothing that prepares you for all activities. Comfortable and casual practical field clothing is recommended throughout the trip including for your time on board the ship, however, a more comprehensive list of apparel includes:

- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI carry field clothing that many birders find appealing. Pants and long- and short-sleeved shirts made of lightweight, yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular and more reasonably priced than in the past. Easily washable, quick-drying clothes are useful.
- **Pants:** A couple pairs of pants are recommended. Many people prefer lightweight pants made of cotton or other material, but denim, though not as comfortable, is certainly acceptable. Corduroy, or wool pants are acceptable in dry conditions, such as when birding from the ship's decks; and for evening recaps, social hours, and dinners.
- **Shirts:** Simple cotton t-shirts (long- and short-sleeved) are comfortable for wearing under warmer outerwear. Please consider other comfortable styles suitable for warm weather, such as those listed above under Field Clothing.
- **Turtlenecks and flannels** – More warm weather clothing for wearing under parkas, fleeces, and sweaters for when you are at altitude in the Andes; out in cool, blustery conditions; or when you are on the decks of the ship or on the water in zodiacs.
- **Sweaters, coats, and fleeces:** While exceedingly cold weather is not expected on this trip, you will definitely want to include clothing that will keep you warm and dry if necessary. A warm sweater will come in very handy some mornings and evenings and when in the mountains. Polar fleece is now very popular and offers excellent insulation against cold temperatures. Rain is a distinct possibility at all locations in the far south of the country. For this reason, a **waterproof parka is an essential item to bring.**
- **Waterproof Rainpants** – **STRONGLY RECOMMENDED** for protection against precipitation, ocean spray in zodiac landing craft, and when walking through wet grass or bushes. Your rainpants

should fit comfortably over your regular pants. Some types feature a zipper on the outside of the lower pantleg, enabling you to pull your pants on and off without removing shoes or boots.

- **Evening Wear:** The atmosphere aboard *Via Australis* is casual, but women and men may prefer Smart Casual attire for the welcome cocktail reception and dinners. For women this includes casual dresses or skirt/slacks ensembles. For men this includes khakis/slacks and open-collared shirts. Men may choose to wear a sports jacket for dressier evenings. The degree of dress is also in accordance with your personal preference.
- **Long Underwear** – Not required, but you might consider bringing a pair in the event you experience cold wind when standing on the viewing decks of *Australis*. Silk or other lightweight material is sufficient for most people. Those who are easily chilled might consider a heavier material, such as wool.
- **Socks** – Thin cotton or polypropylene socks are a good choice, in combination with a few pairs of wool socks and dress socks. It is important to have clean, dry, and warm socks for the diversity of activities included in the program. Pack accordingly.
- **Warm, waterproof gloves and mittens** – **STRONGLY RECOMMENDED** for time on the ship and mornings in the mountains. Thin glove liners are a good choice when trying to use your fingers for taking pictures or using binoculars.
- **Hats, scarfs and gaitors** – **REQUIRED. A hat for protection from the sun is essential!** You will also need a cotton, knit, or wool pull down cap at the least, while a warm scarf or gaitor will come in handy when you are exposed to blustery conditions.
- **Footwear:** There will be plenty of time on foot on the land-based part of the tour, so you should pack a pair of light hiking boots or trail shoes. When on board the ship, comfortable walking shoes, or deck shoes are sufficient. Some people may also prefer to bring a pair of dress shoes for some evenings aboard the ship. While rubber boots are not required for this departure, some people may prefer to bring them anyway as they are good for keeping your feet dry when walking through wet grass.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is available for extra charge at the hotel in Santiago and while aboard *Via Australis*.

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 tour to Chile:

- **Backpack** – Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, personal items and optical equipment for all excursions
- **Ziplock bags** – Excellent for keeping small items or any items of value dry; bring several different sizes
- **Notebooks and pens**
- **Travel alarm clock**
- **Sunglasses with good UV protection (Polarized glasses are best)**
- **Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions**
- **Personal toiletries and medications**
- **Cameras, lenses, film, memory cards, and extra batteries**
- **Collapsible walking stick**
- **Tissue packs**
- **Binoculars** – A quality pair of binocular is essential. We strongly recommend good binoculars of at least 7 x 35, 8 x 42, 10 x 40, or 10 x 42 magnification. We recommend that you do NOT bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like them 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 7 x 35 or 8 x 42 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Central Chile & Patagonia, Page 12

Spotting Scopes - Your tour leaders will have their personal spotting scopes available for group use throughout the tour, but you may bring your own if you prefer, especially for the land-based portion of the tour.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:

PASSPORTS

A valid passport is required for entry into Chile. Please check the expiration date on your passport. **If it is not valid for at least six months after your trip return date, you will need to get it renewed.** You will also want to make sure that you have at least two blank pages in your passport for stamps.

If you need a passport, you should get it well in advance of your trip 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, most post offices, or the county clerk's office. You may also visit www.state.gov/travel/ 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.**

On board ship, it is customary for the purser to hold all passports for clearance with Customs and Immigration authorities. Your passport will be collected prior to or upon embarkation, and returned upon disembarkation.

VISAS

Visas are not required for U.S. and Canadian citizens for entry into Chile. **Note that a "reciprocity" fee applies to all U.S. and Canadian citizens entering Chile, and that a one-time payment of \$100.00 must be paid in USD. For Canadians the fee is \$55 USD.** Also note that this fee is subject to change without notice.

Rules and regulations pertaining to non-U.S. citizens may vary; please check with one of the Chilean consulates or embassy.

TIME: Chile observes daylight saving time during the Austral summer, generally from the middle of October to middle or end of March. During this time, Chile is 3 hours behind Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) or 1 hour ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST) in the United States.

CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS: Your tour fee covers all necessary expenses during the tour from your arrival in Santiago on day 1 to your departure on day 12. You will want to bring enough cash to cover extra expenses incurred during the tour or if you choose to extend your time in Chile beyond the dates of the tour. Example include, but are not limited to, taxi rides, gifts, laundry service, gratuities, meals other than those covered in the program, and personal items. Travelers checks are the safest way to carry money, since they're refundable in case of loss or theft, but please remember that banks keep limited hours and are simply not available in more remote locations. If you choose to spend American dollars, do not expect to receive your change in American currency. We suggest carrying a mix of Chilean cash and U.S. dollars in small denominations. Large amounts of Chilean pesos are best obtained before departing the United States, but ATMs are widely available in larger cities.

The official currency of Chile is the Chilean peso (CLP). 100 centavos = 1 peso.

As of February 28, 2008, the conversion rate is: 1 US dollar = 463.260 Chilean pesos.

To view the most recent rate of exchange, please click on the link, <http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert.cgi>.

Major credit cards are accepted at bigger hotels and restaurants in Santiago and other big cities, but not reliably in more remote destinations. Many banks provide cash advances on either Visa or MasterCard. Shipboard accounts while aboard *Via Australis* can be paid with most major credit cards. Visa and Mastercard are universally accepted. Please inquire for further details regarding the use of Diners Club and American Express. Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

HEALTH: As of this writing (February 2008), no major shots or inoculations are required for entry into Chile. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B.

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 trip 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.

Motion Sickness – Travelers should not anticipate traveling in especially rough water during the cruise portion of the program, but this does not mean the possibility of seasickness doesn't exist, particularly around Cape Horn. Even people who have never been motion sick may find themselves at risk in this part of the world. Many ships visiting Patagonia carry a supply of anti-motion sickness medication for general availability to passengers. We recommend that you consult your physician on an appropriate medication.

Sun Exposure – The sun's ultraviolet rays are more dangerous this far south than many other places in the world. Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. A 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 ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

Food and Water:

Diseases from food and water are the leading cause of illness in travelers. Follow these tips for safe eating and drinking:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially before eating. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand gel (with at least 60% alcohol).
- Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated (bubbly) drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes. If this is not possible, learn how to [make water safer to drink](#).
- Do not eat food purchased from street vendors.
- Make sure food is fully cooked.
- Avoid dairy products, unless you know they have been pasteurized.

Diseases from food and water often cause vomiting and diarrhea. Make sure to bring diarrhea medicine with you so that you can treat mild cases yourself.

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 (877) FYI-TRIP. You can check the CDC website at 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 (click on travel health).

Central Chile & Patagonia, Page 14

SUGGESTED READING: Our website, 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 the store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You might also want to visit such other online stores as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print and hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com or www.buteobooks.com, which specializes in ornithology books.

Birds:

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

This is the best book available for this tour; it is a modern easy-to-use, pocket-size field guide covering all of Chile's birdlife, including southernmost Tierra del Fuego. Most importantly, the guide also includes **ALL** of the species the tour could possibly encounter in the Falkland Islands, South Georgia, Antarctica, and the Southern Ocean. The book is available through ABA Sales (www.abasales.com) and Amazon.com.

Couvre, Enrique and Claudio Vidal. **Birds of Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego & Antarctic Peninsula.** Printed in Chile, by Fantastico Sur, 2003.

A quality reference guide which serves as a useful companion to *Birds of Chile*. This book is small and fits especially well in your pocket.

Mammals:

Shirihai, Hadoram and Brett Jarrett, **Whales, Dolphins, & Other Marine Mammals of the World.** Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, and local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, gratuities for shipboard personnel are **not included** in your tour fee. While such gratuities are customary practice aboard all ships, gratuities are a personal decision and the amount extended should be based on the quality and manner of the service you receive.

Via Australis generally recommends a guideline of **\$XXX** per passenger per day. Gratuities are traditionally given at the end of the voyage in either cash or travelers' checks. Further guidelines will be given by cruise staff at the end of the voyage. **Note:** To avoid confusion, tips placed in the general fund will be distributed to the ship's crew, which generally consists of housekeeping, dining room service, maintenance workers, and deckhands. The Cruise Director is NOT considered part of the main crew. **If you decide to tip the Cruise Director, you should hand it to him/her directly.**

If you feel one or all of your VENT leaders or any local guide has provided exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger 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 passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are

based on tariffs and exchange rates in March 17, 2008 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.