

Birding
Buenos Aires



Rufous-throated Dipper - © Jorge La Grotteria

Post “Ornithological Congress of the Americas 2017” Tour

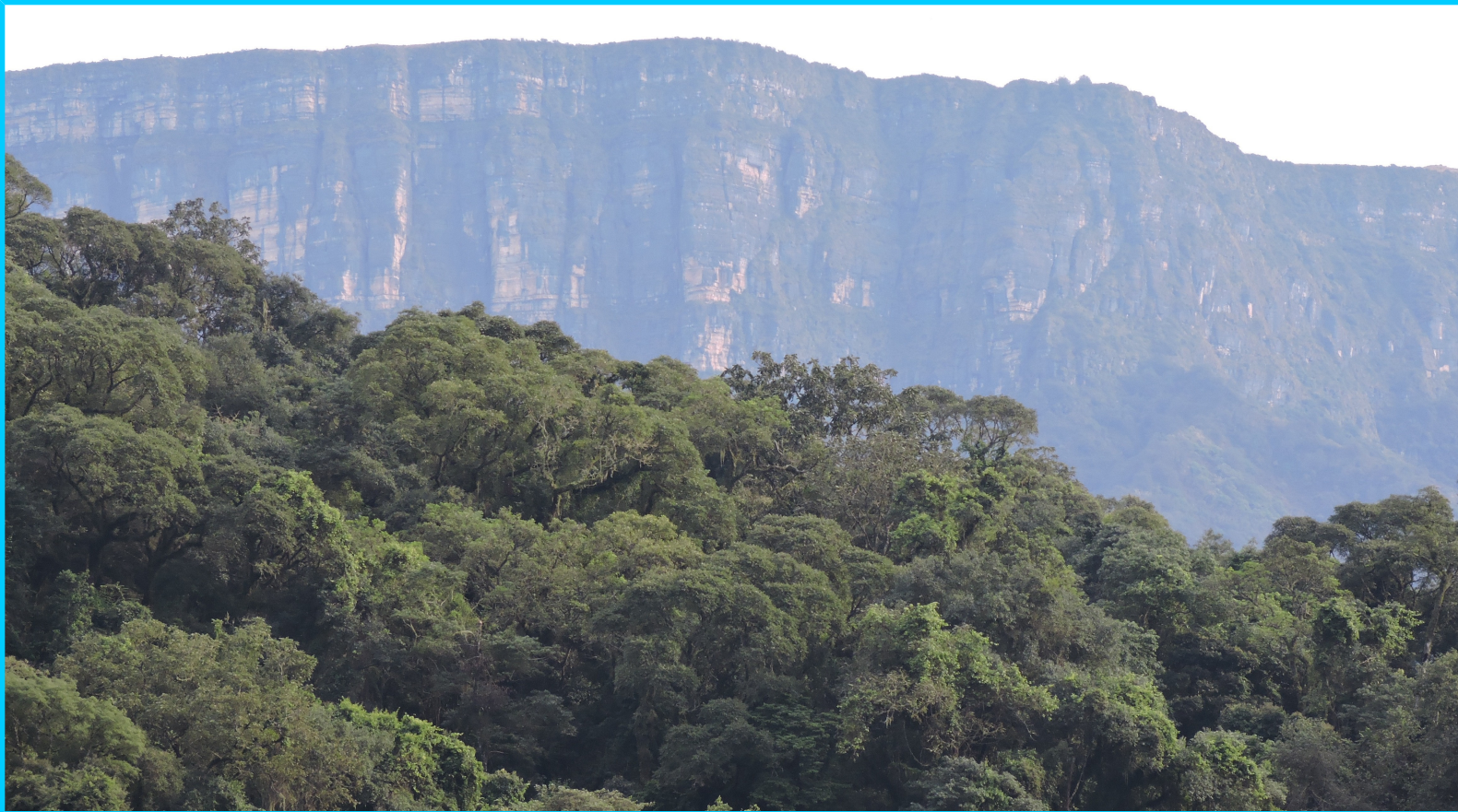
North West Argentina

Jujuy birding route

6 days/ 5 nights tour, August 12th to 17th

(+ optional tour complement, August 18th to 23rd)

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Austral Yungas forest in Jujuy - © Marcelo Gavensky

INTRODUCTION

North-west Argentina is famous for its diversity of landscapes, wildlife and cultures. In a relatively small area it is possible to travel from the subtropical warm plains of the eastern lowlands to the high altitude cold Andean peaks, with a wide array of habitats and landscapes in between. This produces a very high bird diversity that goes from toucans and trogons to flamingoes and condors, just to mention a few iconic species. This trip comprises all major habitats of north-west Argentina, in a fairly new birding route that has been designed by us to take the best advantage of a relatively short period of time.

The tour is divided in two stages:

- **STAGE ONE: The Chaco lowlands and Austral Yungas forest (August 12th to 17th)**

Main targets: Andean Condor, King Vulture, Torrent Duck, White-rumped Hawk, Black-and-chestnut Eagle, Orange-breasted Falcon, Red-faced Guan, Black-legged Seriema, Red-legged Seriema, Golden-collared Macaw, Tucuman Parrot, Yungas Pygmy-Owl, Lyre-tailed Nightjar, Red-tailed Comet, Chaco Puffbird, Cream-backed Woodpecker, Crested Hornero, Spot-breasted Thornbird, Giant Antshrike, Stripe-backed Antbird, White-throated Antpitta, Olive-crowned Crescentchest, White-browed Tapaculo, Yungas Manakin, Rufous-throated Dipper, Many-colored Chaco-Finch, Rusty-browed Warbling-Finch, Yellow-striped Brush-Finch, Fulvous-headed Brush-Finch, Black-backed Grosbeak and more.

- **STAGE TWO: The Pre-Puna, Puna and High Andes (August 18th to 23rd)**

Main targets: Puna Rhea, Puna Ibis, Chilean Flamingo, Andean Flamingo, James's Flamingo, Andean Goose, Mountain Caracara, Giant Coot, Horned Coot, Andean Avocet, Andean Lapwing, Diademed Sandpiper-plover, Gray-breasted Seedsnipe, Golden-spotted Ground-Dove, Bare-eyed Ground-Dove, Bare-faced Ground-Dove, Gray-hooded Parakeet, Mountain Parakeet, Wedge-tailed Hillstar, Giant Hummingbird, Andean Flicker, Slender-billed Miner, Rock Earthcreeper, Maquis Canastero, Streak-fronted Thornbird, Andean Negrito, Brown-backed Mockingbird, Red-backed Sierra-Finch, Black-hooded Sierra-Finch, Short-tailed Finch, Bright-rumped Yellow-Finch, Citron-headed Yellow-Finch, Puna Yellow-Finch, Rufous-bellied Mountain-Tanager, Black Siskin and more.



Yellow-striped Brush-Finch, Argentine endemic - © Jorge La Grotteria

TOUR DESCRIPTION

A short flight connection from Iguazu to Salta airport will take us to this exciting and extremely diverse region of Argentina.

After meeting with the tour leader and local guide/driver, we will travel northwards to the province of Jujuy, to our first birding destination: Eco-portal de Piedra. This nice accommodation with its own private reserve is located next to the Sierra de Santa Bárbara, a small mountain where two types of forest can be found at their best: Montane Chaco forest (semi-humid forest) and Austral Yungas forest (also known as “Tucumano-Boliviano forest”, a subtropical humid forest which is one of the most bio-diverse habitats in Argentina).

The bird fauna of this place, out of the beaten path, is very diverse and the first chances of seeing **Andean Condors** are right here, as well as another remarkable “new world’s” vulture: the **King Vulture**. This is one of the best places for watching both species, which can be seen together at times, soaring over the subtropical forest.

An interesting mix of chaco related species (such as **Red-legged Seriema**, **Chaco Puffbird** and **Chaco Chachalaca**) with yungas species (such as **Tucuman Parrot**, **Large-tailed Dove**, **Golden-olive Woodpecker** and **Fasciated Tiger-Heron**), as well as the beautiful landscape, are some of the main attractions of the area. At least two Argentine endemic birds are found in this private reserve: **Yellow-striped Brush-Finch** and the skulking **White-browed Tapaculo**, “*santabarbaerae*” subspecies (which is only found in this mountain). Many species of very scarce raptors are often seen here, such as the **White-rumped Hawk**, **Zone-tailed Hawk**, **Rufous-thighed Kite** and **Collared Forest-Falcon**, although the rare **Black-and-chestnut Eagle** and **Orange-breasted Falcon** are the reserve’s highlights, with breeding pairs living within it.



Orange-breasted Falcon at Ecoportal de Piedra - © Marcelo Gavensky

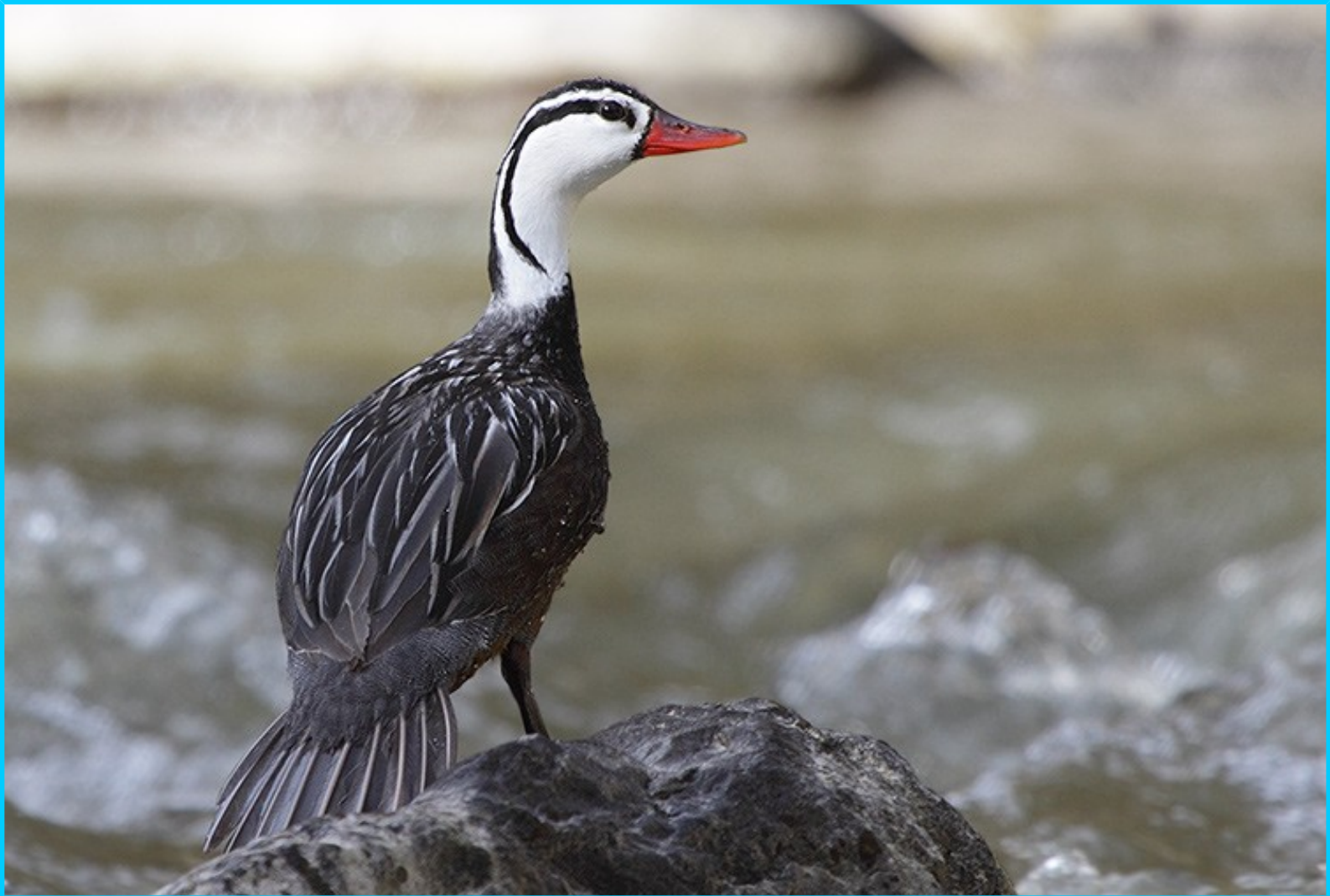
attractive species in the area include **Red-tailed Comet**, **Toco Toucan**, **Cream-backed Woodpecker** and **Golden-collared Macaw**. In the evening, we will try to spot some of the many interesting nocturnal species that live in the reserve, such as **Black-banded Owl**, **Spectacled Owl**, **Buff-fronted Owl** and **Hoy's Screech-Owl**.

From the Eco-portal we will make short trips to visit the Dry Chaco forest near the border with the province of Salta, in order to have good chances of seeing some of the specialties of that habitat, such as **Black-legged Seriema**, **Many-colored Chaco-Finch** and **Crested Hornero**; and El Fuerte area (in the heart of the Sierra de Santa Bárbara) to look for **Huayco Tinamou**, **Olive-crowned Crescentchest** and more.

After Ecoportal de Piedra we will travel westwards, making birding stops in search of **Stripe-backed Antbird** and **Great Antshrike**, to finally get to one of the best preserved protected areas in north west Argentina: Calilegua National Park.

Calilegua is a great natural area with different layers of Yungas Forest. There we will be looking for more specialties of this habitat, such as the **White-throated Antpitta** and **Spotted Nightingale-Thrush** (both species far more often heard than seen), **Fulvous-headed Brush-Finch**, **Spot-breasted Thornbird** and a recently found species for Argentina: **Yungas Manakin**.

Other attractive birds to look for include **Solitary Eagle**, **Yungas Pygmy-Owl**, **Amazonian Motmot**, **Blue-crowned Trogon**, **Speckled Hummingbird**, **Slender-tailed Woodstar**, and the “*cinerea*” subspecies of **Giant Antshrike**. Recent records of **Harpy Eagle** make the experience of birding in Calilegua National Park even more exciting.



Torrent Duck (male) - © Jorge La Grotteria

Before finishing the first leg of the tour, we will visit Potrero de Yala Provincial Park. This strategic birding area will give us the best chances of finding some of the most attractive birds of the region: **Torrent Duck**, **Red-faced Guan**, **Rufous-throated Dipper** and **Lyre-tailed Nightjar**, as well as the **Black-and-chestnut Eagle**, which is often seen soaring in the area.

After visiting Potrero de Yala we will either end the tour or continue to the second stage (optional), and start birding in totally different landscapes.

The first stop at Quebrada de Humahuaca will be in the town of Tilcara, a traditional place with ancient history, which still preserves ruins of a pre-columbine culture that was conquered by the Inca Empire (it is possible to visit these ruins, called “El Pucará”).

The bird fauna in this region is very different to the one seen in the other places visited along the tour, and we will look for Pre-Puna semi-desert specialties such as the **Gray-hooded Parakeet**, **Creamy-breasted Canastero**, **Brown-backed Mockingbird**, **Greenish Yellow-Finch** and **Black-hooded Sierra-Finch**, among many others.

After Tilcara we will continue travelling northwards to the town of Abra Pampa, the “capital” of the Argentine Puna. The Puna has many bird specialties, and its dry plains have scattered lagoons and marshes where plenty of aquatic birds are found, including three species of flamingoes: **Chilean**, **Andean** and **James’s**.



Pre-Puna semi-desert around Tilcara - © Marcelo Gavensky

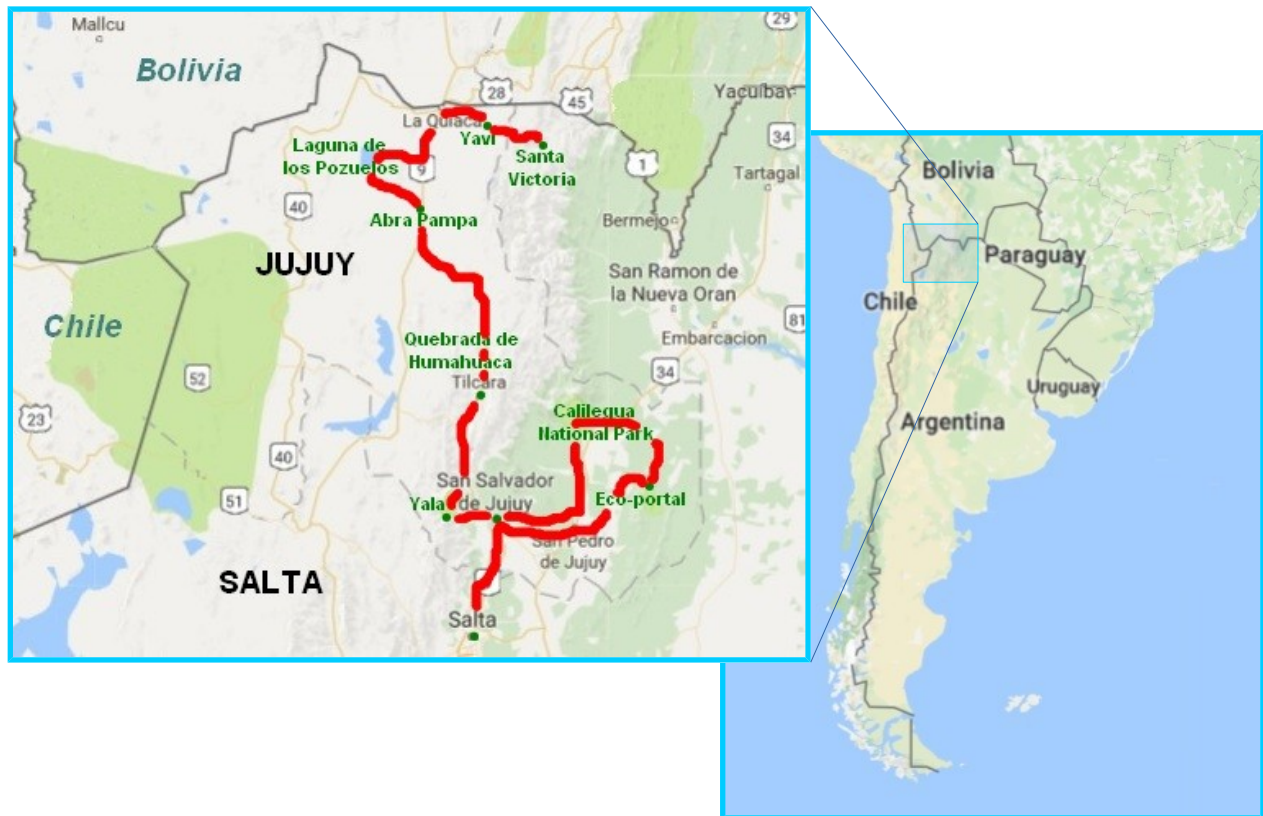
This is a land with lots of “puna” and “andean” birds, such as the **Puna Rhea**, **Puna Tinamou**, **Andean Tinamou**, **Puna Ibis**, **Puna Teal**, **Andean Goose**, **Andean Coot**, **Andean Avocet**, **Andean Lapwing**, **Puna Plover**, **Andean Gull**, **Andean Hillstar**, **Andean Flicker**, **Puna Miner**, **Puna Canastero**, **Andean Negrito** and more, that will be our target species while we sightsee some of the most incredible landscapes.

Among the most remarkable birds in this area are the **Giant** and **Horned Coots**, two species of large and scarce coots only found in this part of South America. Other interesting animals such as Vicuñas, Culpeo Foxes and Mountain Viscachas, are likely to be seen during the tour. Visiting the Natural Monument “Laguna de los Pozuelos” we will increase our chances of finding all these species.

Further north, we will get to the small village of Yavi, very near the Bolivian border. Here we will look for some local specialties that are almost only found in this remote point of the Country. These include the **Wedge-tailed Hillstar**, **Citron-headed Yellow-Finch** and **Bare-faced Ground-Dove**. It is also a great place to look for the **Giant Hummingbird**, the largest species in its kind.

Finally, we will go across the heights of Abra del Lizoite (located at 4600 metres above sea level) in the High Andes looking for some very rewarding specialties such as the **Red-backed Sierra-Finch** and the rare **Diademed Sandpiper-plover**, as well as many other species such as **Slender-billed Miner**, **Puna Tinamou** and more.

After passing through Abra del Lizoite, we will get to Santa Victoria. In the surroundings of this little town there is a Polylepis forest that gives refuge to very scarce species such as **Rufous-bellied Mountain-Tanager**, **Tawny Tit-spinetail** and **Maquis Canastero**. Other species found in the area and on the road to Santa Victoria include **Bolivian Warbling-Finch**, **Short-tailed Finch**, **Rufous-webbed Tyrant** and more, as well as some of the most spectacular mountain landscapes found in north-west Argentina.



ITINERARY*

STAGE ONE

DAY 1: Arrival in Salta airport. Meet with local driver/guide and birding transfer to Ecoportal de Piedra reserve & lodge, with birding stops in the Chaco lowlands. Afternoon birding in Ecoportal area. Night at Ecoportal.

DAY 2: Full day birding in Ecoportal de Piedra and surroundings. Night at Ecoportal.

DAY 3: Full day birding in Ecoportal de Piedra and surroundings. Night at Ecoportal.

DAY 4: Birding transfer to Calilegua National Park with birding stops in the lowlands. Afternoon birding in Calilegua National Park and surroundings. Night in Calilegua.

DAY 5: Morning birding in Calilegua National Park. Transfer to Yala. Nocturnal birding, and night in Yala.

DAY 6: Half day birding in Potrero de Yala Provincial Park. End of the tour in Jujuy airport or continue to STAGE TWO of the tour, with afternoon transfer to Tilcara. Night in Tilcara.

** The itinerary may change due to force majeure*



Rufous-bellied Mountain-Tanager - © Andrés Terán

STAGE TWO

DAY 7: Full day birding in Tilcara and surroundings. Optional visit to “El Pucará” (pre-columbine ruins). Transfer to Abra Pampa. Night in Abra Pampa.

DAY 8: Full day birding in Abra Pampa and Laguna de los Pozuelos. Transfer to Yavi. Night in Yavi.

DAY 9: Birding tour to Santa Victoria through Abra del Lizoite. Night in Santa Victoria.

DAY 10: Full day birding in Santa Victoria surroundings. Night in Santa Victoria.

DAY 11: Birding transfer to Yavi. Night in Yavi.

DAY 12: Transfer to Jujuy or Salta airport. End of tour.

TOUR DETAILS

Price

The STAGE ONE of the tour has a total price of **US\$2350** per person, in double basis. Single supplement (not available in all accommodations, and subject to group size): US\$200.

STAGE TWO (optional tour complement) has a total price of **US\$1750**, in double basis. Single supplement (not available in all accommodations, and subject to group size): US\$200.



Diademed Sandpiper-Plover- © Andrés Terán

Includes all accommodations, three meals a day (breakfast, lunch and dinner), all land transfers in private vehicle, local guide/driver and tour leader with spotting scope, site guide for Calilegua National Park (mandatory), snacks and drinks (bottled water) during the tour.

Does not include flight tickets to and from Salta or Jujuy airport, alcoholic drinks, tips, nor anything not mentioned on previous paragraph.

Group size

Both tour stages will be made with a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 5 passengers (+ 1 local guide/driver and 1 tour leader).

Fisical difficulty

Easy to moderate.

Acommodations

Vary from a comfortable lodge with cabins located within a natural reserve (Eco-portal de Piedra) to comfortable small hotels located in towns near birding sites (San Francisco, Yala, Tilcara, Abra Pampa and Yavi). Rustic cabins are only expected for Santa Victoria.

Weather in NW Argentina

The diversity of habitats and heights above sea level that we will go through will also give us a



King Vulture - © Adrián Heredia

diverse array of weather conditions. Generally speaking, weather will be subtropical (we will in fact go across the Tropic of Capricorn at some point of the tour), but in the heights of the Andes it can be very cold, especially in winter. The eastern lowlands are usually warm and can be even hot in the winter. The Puna and high Andes heights can reach warm temperatures during the day (not very often in winter), but at night the temperature decreases drastically, being cold. Around the highest Andean peaks that we will pass by in the tour extension, there is the possibility of snow fall. Winter is the dry season and we should expect very few rain fall, mainly in the yungas cloud forest.

High altitude sickness possibilities

The whole tour (if both tour stages are booked) is planned to reduce to a minimum the risk of having this problem. The tour starts in the lowlands and begins getting gradually higher, giving your body time to adapt gradually to high altitude conditions. Also, we will have a vehicle near us while we bird in the heights, so to keep the fatigue to a minimum possible. If you only take the STAGE ONE of the tour, then the risk of having altitude sickness decreases to almost zero. **IN ANY CASE YOU MUST ASK YOUR DOCTOR BEFORE THE TRIP, ESPECIALLY IF YOU HAVE GOT ANY SPECIAL HEALTH CONDITION.**

Packing for the trip

In spite of the complex weather conditions described above, preparing clothing for this trip is not an impossible task: take with you a good amount of light clothing (long-sleeves shirts and long pants to avoid insect bites), a light coat for the nights in the lowland, and a warmer coat and a good sweater for the highlands, with a scarf, wool hat and gloves. It's also essential to bring closed shoes (2 pairs if possible), a rain coat ("ponchos" are very usefull) and a good hat. Along with that you should bring sun glasses, sun screen and insect repellent (this last one mainly for the rainforest).




Birding out of the beaten path in Sierra de Santa Barbara - © Marcelo Gavensky

Important information (READ): *Birding Buenos Aires tours are designed for small groups, with low impact, personalized attention and hiring local guides whenever possible, in order to increase the quality of the tour. We keep the use play back down to a minimum possible so to avoid stressing the birds or affecting their natural behavior, thus actively contributing to the conservation of the same and promotion of responsible birding and ecotourism practices.*

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