

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES
birding & nature tours



Chile – Argentina. Birds & Wine! 2024

March 1 - 16, 2024

**(Pumas in Torres del Paine Pre-tour Feb 24 – Mar 1,
2024)**

**Guided by Alvaro Jaramillo
and Ricardo Matus**

May be combined with Easter Island!



His Majesty - The Andean Condor – National bird of Chile.

Chile is a fantastic birding nation, with absolutely wonderful scenery, some of the best in the world! Not to be outdone, neighboring Argentina is an absolute gem, with fantastic vistas, and a largely different and unique avifauna. These two nations are separated by the highest section of the majestic Andes, at roughly the same latitude here we find two of the most up and coming internationally renowned wine regions. Hmmmmm – so why not go birding in both countries, and do a little wine tasting while there? This is how Chile-Argentina Birds & Wine was born, some years ago. We were the pioneers in this concept, offering it before anyone else was doing it! You can blame us. Keep in mind that this is a tour that samples only a subset of the birding areas of both of these countries, it is not a comprehensive survey tour. But within the regions we visit, it surely is both complete as well as utterly enjoyable. Many participants have commented that this is the best bird tour they have ever been on, and these were experienced travelers. Taking the time to

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visit some of the wine growing regions, tasting wine, and also local food and culture is an added bonus of this tour. This is definitely a trip where even a non-birding outdoorsy person will have a great time. In 2024 will be our 11th anniversary for this trip, we are on a roll. It also is the start of a new itinerary, where we travel across the Andes along the forest zone, and sample habitats similar to those in northern Patagonia, allowing for more diversity in this two-week trip.

The timing of the tour is in the southern spring. So will see the vines, but no grapes yet. It is before summer vacation, and in a time that is great for birds with migration, bird song and display.



Rufous-banded Miner – two cryptic species might be seen on our tour, they look the same but sound different. More than meets the eye in this mountain species.

The critical feature in this region of the world is the Andes, which divide the avifaunas, countries as well as the cultures of Chile and Argentina. It is absolutely astounding to compare both sides, they are quite different. On the Chilean side you might be seeing the endemic Chilean Mockingbirds and Moustached Turcas, while higher up the ground-tyrants, sierra-finches and yellow-finches make a showing. On the Argentine side, the highland birds are similar, but as you head down it becomes a much more desert like,

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with elements of the Chaco. We may see many members of this unique avifauna, real Argentine specialties, maybe a Sandy Gallito or a White-throated Cacholote! These are birds usually associated with Patagonia which are actually fond of a region known as the Monte Desert. Curiously, as the term desert suggests, both sides of the Andes here have dry summers favored by wine producers. The arid weather is caused by different factors on each side of the mountains, but it clarifies that everything on this tour goes back to the influence of the Andes. Seeing both sides of the Andes is in many ways an absolute highlight of this tour. Although the Andes here are higher and more treacherous than farther north or south, road and air connections are such that in a few hours one can be sipping an Argentine Malbec versus a Chilean Carménère. An added appeal is that weather and time permitting we will be able to see one of the most magnificent mountains on earth, Mt. Aconcagua, the highest peak in the Americas at 6,962 m (22,841 ft). Aconcagua is a huge mountain, a beautiful mountain and the tallest mountain in the entire southern hemisphere! Watching Aconcagua as we look for Creamy-rumped Miners, Mountain Caracaras, and Mountain Parakeets well, what more could you ask for?



Diademed Sandpiper-Plover - Wow!

On the Chilean side we will visit three main regions. One is Santiago itself, the capital and economic engine of Chile. Now perhaps the most modern and vibrant city in Latin America, it is also a gorgeous town, with a rich energy that permeates the place. There is even a little cockiness in Santiago now, a rare quality for the typically more subdued Chileans (as opposed to the effusive and self-assured Argentines). You will very much enjoy seeing the similarities and noticeable differences in the ways of

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Argentines and Chileans, a little bit sociology as we sip and bird our way through these places. In Santiago we will focus on birding the Andes as well as the lowland marshes to the west of the city and coast.

The second region in Chile we will bird is the central coast, visiting various estuaries, beaches, coastal lagoons and rocky headlands. The coast here is similar to that of Central California, not only in its look but in the cool breeze which always seems to be blowing. Just offshore there may be many Peruvian Pelicans, Peruvian Boobies, Guanay Cormorants, Grey Gulls and the beautiful Inca Tern. This underscores the fact that this is amongst the richest ocean areas anywhere on earth. If that much can be seen from the coast, then what is out there in deeper water? The answer is more albatrosses than you can dream of, from the smaller Black-browed and Buller's to the larger Salvin's or the huge Northern Royal, it is a pelagic feast out there. Wilson's Storm-Petrels zoom by, with hundreds of shearwaters, giant-petrels, scavenging Westland and White-chinned Petrels and maybe even the gadflys – like Juan Fernandez Petrel. And that funny looking loon swimming around, well, it's a Humboldt Penguin! Even if you have been on a hundred pelagics, a trip out of Valparaiso is like no other, it is just chock-full of birds. Best part of it is that you can be done early enough in the day to get back for a late lunch!

Finally, in Chile we head south to the northern edge of the Patagonian Forest. We do not have a huge amount of time here, but it will be a great introduction to the southern forest. Here massive stands of southern beech (*Nothofagus sp.*) hold a wonderful assortment of birds, from colorful Patagonian Sierra-Finches, the creeper like Thorn-tailed Rayadito, to Chile's version of the nuthatch, the White-throated Treerunner. But if we are lucky as can be, a Magellanic Woodpecker may show up for us. They are not abundant this far north, but we do stand a pretty good chance of seeing one. Add to this Alvaro's favorite bird in the world, the Chucao Tapaculo and its larger cousin, the Chestnut-throated Huet-Huet and we have quite a few cool possibilities, although these two species can be difficult to see. Again, we need a bit of luck, or perhaps an extra glass of wine at the end of the day depending on how it goes. A tad north of our forest birding sites is the Colchagua Valley, one of Chile's premier wine growing regions. Home to Montes, Viu Manent, Casa Silva, Casa Lapostolle and many other wineries. Here we shall tone down the birding and ramp up the food and wine. It will be a nice change of pace in a beautiful wine growing area of the country, where we shall be able to immerse ourselves in the wine.

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

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Chucao Tapaculo - a perky little guy, when not hiding in bamboo!

But wait, there's more! This is a tour of two countries, we have yet to talk about Argentina. We will be visiting Mendoza, but this is only a tiny taste of what Argentina has to offer, both in terms of the birds, the people, culture, and the landscape. Argentina is a huge country, one that cannot be adequately covered in one, two or even three trips! Argentina is the 8th largest country in the world, only slightly smaller than the Indian Subcontinent. Yet what we do visit in Argentina, the Mendoza area, is a gorgeous and unique part of the country – this is why wines are grown here, the specific desert-like climate type is not common in Argentina. The birds here sort out into those found in the foothills and those found in the lowlands. We will visit these two areas and make sure we sample all of what this area's bird life offers to experience. We will have days devoted to birds, and a day devoted to wine, and some superb food! Argentina's world-renowned beef will be on the menu, as well as Malbec and maybe some rarer varieties you may have never heard of! Torrontes anyone? As we taste, we will chat and learn about what makes Argentina the fantastic nation it is. The influence of the Gaucho is still strong this far west in Argentina, and how the culture of roving "cowboys" has shaped this nation is imperative in understanding the greater confidence and swagger of the Argentines versus the Chileans. Birds will be our reason for coming down here, but they are an avenue to a rich travel experience. By the end of this trip you will not only have a good idea of the birds, but also the food, culture, idiosyncrasies, scenery and yes...the wonderful wine of these two neighboring countries. You don't want to miss this incredible tour!!



Mt. Aconcagua in the distance.

The Birding Sites We Visit

Santiago and the Andes — Santiago is where we begin; it is the largest city in the region and the largest city and capital of Chile. Although it is at the base of the Andes, the city is only about 1500 feet in elevation. It is large; over 4.5 million people live in the area, nearing half of the population of Chile. Yet, there is plenty of amazing birding right near and even within the city limits. In Santiago we will bird the Andes, the foothills and the wetlands of the lowlands. Here the Andes are very high and rugged, yet it is not all that difficult to ascend to areas between 4000 and 10000 feet, gaining access to some fantastic habitats! The lower elevations are typical arid Mediterranean scrub known as Matorral, mixed with dry forest. But as you go higher up the taller vegetation gives to rugged rocky slopes, and eventually open alpine habitats surrounded by snowcapped peaks...even in late summer! Lower down we may find Moustached Turca (a huge and charismatic tapaculo), Chilean Mockingbird, Mourning Sierra-Finch, California Quail and perhaps even a Chilean Tinamou. In the higher reaches there are Creamy-rumped Miners, the more common Rufous-banded Miner, Sharp-billed Canastero, White-sided Hillstar and maybe even Mountain Parakeets. There is a diversity of ground loving flycatchers here such as the various ground-tyrants, like the White-browed, Ochre-naped, Cinereous (rare), and the large Black-fronted. What were thought of as New World Sparrows (Emberizids) until genetic work resolved that they are finch-like tanagers, are also diverse up here. These include the Greater Yellow-Finches, Band-tailed and Grey-hooded as well as Plumbeous sierra-finches. The more we learn the less we know! Some of these sierra-finches are not closely related to each other apparently, while the yellow-finches are genetically similar to some of the sierra-finches. Yikes!! As we bird and enjoy

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the outdoors we will also talk about and learn of these findings and what they mean as it relates to the evolution of Andean and southern South American bird communities. At any time in the mountains we may find the master of the Andes, the Andean Condor. They are not only regular here; they can be relatively common! It is not unheard of to see 10 or even 20 condors while birding the mountains of Santiago. Appropriately this is the national bird of Chile, and one of the most impressive raptors in the world. Another particularly charismatic bird of the Andean Slopes is the Crag Chilia, a bird of the “ovenbird” family that resembles a South American version of the Canyon Wren. But perhaps the most sought after and amazing bird of this region of the Andes is the rare and little-known Diademed Sandpiper-Plover, a colorful plover with the bill of a sandpiper that is both rare and restricted to very specific wetlands in the high Andes. The Yeso Valley (picture below right) above Santiago is one of the most reliable places to find this species.

Santiago itself is a beautiful and historic city, many buildings in the historical downtown may recall Paris, France that other South American cities. The modern section of Santiago now holds the tallest skyscrapers in South America. Chile has been booming for decades, and in terms of infrastructure and ease of travel you may be surprised to find out how European this city seems. If time permits, we will do a tasting at one of the old wineries in the Maipo Valley (Concha & Toro), from where Chilean wine first became known in the international scene.

The Matorral (La Campana National Park) – During several parts of the trip we may be birding in the lowland shrub habitat known as Matorral in Chile; the equivalent of California’s Chaparral. La Campana National Park is certainly one of the best examples of this habitat and we will visit here for a morning. Areas in the foothills of the Andes, near Santiago as well as near Santa Cruz will also effectively be in this zone and may allow us other opportunities to see the birds of the Matorral. La Campana is where in 1834 Charles Darwin explored on one of his outings from the port of Valparaiso, as this was the highest and most prominent mountain on the coastal range, he decided to venture here to see what he could find. As such we shall be birding in the footsteps of Darwin! To think he may have walked in these very areas, and maybe



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seeing some of the same birds is a real kick. Many species of the Matorral are found in Chile and in Chile only; this particularly applies to plants and insects, but also in birds. The Chilean Tinamou, White-throated Tapaculo, Moustached Turca, Dusky Tapaculo, Dusky-tailed Canastero and Chilean Mockingbird are all endemics or nearly so (in the case of the mockingbird) that live in this area. The White-throated Tapaculo is particularly difficult to find and we shall spend some effort trying to locate one here. There are other outstanding birds in the Matorral, such as the awesome Giant Hummingbird! A hummingbird so large it resembles a swift more than a hummingbird. Overhead Black-chested Buzzard-Eagles, or Harris's Hawks may patrol in addition to the more common Variable Hawk. A bird that is really a voracious predator but does not necessarily look like it at first glance is the Great Shrike-Tyrant, the largest of the American flycatchers. It is so big it can eat lizards with the hook-tipped bill it has! This flycatcher is not common, so we shall need some luck and careful looking to find one. Chilean Pigeons, White-throated Treerunner, and Thorn-tailed Rayaditos may show up in the taller dry forest of La Campana, species that are typically much more common farther south!



Northern Royal Albatross - The Big Guy!

Valparaiso and the Coast — The Humboldt Current region is amongst the most productive, perhaps the most productive part of the world's oceans. Here we have an effect of a cold-water current that sweeps north from more polar regions, as well as winds

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that cause an upwelling effect off the coast of Chile. Both of these elements create a heck of a lot of nutrients to be thrust into areas with ample sunshine, allowing various creatures to feast, grow, multiply and feed other creatures. Up at the top of the food chain are the birds, and man are there lots of them. Here we could go out and see up to five species of albatross, and sometimes hundreds of individuals! The huge Northern Royal Albatross is a regular, although uncommon, component of the feeding flocks. Thousands of Sooty and Pink-footed Shearwaters may be around along with the two species of Giant Petrel, Westland and White-chinned Petrels as well as “Fuegian” Wilson’s Storm-Petrel. An uncommon but regular species we look for is the alcid-like Peruvian Diving-Petrel; a family entirely separate from the true petrels. Closer to shore we can enjoy groups of Peruvian Booby, both Guanay and Red-legged Cormorants, Franklin’s Gulls, and often lots of the gorgeous Inca Tern.



Birding the Andes

Coastal birding in the area is fantastic, for one the scenery is nice, and Valparaiso and Viña del Mar are quite interesting and picturesque cities. Any spot that has a number of rocks at the shore may hold the most unlikely of seabirds, the Seaside Cinclodes. This is a member of the ovenbird family which has chosen to spend all of its life right at the shore

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of the ocean, it is as much a seabird as many gulls and cormorants. We will visit one area where we may see Humboldt Penguins at a colony, we cannot go to the colony but we will be close enough to see them well in the scope. Otherwise there are several wetlands and estuaries in the area where we will have a chance to see various migratory shorebirds, gulls and terns, the “Amazon” Black Skimmer, and maybe the uncommon Great Shrike-Tyrant.

Altos del Lircay and Lago Colbún – Much of southern Chile is covered in wonderful southern beech forests (*Nothofagus*), an old lineage of trees that once dominated the southern hemisphere. They are now found in relict populations, including many in New Zealand, and another great diversity of them in Chile. As this tour is focused on the wine growing regions, which are warmer than the more Patagonian sections of the country where the forest is found, we have few chances to find some of the distinctive Chilean forest birds on this tour. However, we are just at the edge of the forest zone. What we do is visit an area known as Altos de Lircay, sometimes known by birders as “Vilches.” This is as far north as many superb birds of the forest can be found. Here we will look for several forest tapaculos, such as the Chucao and Magellanic tapaculos, as well as the Chestnut-throated Huet-Huet a shy forest dweller that hoots out a unique song that reminds one of an owl or even antpitta. There could be some more forest-based raptors here such as the Chilean (Bicolored) Hawk, and the White-throated Hawk; and if we are more than just a little bit lucky the fantastic Magellanic Woodpecker.

One side visit on our way to “Vilches” will be to visit the Colbún Reservoir. This man-made lake has created some valuable habitat for waterbirds, particularly waterfowl. In winter it is a major concentration area for the rare and threatened Spectacled Duck, and we hope that some will already be at the lake for us to enjoy. Otherwise this is a place to find the unique Chilean subspecies of the Burrowing Parakeet. This parrot is really a huge and overgrown parakeet that resembles a macaw with its large size and long and pointed tail. They get their name from the fact that this species nests colonially on cliffs, and each nest is inside a long burrow. Often something unusual shows up at Colbún, maybe a migrant Osprey or an Andean Gull down from its highland breeding areas perhaps?

The Andes & Aconcagua – This alone is worth the price of admission, to see the High Andes is something that is so awesome that it is hard to put into words. At this latitude the Andes are huge, massive walls of rock. Some of the most unforgiving and treacherous mountains anywhere; this is still a sharp, pointed, young mountain range. It has not had the time to wear and be tamed by the elements. Right now, the Andes are winning the battle; they are getting taller not smaller! The scenery from either the Chilean or Argentine side is spectacular, and the star of the show is Mt. Aconcagua which at 6,962 m (22,841 ft) is the tallest mountain in the Americas. It is the highest mountain in the southern hemisphere, and the second tallest in the seven summits (tallest mountains of

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each continent). Up high we may see “Alpine” type Rufous-banded Miners, Greater Yellow-Finches, Black-fronted Ground-Tyrants and hopefully a few Andean Condors. We aim to bird from the Argentine side up through Uspallata and up to the overlook of Mt. Aconcagua, assuming weather permits. The Mendoza side of the Andes are colorful, much more sedimentary rock here than the more igneous Chilean side, the slope of rise is also shallower. Lower down, at 2500m in elevation birds begin to change. Our Rufous-banded Miner starts to sound different, act different, and you know what – it probably is a different as yet unrecognized species. We may find Band-tailed Seedeaters, maybe Andean Swifts, Chiguanco Thrushes and much more diversity here. Each elevation is different for birds and scenery, and the east and west slopes of the Andes are totally different.

Mendoza foothills - The Mendoza foothills encompass dry areas that have a Patagonian element. We will bird the environs of Uspallata and Potrerillos looking for many birds that are present on this side but not the Chilean side. These include many widespread species such as Tropical Kingbird, Guira Cuckoo and Spot-winged Pigeon to more typically Argentine species like the Grey-hooded Parakeet, White-winged Black-Tyrant, White-tipped Plantcutter, Chaco Earthcreeper, Patagonian Mockingbird and Ringed Warbling-Finch. There are Argentine endemics here as well such as the very little-known Steinbach’s Canastero, and the White-throated Cacholote as well as the gorgeous Cinnamon Warbling-Finch – the latter is nomadic and may be present in some years and not others. The most impressive and neat looking of the world’s tapaculos live either in Chile or Argentina, and this tour allows you to sample both countries “mega” tapaculos. Here in Mendoza the Crested Gallito (meaning little rooster) makes his appearance, a funny almost quail like bird with a pointed crest that makes him look like Zippy the pinhead. A bit more of a specialist and an Argentine endemic is the much rarer Sandy Gallito. This species is a lover of dry sandy habitats, particularly in the little-known endemic zone called the “Monte Desert.”

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Burrowing Parakeet – nearly as big as a macaw!

Mendoza – Monte Desert – The city of Mendoza is positioned such that it is right at the interface between the lowlands and the foothills. One drives to the east of the city and you have almost nothing but flat land until you reach Buenos Aires! Much of this area is a little birded region known as the Monte Desert. This is where one might find the Cinnamon Warbling-Finch and perhaps a White-banded Mockingbird, or a handsome Elegant-crested Tinamou. There may be more Monte Desert species that have gone ignored or are lost in muddled taxonomy. There is a siskin here that appears to have only a female like plumage, not a bright yellow and black one as in most males in this group. Could this be a new species? Perhaps! There is a newly recognized Argentine endemic, formerly considered an isolated race of the Greenish Yellow-Finch. This newly crowned Monte Yellow-Finch is a species we could see on our trip! In the southern part of our visit, we touch on Patagonian shrub-steppe, and may find Darwin's Rhea, perhaps Patagonian Canastero and the more common Patagonian Mockingbird. Even Chilean Flamingos are a possibility here. The lowlands of Mendoza have many secrets to divulge to us, and we hope you see the beauty and allure of this seldom-birded region – particularly as you sip on that local Malbec!

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The Wine Areas We Visit

Maipo Valley, Chile – This is one of the oldest wine growing regions in Chile, and one that has now expanded from the Andean foothills and mid valley all the way to the coast. We will be planning to visit the most well-known wine in all of South America – Concha y Toro during our tour. The Alto Maipo region is best known for its Cabernet Sauvignon, as well as Merlot and Carménère.

Colchagua Valley (Santa Cruz), Chile – This is now amongst the best known of all wine growing regions in Chile. There are lots of wineries to visit here, and we will have to pick and choose. It is terroir that comes with body! Full body. This is the land of Cabernet Sauvignon and Carménère, although Merlot and Syrah are also produced here in good quantities. We will have a full day of wine tasting in the Colchagua Valley.

Lujan del Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina – This is the most important wine region of Argentina, producing two thirds of all Argentine wine! The climate here is dry, and unlike in Chile there is no maritime influence it is very much a continental climate. It is hotter in the summer and much cooler in winter than on the Chilean side. This is a much more arid part of the world than the Chilean side, with only 8 inches of rain a year, meaning that irrigation is a must here for wine growing. Fortunately, the nearby Andes provide more than enough water to do so. The fame of the region comes from its Malbec,

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although Cabernet Sauvignon and Spanish Tempranillo are also planted here. A curiosity is that nearly a quarter of the area is planted with varieties that are never exported – Criolla Grande and Cereza. These are old lineages of grapes, and although they are used to make high volume box wines!



Magellanic Woodpecker - a male. With luck we could find one in Vilches.

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About the Physical Requirements & Pace

This is a tour of Chile's and Argentina's wine regions with a focus on both the birds and the wines. As you know, birds are best in the morning, and wine seems to get better and better as one eats dinner and into the evening! We will accommodate the schedule to both allow for some great birding, and some great food and wine, and will be conscious of not burning the candle at both ends. There will be days where the focus will be the birds entirely and others where it will be essentially the wine, or we may divide up the day into a morning of birding or travel and an afternoon tasting. The idea is to enjoy as best we can and fit all we can without exhausting ourselves. The key will be to hit a good balance. Note that on the days we devote to wine, our tasting begins mid-morning (10 am or so), but we end the day midafternoon to rest up for the next day's birding. The pace of the tour is moderate; and in general, the day-by-day pace is easy to moderate, though there are several longer days in the field and days where we will be doing some traveling on the bus for multiple hours with leg stretch, snack breaks of course. Most of our birding will be in fairly easy terrain or along roadsides and trails, although birding in the Andes may involve trails with a slope to them. The exception is when we are at higher altitudes in the Andes, at which point we may reach elevations to 10,000 feet. Altitude sickness affects some visitors to these elevations, and physical or health problems can be exacerbated. We will take care to move at a reasonable pace, but participants must be aware of their limitations and the challenge birding at such an altitude presents. Keep in mind that we will not be at the very highest elevations for any length of time. As well, we will not be sleeping at these high elevations.

The tour includes a morning pelagic trip off Valparaiso. The ocean is seldom flat calm in central Chile, and we do want some wind and waves as this is best for pelagics. Ocean swell, no matter how light or smooth can cause discomfort to some; it is quite an individual response in how the ocean affects you. If you are susceptible or think you might be susceptible to "mal de mer" (seasickness) do consider taking either an over the counter or going to your doctor to obtain a prescription seasickness medicine. If you absolutely do not do boats, the option of staying back at the hotel will be available.

Note that restaurants in Chile and in particular Argentina typically open later than most birders would prefer, often at 8:00 p.m. In order to get earlier in some cases, it will be necessary to pre-arrange a set menu. This facilitates the evening meal immensely as

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

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well as allowing us to sample a broad selection of cuisine over the course of the tour. Even so, we still are unlikely to eat dinner any earlier than 7:00 p.m. at most sites, and sometimes 8:00 will be the earliest we can obtain dinner. Be prepared for late dinners to be routine, it is just the way things are in the Southern Cone, and one needs to adjust to this situation. If you have let us know about any dietary concerns, these will be forwarded to the hotels before the tour. Most of our hotels will have a morning buffet breakfast. Breakfasts in both countries tend to be continental, although in hotels eggs are usually available; but particularly in Argentina eggs may not be on the breakfast menu. Lunches will vary from sit-down lunches at restaurants, to picnics made by the guides, to box lunches provided by hotels. Be aware that Argentina is very much a country of carnivores, and Chile is not that far behind – there will be a lot of meat on the menu! Chile also has great fish and seafood which we will try to sample. Fresh pastas are another food loved by Argentines, so there is diversity above and beyond the meats.



Fork-tailed Flycatcher

Itinerary for pretour – Torres del Paine and Pumas (Optional)

The pre-tour will be led by Ricardo Matus, local expert from Chilean Patagonia.

Feb 23, 24 (Day 0) – Suggested arrival in Chile. Plan to arrive today, no birding will happen today. Many flights arrive in Santiago the morning, so if energetic you can head downtown to see the sights. You may purchase a ticket direct to Punta Arenas, as part of your international ticket, and overnight there. Hotel will be charged separately.

Feb 24, 24 (Day 1) – Fly to Punta Arenas. Suggested morning flight to Punta Arenas. Lunch upon arrival at airport. Local birding between airport and hotel. Night in Punta Arenas. Suggested flight: would be one leaving early, perhaps approximately 9 am and arriving at noon. We will have a specific recommendation closer to the trip date.

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

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Feb 25, 24 (Day 2) – Drive to Puerto Natales. Exactly what you do today will depend on what Ricardo's ideas are on what is best for the day. It may mean that there will be a trip to the east, to visit the steppe habitat of Patagonia. This could provide a few different birds and mammals, not seen elsewhere on the trip. Overnight at beautiful Puerto Natales, along the Seno de Ultima Esperanza (Last Hope Sound)

Feb 26, 24 (Day 3) – To Torres del Paine. The drive to Torres del Paine from Puerto Natales is only a couple of hours, but with stops for condors and photos, it can take a little longer. We will stay in the south end of the park, so it makes sense today to visit the north end of the park, farthest from our hotel. Night in Torres del Paine.

Feb 27 -28, 24 (Day 4 - 5) –Torres del Paine. Two days in the park. We will devote the morning and evening of both of these days to a Puma search with a dedicated guide and tracker. It is not a guarantee, but this is about the best place in the world to find a Puma! Other visits will include the south, including Lake Grey and the forests adjacent to the lake, where forest species are possible such as Patagonian Sierra-Finch, Austral Parakeet, White-throated Treerunner, Thorn-tailed Rayadito and if lucky, the Magellanic Woodpecker. If the weather is good, views of Torres del Paine will be the highlight of the day.

Feb 29, 24 (Day 6) –Return to Punta Arenas. We will exit on the southern road stopping for sightseeing and in case we see any birds or mammals. Lunch will be en route in Puerto Natales. We may stop on route in steppe habitat to see species we have not yet seen on the trip. Night in Punta Arenas.

Mar 1, 24 (Day 7) – Return to Santiago. You may return to Santiago at any time of day. We may be able to do some local birding early in the morning, before checking out. Lunch will be at the airport restaurant. We suggest a flight returning in the early afternoon, 2 pm and arriving in Santiago at 5:30 pm or so. Closer to the trip date we will offer a specific recommended flight. Ricardo will be on this flight with you.

Itinerary for Chile - Argentina Birds & Wine

Mar 1, 24 (Day 0) – Arrival in Santiago. Plan to arrive today, no birding will happen today. Many flights arrive in the morning, so if energetic you can head downtown to see the sights. Hotel at the airport is included in the trip price for this day, and the welcome dinner.

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



Mar 2, 24 (Day 1) - Coastal birding and drive to Viña del Mar. We head to the coast today. The plan will be that we will stop at an estuary at the mouth of the Maipo River, and a lake or two north of there. Our quests will be waterfowl, shorebirds, and hopefully goodies like the Dusky Tapaculo and the Ticking Doradito. Night in Viña del Mar.

Mar 3, 24 (Day 2) – Valparaiso Pelagic; Reñaca afternoon. The richness of the ocean here is amazing, and you may be surprised to realize that the morning pelagic we do may end up being among your favorite parts of this tour. Often people do not know what to expect, and they expect something short of what it actually is – often face to face encounters with albatrosses, shearwaters, petrels and Inca Terns. We will have a late lunch after our pelagic, and for those who have some energy and do not want to stay back we shall visit some local coastal birding spots, looking for Seaside Cinclodes among others. Night in Viña del Mar.

Mar 4, 24 (Day 3) - Cachagua penguins, return to Santiago and on to Maipo Valley. This is a surf and turf type of day. We will head north along the coast in the morning to a beach town that happens to have a little colony of Humboldt Penguins! The penguins are on an island, but it is close enough to the shore, that nice views are possible with scope. We will stop for a seafood lunch, and then continue back past Santiago to the Maipo Valley. If there are species that have eluded us and energy is high, we will make a stop. Night in the Maipo Valley.



Chestnut-throated Huet-Huet

Mar 5, 24 (Day 4) – Birding the Yeso Valley. As we are staying in the Maipo Valley, we are in the birds, and are relatively close to the start of the Yeso Valley. The lower parts of the valley are paved, but eventually the pavement ends, and we are on a smaller dirt road, one leading to the Yeso Valley where Andean birding will be our quest. Our first major stop will concentrate on trying to find the Crag Chilia. We will make various

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



stops as we continue heading up, and we hope to see a variety of ground-tyrants, Buff-winged and Grey-flanked cinclodes, maybe the gorgeous Torrent Duck, Andean Condor, Greater Yellow-Finch, and several species of sierra-finch to give a few examples. If we are lucky, we may find the Mountain Parakeet up here, and the White-sided Hillstar. Our main goal, other than to enjoy the amazing scenery, will be to get up to the far end of the Yeso Reservoir where we will be looking for the rare Diademed Sandpiper-Plover. Night in the Maipo Valley.

Mar 6, 24 (Day 5) – Drive to Santa Cruz and wine tasting. Today we head south! We will spend part of the morning tasting wine in the Maipo Valley, at Concha y Toro Wines before eating a filling traditional Chilean lunch. Then we shall travel, heading south on the Panamerican Highway and perhaps doing another wine tasting before arriving in Santa Cruz. Night in Santa Cruz.



Mar 7, 24 (Day 6) – Santa Cruz, Colchagua Valley. This will definitely be a wine day rather than a bird day. We will be spend catching the sights of this well-known wine area, eating some nice food and tasting the various wines of the region. Our hotel is by a well-regarded local museum which we may visit if there is time. Night in Santa Cruz.

Mar 8, 24 (Day 7) – Drive to Vilches; pm birding. Morning drive to Vilches, where we will have lunch. We will get settled into our hotel and do some birding in the afternoon. If the weather is right, we may try some owling tonight. Night in Vilches.

Mar 9, 24 (Day 8) – Vilches and Lago Colbún. We will spend the day visiting the forest in the Altos del Lircay National Park. The standouts we shall be looking for are the Chucao Tapaculo, Chestnut-throated Huet-Huet and of course the Magellanic Woodpecker. We shall need some luck for the woodpecker. In the afternoon we will head

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



downhill and then go up an adjacent valley to Lake Colbún where we may find the Burrowing Parakeet and perhaps Spectacled Duck. Night in Vilches.

Mar 10, 24 (Day 9) – Drive to Argentina. We are going to travel up the mountains to the highland pass at Laguna del Maule. Through forest and some wonderful scenery, before dropping down into what is essentially the northern extent of Patagonia (at least habitat wise) in the area of Malargue, Mendoza, Argentina. We will bird as we go along, and will be at our hotel before dinner. Night in Malargue.

Mar 11, 24 (Day 10) – Llanquanelo Park. We spend the day looking for steppe birds that are more expected in Patagonia, such as Darwin's Rhea, and Elegant-crested Tinamou and perhaps some passerines such as Patagonian Canastero, White-throated Cacholote, Rusty-backed Monjita for example. The lake itself is a great place to see Chilean Flamingo. Night in Malargue.

Mar 12, 24 (Day 11) – Drive north to Mendoza. We have 400 km to drive today, so this will be mainly a travel day. However, there will be stops for birding along the way to Mendoza. Night in Mendoza.

Mar 13, 24 (Day 12) – Birding the Monte Desert. We will head north today, into the Monte Desert, as it gets hot here we will need to head out early, yet we aim to return early as well. We will be looking for species such as the Sandy Gallito, Greater Wagtail Tyrant, White Monjita, Black-crowned Monjita, White-banded Mockingbird among many others that are possible. Night in Mendoza.

Mar 14, 24 (Day 13) – Wines of Mendoza! Today's will be the Argentine wine tasting day, including a multi course lunch. We shall be tasting the famed wines of Mendoza in the Lujan del Cuyo area, land of the Malbec. We drive downslope in the morning to the Lujan del Cuyo area and begin our wine tasting. We will be done early this afternoon and returning to the city, giving folks a chance to rest or walk around town. Night in Potrerillos.

Mar 15, 24 (Day 14) – Uspallata and the Argentine Andes. We will drive to higher elevation today, we will bird in the region of Uspallata and if time and weather permits, we will head even higher to the overlook to see Mt. Aconcagua, the highest mountain in the Western Hemisphere. In Uspallata we may find the endemic White-throated Cacholote, a large jay like furnariid (ovenbird), or perhaps some unusual birds in the moist valley near town. As we climb we shall look and listen carefully to the Rufous-banded Miner, watching as the highland "species" is taken over by the lowland form which sounds rather different. It is our thought that these are in fact two separate species. Up top we may find the Creamy-rumped Miner, and Black-fronted Ground-Tyrant, two

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

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high elevation specialists, and who knows Mountain Parakeet or Andean Condor perhaps. We return to Potrerillos in the afternoon. Night in Potrerillos.

Mar 16, 24 (Day 15) – Vallecitos and return to airport. We will visit the Ski area of Vallecitos in the morning, returning by mid-morning to our hotel. We will then make our way to the Mendoza airport for a late lunch. International flights back to North America leave at night from Santiago or Buenos Aires. We end our tour early in the afternoon at Mendoza airport for your onward flight back north. Note that Santiago is much closer in distance than Buenos Aires, and connections there are in the same airport. While in Buenos Aires you may have to move between airports. If you would like to extend your stay in Mendoza, we can book extra nights at our hotel for you.



The gorgeous Inca Tern.

Your Guides

Alvaro Jaramillo was born in Chile but began birding in Toronto, where he lived as a youth. He was trained in ecology and evolution with a particular interest in bird behavior. Research forays and backpacking trips introduced Alvaro to the riches of the Neotropics, where he has traveled extensively. He is the author of the Birds of Chile, an authoritative yet portable field guide to Chile's birds. Alvaro writes the Identify Yourself column in Bird Watcher's Digest. Among various projects he recently authored the ABA Field Guide to Birds of California, and the sparrow chapter for the Handbook of Birds of the World, he is also writing a photo guide to the birds and wildlife of Patagonia. Alvaro was granted the Eisenmann Medal by the Linnaean Society of New York, it is awarded occasionally for excellence in ornithology and encouragement of the amateur. Alvaro lives with his family in Half Moon Bay, California.

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



Ricardo Matus is a naturalist born and raised in Punta Arenas, Chile, on the shores of the Straits of Magellan. As a youngster, Ricardo became interested in birds and marine mammals and started reading about them and examining the skin collection at the Instituto de la Patagonia (a research center now part of the local university). He is widely regarded as the expert on the birds of Patagonian Chile! Ricardo participates in research and conservation projects locally in the southern extreme of Patagonia. Most recently, his work has focused on the breeding biology and conservation of the Ruddy-headed Goose as well as the wintering ecology and banding of Red Knots at Bahia Lomas. As an artist he paints birds in watercolors and has illustrated scientific papers and a book on the birds of southernmost Chile (*Aves de Magallanes*). He has been guiding in Patagonia for over 20 years. Ricardo lives still in Punta Arenas with his wife, Olivia, and their sons, Alonso and Antonio.

Wine Consultation by: **Dr. Felipe Laurie Gleisner** is a professor and researcher at the University of Talca. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of California at Davis, in Viticulture and Enology. For his graduate work he was awarded a prestigious Fulbright scholarship. He serves as a consultant, offering suggestions of wineries for us to visit, and making available to us much information that will help us in our learning of the wines of Chile and Argentina. If he is in the country, perhaps he will join us for dinner on one of the nights.

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES
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Financial Information

FEE: \$6900 from Santiago, tour ends in Mendoza.

DEPOSIT: \$500 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: Nov 2, 2023

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$950

LIMIT: 12 - A small group surcharge may be necessary for groups under 8

PRE-TOUR INFORMATION

FEE: \$3850 from Santiago, does not include flights to and from Punta Arenas.

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$600

LIMIT: 12 A small group surcharge may be necessary for groups under 5.



Additional Information

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



DOCUMENTS: A current passport valid three months beyond the date of your return is necessary for US citizens to enter Chile. If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Chilean consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Argentina requires a valid passport, a blank passport page and passport valid six months beyond your return date. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or phone or e-mail Alvaro's Adventures and we can look this up. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: Please plan to arrive in Santiago on Mar 1, 2024 for the main tour and Feb 23, 2024 (arrival in Santiago or fly directly to Punta Arenas) at any time for the pre-tour (begins in Punta Arenas Feb 24, 24), the initial hotel night is not included in the pre-tour. Flights back home at the end of the tour can be booked leaving Mendoza on Mar 16, 2024. If you want to go to Rapa Nui, you will need to take return to Santiago for departure to the island.

Various North American airlines fly to Santiago, from several different hubs. Flights tend to occur at night, arriving in the morning in Santiago. Be sure to check with Alvaro's Adventures to confirm that the flights you have chosen will work with our itinerary and to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Departure from Mendoza might require stop-over in Santiago, or Buenos Aires, Santiago is much closer to Mendoza than Buenos Aires. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. We are not responsible for these fees.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The tour fee is \$6900 for one person in double occupancy from Santiago. It includes all lodging from Day 0 through Day 14, all meals from dinner on Day 0 through breakfast on Day 15, all ground transportation, entrance fees, tips for baggage handling and meal service, and the guide services of the tour leaders. We also include wine tastings. The tour includes a budget for moderately priced wines during dinner which the guides will choose. Note that cocktails and extra bottles of wine, above what is served at dinner, are not included.

PRE-TOUR - The tour fee is \$3850 for one person in double occupancy from Santiago. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 5, all meals from breakfast on Day 1 through dinner on Day 6, all ground transportation, entrance fees, tips for baggage handling and meal service, and the guide services of the tour leaders. This also includes two days of puma tracking and search, with the aid of specialized guides and 4x4 vehicles. The tour includes a budget for moderately priced wines during dinner which the guides will choose. Note that cocktails and extra bottles of wine, above what is served at dinner, are not included. The return flight from Santiago to Punta Arenas is not included in the trip cost – a suggestion of itinerary is made above, and we can help secure these flights.

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



The above fees do not include your airfare to and from Chile, airport taxes, visa fees, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature. Wine at dinner and tastings is included, but cocktails and wine above that served with dinner is not included.

The single supplement for the main tour is \$950, \$600 for the pre-tour. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the enclosed Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$500** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit and the Release and Indemnity form must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by Nov 2, 2023. We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

SMOKING: This is a non-smoking tour.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee (handling fee is waived during the Coronavirus pandemic. So you may reserve and will receive full refund of your deposit until 120 days before the trip), will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Alvaro's Adventures for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

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 another guide for the original one. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members, and they will have the right to cancel their participation and receive a full refund.

Alvaro's Adventures's is a Registered Seller of Travel in the State of California (CST # 2105497). Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the

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State of California. This ensures your right to a prompt refund: Upon cancellation of the transportation or travel services, where the passenger is not at fault and has not canceled in violation of any terms and conditions previously clearly and conspicuously disclosed and agreed to by the passenger, all sums paid to the seller of travel for services not provided will be promptly paid to the passenger, unless the passenger advises the seller of travel in writing, after cancellation. This provision does not apply where the seller of travel has remitted the payment to another registered wholesale seller of travel or a carrier, without obtaining a refund, and where the wholesaler or provider defaults in providing the agreed-upon transportation or service. In this situation, the seller of travel must provide the passenger with a written statement accompanied by bank records establishing the disbursement of the payment, and if disbursed to a wholesale seller of travel, proof of current registration of that wholesaler.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Alvaro's Adventures, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Alvaro's Adventures acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or

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bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Alvaro's Adventures accepts 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. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Alvaro's Adventures reserves the right 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. Alvaro's Adventures reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, and other pertinent matter provided by Alvaro's Adventures. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

7/23 AJ