Chile

Penguins, Condors, and Albatross with Tucson Audubon Society

Tour Leader: Rob Ripma

Main Tour: October 16-27, 2025
Extension: October 27 - November 1, 2025
Chile is an incredible birding destination that you are sure to love! From fantastic pelagic birds to the wonderful birds in the stunningly beautiful high Andes, the diversity and beauty of this country is simply amazing.

**Itinerary Overview:**

Main Tour
October 16: Arrival and Stay at Airport Hotel
October 17: Lampa/Batuco Marshes and Farellones
October 18: Full day exploring the Andes: El Yeso Valley
October 19: Drive to the Pacific Coast - Maipo Estuary and Laguna El Peral
October 20: Pelagic trip off Quintero – Cachagua (Humboldt Penguin breeding colony)
October 21: La Campana National Park and Drive to Vilches
October 22: Altos de Lircay – Lake Colbun
October 23: Drive to Santiago and Flight to Temuco
October 24: Conguillio National Park and Llaima Volcano
October 25: Cerro Ñielol NR, Drive to Puerto Montt, and Alerce Andino National Park
October 26: Birding Chiloe Island
October 27: Pelagic trip off Reloncavi Sound and Flight to Santiago – End of main trip

Extension
October 27: End of the main tour in Puerto Montt and flight to Punta Arenas
October 28: Ferry to Tierra del Fuego and King Penguins
October 29: Laguna Verde and Pali Aike Road
October 30: Torres del Paine National Park
October 31: Sierra Baguales and Drive to Punta Arenas
November 1: Birding San Juan Bay and Fly to Santiago

**Detailed Itinerary:**

**October 16: Arrival and Stay at Airport Hotel**

-Overnight: Holiday Inn Santiago Airport or similar
October 17: Lampa/Batuco Marshes and Farellones

We will drive a short distance north of Chile’s capital to explore some marshes around Lampa and Batuco. Wetlands are under a lot of urban pressure in central Chile and sadly Lampa and Batuco are examples of this threat. However, they hold a well-represented sample of waterfowl, including Yellow-billed Pintail, Yellow-billed and Cinnamon Teals, Chiloe Wigeon, Rosy-billed Pochard, White-cheeked Pintail, and Red Shoveler. Correndera Pipit might be singing high in the air in their characteristic courtship display!

During the afternoon we will bird in the spectacular setting of Farellones. There are several Andean specialties here including Mountain Caracara, White-sided Hillstar, Rufous-banded and Creamy-rumped Miners, Cinereous, Black-fronted, White-browed, and Rufous-naped Ground-Tyrants plus Greater Yellow-Finch, and Grey-hooded and Band-tailed Sierra-Finch. We will also look for the endemic Chilean Tinamou and Chilean Mockingbird and we might have the chance to see Red-backed (Variable) Hawk and Aplomado Falcon.

-Overnight: Holiday Inn Santiago Airport or similar

October 18: Full day exploring the Andes: El Yeso Valley

We will spend a full day exploring the surroundings of El Yeso reservoir in the Andean foothills, where we will hopefully be rewarded with sightings of the endemic Crag Chilia plus our first Andean Condor, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, as well as several other Andean specialties such as Black-winged Ground Dove, Gray-flanked Cinclodes, Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant, and Yellow-rumped Siskin. Careful scanning of grasslands and streams may produce the stunning Diademed Sandpiper-Plover, our main target species for the day. This is a lovely mountain spot where we will also have chances for Mountain Parakeet flocks.

During the afternoon we will visit another valley, Baños Morales. This location offers great chances for several other specialties including Mountain Caracara, White-sided Hillstar, Rufous-banded and Creamy-rumped Miners, Cinereous, Black-fronted, White-browed and Rufous-naped Ground Tyrants plus Greater Yellow Finch and Grey-hooded and Band-tailed Sierra Finches.

-Overnight: Holiday Inn Santiago Airport or similar
October 19: Drive to the Pacific Coast - Maipo Estuary and Laguna El Peral

We’ll head to the coast to explore the Maipo River estuary and the productive coastal ponds and marshes nearby. At the tiny El Peral Nature Reserve, we’ll concentrate on finding the cryptic-colored Stripe-backed Bittern, the brood-parasitic Black-headed Duck, and the striking Many-colored Rush Tyrant. We’ll also have a chance to find the scarce and restricted Ticking Doradito. Just before reaching our seaside hotel, we’ll inspect the rocky coast for the endemic Seaside Cinclodes and a variety of Humboldt Current seabird specialties.

*Overnight: Hotel Yachting Quintero or similar*

October 20: Pelagic trip off Quintero – Cachagua (Humboldt Penguin breeding colony)

Today we’ll make an unforgettable visit to the cold and rich waters of the Humboldt Current, considered to be one of the world’s finest pelagic birding locations. We can expect to see a great variety of tubenoses such as Black-browed and Salvin’s Albatrosses. On recent trips, we often see Buller’s, Chatham, Wandering, and Royal Albatrosses. We should also find Southern and Northern Giant Petrels, Cape, Masatierra, Juan Fernandez, White-chinned, and Westland Petrels, Pink-footed, Buller’s, and Sooty Shearwaters, Wilson’s Storm-Petrel, and Peruvian Diving-Petrel. Other birds we could encounter include Red Phalarope, Sabine’s Gull, and Chilean Skua. Possible marine mammals include Orca, Sperm Whale, and large pods of Dusky Dolphin and Southern Right Whale Dolphin. We’ll also have repeated sightings of the abundant South American Sea Lion.

In the afternoon, we’ll continue exploring the coastal areas, visiting a protected breeding colony of Humboldt Penguin. We hope to see the scarce and range-restricted Southern Sea Otter here, too. Before ending the day, we’ll stop at a coastal marsh to see a variety of waterfowl including Red Shoveler, Yellow-billed Pintail, Speckled Teal, and Chiloe Wigeon, all three lowland coot species, Spot-flanked Gallinule, and Plumbeous Rail, which surprisingly for a rail is quite easy to spot as it often walks in the open.

*Overnight: Hotel Yachting Quintero or similar*
Magellanic Woodpecker

October 21: La Campana National Park and Drive to Vilches

La Campana National Park and its scrub community, Chilean Palm-tree groves, and dry forests will be the scenes for today’s birding adventures. Mount La Campana (The Bell), after which the park is named, is one of the most prominent peaks of the Coastal Range and was also one of the many interesting places that young Charles Darwin explored during his long stay in Chile in the 1830s. Here we will look for an interesting array of passerines, all endemic to Chile, including Chilean Mockingbird, Dusky-tailed Canastero, Moustached Turca, Dusky Tapaculo, and White-throated Tapaculo. Chilean Pigeon, Striped Woodpecker, Austral Pygmy-Owl, Giant Hummingbird, and Green-backed Firecrown are also regulars here. We will also look for the endemic Chilean Tinamou.

Once we are finished at La Campana, we will continue our explorations south of Santiago. Once we reach Talca, we’ll head eastwards to the majestic Andes once again and our next lodge in Vilches.

Overnight: Hosteria de Vilches or similar

October 22: Altos de Lircay – Lake Colbun

Altos de Lircay Nature Reserve, located in an area better known as Vilches, holds the northernmost southern beech (Nothofagus) forests. Nowadays, these woodlands, deriving from ancient tree lineage, are just found as relict communities in temperate regions of the Southern Hemisphere including in distant places like New Zealand, Australia, and New Caledonia. These temperate woodlands are home to several unique forest-dwelling birds. Among others, we shall look for Rufous-legged Owl, Magellanic Woodpecker, White-throated Hawk (and Rufous-tailed Hawk, if we are lucky), White-throated Treerunner, and the nearly endemic Chestnut-throated Huet-huet. Other tapaculos we will be trying to find are the striking Chucao Tapaculo and the skulking Magellanic Tapaculo.

Overnight: Hosteria de Vilches or similar
October 23: Drive to Santiago and Flight to Temuco

After some dawn birding at Vilches, we will drive back to Santiago and catch our flight to the city of Temuco, the gateway to northern Patagonia.

Overnight: Holiday Inn Temuco or similar

October 24: Conguillio National Park and Llaima Volcano

In the morning, we will visit the slopes of the Llaima Volcano located east of Temuco, in the gorgeous Conguillio National Park. This protected area offers spectacular vistas and remarkable vegetation, including stands of the peculiar Chilean Pine (also known as Araucaria or Monkey-puzzle tree). These woodlands are reminiscent of pre-historic landscapes and we will have good chances of seeing the endemic Slender-billed Parakeet and Magellanic Woodpecker together with a variety of Patagonian songbirds such as Des Murs’s Wiretail, Fire-eyed Diucon, Patagonian Tyrant, Austral Blackbird, and Black-chinned Siskin. The soils of the forests and volcano slopes show an attractive array of wildflowers including several species of ground orchids, anemones, geraniums, and lady slippers.

Overnight: Holiday Inn Temuco or similar

October 25: Cerro Ñielol NR, Drive to Puerto Montt, and Alerce Andino National Park

We will visit Cerro Ñielol, a very interesting and well-preserved urban nature forest where we will try to find the rare Rufous-tailed Hawk, Black-throated Huet-huet, and Des Murs’s Wiretail.

Then, we’ll drive towards Puerto Montt (41°S) and as we head south, if we have clear skies we will admire a line of volcanos that form part of the section of the Andes; the most striking is no doubt Volcano ‘Osorno’, and it’s almost perfect cone-shaped profile. The city of Puerto Montt is located at the very end of Chile’s central valley. The topography south of here starts to break out, forming the maze of archipelagos and channels known as the Patagonian Fjords. The grasslands, orchards, and agricultural fields are ideal habitat for Black-faced Ibis, Chimango Caracara, Southern Lapwing, Chilean Flicker, Rufous-tailed Plantcutter, Common Diuca Finch, and Grassland Yellow Finch. We will also explore the lush temperate rainforest of Alerce Andino National Park, located just one hour south of Puerto Montt. Here we will search for other Patagonian rainforest specialties including Chilean Hawk, Green-backed Firecrown, the skulking Black-throated Huet-huet, Ochre-flanked Tapaculo, and White-crested Elaenia. Later, on route back to Puerto Montt, we will scan the intertidal mudflats in search of wintering flocks of Nearctic visitors such as Hudsonian Godwit, Red Knot, and Sanderling; other common coastal birds include the stocky Flightless Steamer Duck, Black-necked Swan, American Oystercatcher, Brown-hooded Gull, and the local Snowy-crowned Tern.

Overnight: Hotel Diego de Almagro or similar
October 26: Birding Chiloe Island

We’ll drive south to the ferry across the Chacao Channel. This short 30-minute journey offers great marine wildlife viewing opportunities and we are likely to see pods of Peale’s Dolphin, groups of South American Sea Lions, and a great array of seabirds including Southern Giant Petrel, Sooty and Pink-footed Shearwaters, Imperial and Red-legged Cormorants, Peruvian Pelican, and South American Tern. Once on the island, we’ll take a scenic drive to the little fishermen’s cove of Puñihuil. Here we will circumnavigate the islets to see one of the few mixed breeding colonies of Humboldt and Magellanic Penguins. Marine Otter, Magellanic Cormorant, Kelp Goose, and Flightless Steamer Duck are all usually found here, too.

Overnight: Hotel Diego de Almagro or similar

October 27: Pelagic trip off Reloncavi Sound and Flight to Santiago – End of main trip

Early morning with the first light of the day, we will take a boat trip into the Reloncavi Sound to look for seabirds, particularly the recently discovered Pincoya Storm Petrel, a new species to science, overlooked during many years because of its strong similarities to the sympatric Wilson’s Storm Petrel. The range of this species seems to be very local and restricted to the nearby waters south of Puerto Montt and between Chiloé Island and the Continent.

We will then catch a flight back to Santiago where you can catch overnight flights home.
Extension:

**October 27: End of the main tour in Puerto Montt and flight to Punta Arenas**

From Santiago, we'll catch an afternoon flight to Punta Arenas (53°S), Chile’s southernmost city. This can be a truly enjoyable plane journey, as we will fly over seemingly endless Patagonian icecaps, deep fjords, and the rugged peaks of the southern Andes. After our arrival, we’ll bird along the coast of the mythic Straits of Magellan looking for Flying Steamer-Duck, Crested Duck, Kelp Goose, Imperial and Magellanic Cormorants, and Magellanic Oystercatcher. The coastal grasslands can produce other interesting species including the ubiquitous Upland Goose, the smaller Ashy-headed Goose, and the endangered Ruddy-headed Goose.

*Overnight: Hotel Diego de Almagro or similar*

**October 28: Ferry to Tierra del Fuego and King Penguins**

This morning, we'll take a two-hour ferry ride across the Straits of Magellan towards the town of Porvenir in Tierra del Fuego. We will be entertained by an interesting array of tubenoses such as Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant-Petrel, Southern Fulmar, the delightful Cape Petrel, White-chinned Petrel, Sooty Shearwater, Wilson’s Storm-Petrel, and Magellanic Diving-Petrel. We'll see other seabirds including Magellanic Penguin, Chilean Skua, Kelp and Dolphin Gulls, and South American Tern. Possible marine mammals will include the common South American Sea Lion and playful pods of Peale's Dolphin.

Once we arrive in Tierra del Fuego, we’ll check the coast where we should see Crested Duck, Chiloe Wigeon, Baird's and White-rumped Sandpipers, Magellanic Oystercatcher, and Dark-bellied Cinclodes. We’ll continue east to explore Useless Bay (Bahía Inútil), where it is likely we will find a wealth of seabirds and other aquatic birds. On our route, we’ll look for potential raptors including Variable Hawk and Aplomado and Peregrine Falcons. The Magellanic subspecies of Great Horned Owl nests in some ravines we’ll pass by as well. The main target of our visit to this scenic part of the island is the newly established King Penguin breeding colony. This splendid species congregates year-round on this site, they have successfully started to breed and raise young here. Later, and before heading back to Porvenir, we’ll drive through the shrubby slopes and moorlands of the Baquedano Hills searching for Rufous-chested Dotterel, Austral Canastero, and the stunning, White-bridled Finch.

*Overnight: Yendegaia House or similar*
October 29: Laguna Verde and Pali Aike Road

During the morning, we’ll visit some alkaline lagoons east of the village. Our target here will be the local and odd-looking Magellanic Plover. This enigmatic wader looks more similar to a little dove rather than to any shorebird and is often seen ‘scratching’ the mud with its bright pink legs! Other birds of the area will include Two-banded Plover, Wilson’s Phalarope, the abundant White-rumped Sandpiper, Short-billed Miner, and the ubiquitous Austral Negrito. The windswept steppes of Tierra del Fuego and Patagonia hold a number of specialties including Least Seedsnipe, Tawny-throated Dotterel, Band-tailed Earthcreeper and Chocolate-vented Tyrant.

A short ferry ride will allow us to be on the mainland once again, and if we’re lucky, we’ll see the striking Commerson’s Dolphin following in the wake of the ferry. Chilean Flamingo, Coscoroba Swan, Silver Teal plus thousands of waders such as Wilson's Phalarope and Baird’s and White-rumped Sandpipers will be common at the roadside wetlands while we explore and enjoy the beauty of this ‘big sky’ country. On the journey, we should encounter Lesser Rhea, Cinereous Harrier, Cinnamon-bellied Ground-Tyrant, and Patagonian Mockingbird. Large herds of llama-like Guanacos will be a common sight along the entire drive towards Puerto Natales and other possible mammals will include Southern Gray (Chilla) Fox, Patagonian Hairy Armadillo, and Patagonian Hog-nosed Skunk.

Overnight: Weskar Lodge or similar

October 30: Torres del Paine National Park

Torres del Paine is one of the gems of Chile and certainly one the most visited parks in Patagonia. We’ll have the whole day to explore its diverse habitats, especially to appreciate the colossal magnitude and rugged beauty of the awe-inspiring granite peaks that name the park. The reed-fringed lagoons of the eastern side of the park will keep us busy during the whole morning. Here we’ll find a wealth of waterbirds including Great, Silvery, and White-tufted Grebes, Andean and Spectacled Ducks, Yellow-billed Teal, Yellow-billed Pintail, and with luck, the elusive and recently re-discovered Austral Rail. We also hope to see Andean Condors and Black-chested Buzzard-Eagles hovering in these turbulent skies. During the afternoon, we’ll visit Lake Gray to enjoy the stunning sight of its southern shore dominated by stranded blue icebergs. We’ll scan the fast-flowing rivers hoping to find the remarkable and colorful Torrent Duck.

Overnight: Weskar Lodge or similar
**October 31: Sierra Baguales and Drive to Punta Arenas**

Early in the morning, we’ll explore the impressive Sierra Baguales Range, located northeast of Torres del Paine. Along the road and in the scrubby gullies, we'll look for more restricted-range songbirds in Chile such as Patagonian Mockingbird and Gray-bellied Shrike-Tyrant. As we continue exploring this montane habitat, we might find the local White-throated Caracara, Gray-breasted Seedsnipe, Rufous-banded Miner, Cinnamon-bellied and Ochre-naped Ground-Tyrants, Patagonian and Greater Yellow-Finches, and the stunning, Yellow-bridled Finch.

*Overnight: Hotel Diego de Almagro or similar*

**November 1: Birding San Juan Bay and Fly to Santiago**

Our morning will start with some birding along the San Juan Bay south of Punta Arenas. After our final birding here along the straights of Magellan, we’ll head to the airport for our flights back to Santiago where we will end the tour.

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*Gray-breasted Seedsnipe*  
*Yellow-bridled Finch*
Trip Details:

Cost:
Main Tour:
Price per person (double occupancy), from Santiago, Chile: $7,499
Single Supplement: $850
Minimum Participants: 8
Maximum Participants: 10

Extension:
Price per person (double occupancy), from Santiago, Chile: $3,699
Single Supplement: $400 Extension
Minimum Participants: 8
Maximum Participants: 10

Price Includes:
- 2 Expert Guides
- Ground Transportation in Chile
- All Lodging
- All Meals
- Park Entrance Fees
- All flights within Chile

Price Does Not Include:
- Airfare to and from Chile
- Airport Taxes
- Passport and Visa Fees (if applicable)
- Alcoholic Beverages
- Personal Items
- Travel Insurance
- Tips

Deposit:
A deposit of $500 per person is required to hold your spot on this tour. The remaining balance is due no later than 3 months prior to the scheduled start date of the tour (July 16, 2025).

If you have any questions about this tour or would like to sign up for it, please contact us at info@sabrewingnaturetours.com, by phone at 317-324-8505, or register through our website at sabrewingnaturetours.com.

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