

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES
birding & nature tours



The Heart of Chile – 2024

Chile with the author of the field guide!

Oct 29- Nov 14, 2024

(Pumas in Torres del Paine post tour Nov 14 – 20, 2024)

Guided by Alvaro Jaramillo and Ricardo Matus



Chile is a fantastic birding destination, with absolutely spectacular scenery! On this trip we bird this narrow nation's core including the Atacama Desert, the endemic rich central zone and the gorgeous southern forests of the country. There is also a Torres del Paine extension for those who want to take in the Patagonian section of Chile. This is a trip with gorgeous scenery, it is a trip where the camera shutters are going off all the time, sometimes photographing the landscape, other times a cooperative bird and there are

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



quite a few of those. This is the type of trip where even your non-birding friends will enjoy the photos you bring back!

Chile is also a place that appeals to a broad spectrum of birders. For the new birder in Latin America it is a nation that has a smaller bird list and many species that are unique, large or colorful such that it is easier to really get to know the birds and not be overwhelmed by countless of little flycatchers and obscure songbirds. For the experienced world traveler, Chile's avifauna is almost like that of an island, it is distinctive and unusual with many birds either found nowhere else or narrowly shared with some of the forests in Argentina or habitats of southernmost Peru. It is the rare place where beginners and experts end up seeing a lot of lifers! As a guide, for me this is one of the most fun trips I do. Partly it is because I have a great love for the country I was born in, and I spent many years traveling throughout in my research for my book, the Birds of Chile. It is a place where each time I get out there with a new group I can re-live my first times I encountered a Des Mur's Wiretail, a Humboldt Penguin, or a Glacier Finch. Co-guide Ricardo Matus is a Chilean birding expert with a particular knowledge of the avifauna of southernmost Chile, we have been traveling together for many years now and have a super time doing so. People have more than once mentioned we have a good chemistry and make the trip a lot of fun. You get to enjoy the country with guides who like to have a good time, but at the same time are experts of this country's birds. Regarding pricing and value, we book the tour directly, we are our own in country operator, as such we can offer the best value there is for a Chilean birding tour. We will be staying at quality accommodation. We are confident that our tour is the highest quality Chilean birding tour out there, and perhaps it is even the most enjoyable! Join us for a fun time in Chile.

We have created a trip that is exceptional. It is comprehensive and detailed, yet we make sure that at the same time we experience the scenery and culture of Chile. We give you insight into what makes this country tick, why it is the way it is, a bit of background in a manner that only people who come from here can! We also try to allow you to sample some of the local food, particularly seafood, some of which is also endemic to Chile. Of course, there are also the great wines, and the booming microbrew culture that makes dinner a touch more than "just food." On the birding end we incorporate some birding highlights such as a focused time in the Chiloe area where some key species and habitats exist, if we are very lucky even the newly described Pincoya Storm-Petrel! Alvaro was involved in the description of this new species but admit it can be a difficult one to find on a tour. We also sample the driest desert on earth, the Atacama birding the periphery of the coast and the mountains, while still getting to see and photograph this driest place on earth. We also are keenly aware of the latest taxonomic issues, some of which we are directly working on and we incorporate this science and natural history as part of what we talk about while on the trip. We try to find forms that may in one day be considered good species, some of them surely to become Chilean specialties. But keep in mind that we guide the trip in an easy manner, this is not a scientific expedition or a daily science lecture, but instead more like a good conversation

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



of the birds in Chile. This is a well-balanced trip where you can really get to know the birds, gain some biological background on the avifauna while enjoying the country and culture; although clearly this is a birding trip and that is the primary focus. Birder photographers have also found this trip to be a rather good one for bird photos taken while birding. Fortunately, some of the birds down here like to pose.

A particular note should be made about the marine birds and marine life. Chile has a huge amount of coastline, and the sea is one of the defining features of this country, and the country's history and psyche. It is also a habitat that holds many interesting birds and marine mammals. We will venture out on the classic Valparaiso pelagic trip that is known as one of the best pelagics anywhere in the world. But we will also venture out in the north, near Antofagasta, where we hope to find some of the rarer northern storm-petrels and perhaps whales or dolphins. Finally in Chiloe we will visit the sheltered waters in the Gulf of Corcovado, here we hope to find the Magellanic Diving-Petrel and the recently described Pincoya Storm-Petrel.

We divide up the country into three parts; the desert north and Altiplano; Santiago – Valparaiso, the central zone; and finally, Chiloe and the southern forests. We spend several days in each of these regions, flying between them as distances are large here, Chile is over 2500 miles long! The way we have structured the trip we begin in the north and head southwards, and we try to have some redundancy such that if we miss key species in one section we can sometimes have a backup place for it in the next. We also give enough time to see the key species in each part of the country, although we also need to incorporate some rather full days. This trip is a balance between detail and time, and we think we have created a winning plan in order to see the heart of the country in a very enjoyable tour.

The north is where water is key, the Atacama is the driest place on earth. Some places are closer in appearance to the surface of Mars than to places you may have seen before. Yet, in Calama we arrive in the oasis of the Loa River, there is some greenery and a connection between the ocean and the highlands. The ocean coasts of Antofagasta are lively due to the influence of the most productive part of the ocean anywhere, the Humboldt Current. In the highlands moisture from the Atlantic Ocean falls during the southern summer. These areas teem with life, although each is within or adjacent to the desert. From Inca Terns and Peruvian Pelicans on the coast, to Slender-billed Finches, in the valleys, and Horned as well as Giant Coots, flamingos, ground-tyrants, miners and earthcreepers in the highlands, it is a fantastic part of the country to visit.

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



Andean (the big ones) and Puna flamingos in Chile's Altiplano.

The Central Zone is where most people live in Chile, the capital Santiago is here, as well as the historically famous port city of Valparaiso. Santiago is a gem of a city, particularly for such a large one, it is clean and organized and a neat mix of old and new. It is quickly becoming the most modern city in South America, and mirrors the huge economic boom that Chile has been part of for decades now.

Valparaiso retains its

historical charm, haphazard with houses of varying sizes, shapes and structure all teetering on hillside ridges. This is a city built on hills, a Latin American version of San Francisco where all eyes focus on the bay and the port, the historical heart of this city. This famous port is where the HMS Beagle once anchored, allowing Charles Darwin to explore the coastal mountains! From here we will set out to experience some of the richest pelagic birding on earth. There are numbers of albatross, petrels, Wilson's Storm-petrel, Peruvian Diving-petrels, shearwaters, terns, gulls, boobies – and even penguins! It is quite a trip, and you do not need to be out all day to enjoy all of this, in fact we return for a late lunch on the pelagic day. The Central Zone allows us to explore the coast, wetlands packed with waterfowl, and the shrubby thickets of the foothills and open country of the high mountains in the Andes. The Andean Condor is common in the central Andes, Grey-breasted Seedsnipe sit quietly on rocks, unique Black-fronted Ground-Tyrants, and Yellow-rumped Siskins mix in, maybe with Mountain Parakeets and Mountain Caracaras. Here is also where we hope to find the very local and coveted "shorebird of all shorebirds," the Diademed Sandpiper-Plover.

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



Grey-breasted Seedsnipe, a handsome and intricately marked bird of the High Andes.

The regions of the south, Chiloe, and the Lake District are where much of the nature related tourism takes place in Chile, no doubt because the scenery is spectacular. There are also superb places to stay, gorgeous southern beech forest and a lot of wildlife. Some of the tidal areas in Chiloe hold almost the entire world population of Hudsonian Godwit during the northern winter, a sizeable number of North America's Whimbrel as well as thousands of Brown-hooded Gulls, South American Terns and a sprinkling of three species of oystercatcher, masses of Southern Lapwings and a duck or two. Then there is the island of forest that is the Patagonian forest zone with species found nowhere else on the planet, Slender billed and Austral parakeets, Fire-eyed Diucon, the Patagonian Tyrant, and Chile's endearing but sometimes frustrating tapaculos. These birds are special! Tapaculos elsewhere tend to be drab, here they are colorful and big, the European Robin like Chucao Tapaculo is my favorite. The huge Black-throated Huet-Huet with its amazing voice is superb, and the elusive "coot-faced" Ochre-flanked is a neat one as well.

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



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

This comprehensive trip takes us from the land of the highland Aymara people (the ladies with the bowler hats, more often associated with Bolivia), to the “Huasos” (Chilean Cowboys) of the central zone where the wine, fruit and big city centers are found, to the people of the sea, the Chilotes of Chiloé Island. Each culture lives in an area with a different habitat, and its corresponding one-of-a-kind set of birds and fauna. This is a trip of a lifetime, in one of the most well regarded ecotourism destinations in the world. It is also a place where travel is straight forward, safe, roads are good, food is yummy, water is potable, hotels are superb, people obey traffic laws, and the planes leave on time – overall a great place to go birding where you can enjoy rather than worry or stress about logistics (that is our job). This is a great, fun and authoritative tour. Chile can be visited with others, but with Alvaro and Ricardo it is a fantastic experience – as we have been told. Sign up for some fun, penguins and tapaculos, we would love to see you with us. Great Travels and super birding to you all!



The Birding Sites We Visit

Puerto Montt and Chiloe – Puerto Montt is the gateway city to this region, and Chiloe



The lord of the southern forest - a Magellanic Woodpecker

is a large island. Chiloe is a unique place with a slightly different culture than the mainland, like a Chilean version of Newfoundland. Chilotes are hardy folks, used to rain and cold, yet are friendly and welcoming people. These are people who have historically lived off the sea, and we will make sure to try some of the unique endemic seafood of this part of the world such as the giant goose neck barnacle! Chiloe has become more and more popular with European tourists as a picturesque and pleasant destination with a definite marine character. Famous are the “palafitos” houses on stilts in sheltered tidal bays. One of the attractions for us here is a mixed colony of penguins, both Magellanic and Humboldt! Here we also look for the oh so cute Marine Otter, as well as Kelp Goose, and Flightless Steamer-Duck. We will have an opportunity to see the endemic

race, with a cinnamon belly, of the Thorn-tailed Rayadito. As well, on the ferry crossings we will have a chance to see the Pincoya Storm-Petrel, a new species described in 2013! This little tubenose is restricted to the inland waterways of the Puerto Montt – Chiloe area, and went unnoticed for years until traveling birders photographed this oddity. This made several experienced observers re-think what they had been seeing there in the past, and little by little the thought that a new species might be involved dawned on them. There is a bridge being built to connect the mainland to Chiloe, sadly this may be the last few years where we will have the pleasure of traveling in the ferry.

In the region we shall also visit some lowland forests, perhaps at Nahuel Ñadi National Park. This is *Nothofagus* (southern beech) forest, which is most extensive and diverse in Chile, although some extends to similar latitudes in Argentina, although here the important Alerce (*Fitzroya*) tree can be found. This is where we look for the Magellanic Woodpecker, Black-throated Huet-Huet or the elusive Ochre-flanked Tapaculo. We also hope to find the Chilean specialty Slender-billed Parakeet. While in Chiloe we may encounter nocturnal Rufous-legged Owls, diurnal Austral Pygmy-Owls the one of a kind Des Mur's Wiretail, and with luck the world's smallest deer, the Pudu.

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



The star of the show though is the forest itself, moist and tall, with some huge *Nothofagus* trees – a wide assortment of temperate frog species, odd weevil beetles, and even colorful tree lizards are here to be enjoyed.

Santiago and the Andes — Santiago is where we begin and where we pass through on



Diademed Sandpiper-Plover

several parts of this tour; it is 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, about a third of the population in Chile. Yet, there is plenty of amazing birding 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 habitat! 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 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), the Andean Finches, are now considered finch-like tanagers and they are diverse up here. There are Greater Yellow-Finches, Band-tailed and Grey-hooded as well as the Plumbeous sierra-finches. The more we learn the less we know! Some of these sierra-finches are not closely related to each other it seems, while the yellow-finches are genetically close to some of the sierra-finches – go figure. As we bird, and enjoy the outdoors we will also talk about and learn of these

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



findings and what they mean regarding 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, 20 or even 30 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 is in some ways like 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 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 two 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.

The Matorral – 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. Areas in the foothills of the Andes, near Santiago will also effectively be in this zone and may allow us other opportunities to see the birds of the Matorral. Many species of the Matorral are found in Chile and in Chile only; this particularly applies to plants and insects, but also to birds. The Chilean Tinamou, White-throated Tapaculo, Moustached Turca, Dusky Tapaculo, Dusky-tailed Canastero and Chilean Mockingbird are all endemics or near endemics which live in this area. The White-throated Tapaculo is particularly difficult to



"Big Foot" also known as the Moustached Turca.

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

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



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 the coast, species that are typically much more common farther south!

Valparaiso and the Coast — The Humboldt Current region is amongst the most productive, if it isn't actually the most productive part of the world's oceans. Here we have an effect of a cold-water current that sweeps north, as well as winds 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 wow, are there lots of them. Here we could go out and see up to five species of albatross,



Male Spectacled Tyrant

and sometimes hundreds of individuals! Even 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 Cape (Pintado) Petrel, the two species of Giant Petrel, Westland and White-chinned Petrels as well as "Fuegian" Wilson's Storm-Petrel. A rare but regular species we look for is the alcid-like Peruvian Diving-Petrel. 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. We always hope for a Masatierra or Juan Fernandez petrel, although these require luck.

Coastal birding in the area is fantastic, for one the scenery is nice, and Valparaiso and Viña del Mar are 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 of the ocean, it is as much a seabird as many gulls and cormorants. 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 even a Spectacled Tyrant or the uncommon Great Shrike-Tyrant.

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



Atacama Desert, the desert coast and Oases – The Atacama Desert is the driest desert on earth! Some places here have not received rainfall, ever. Antofagasta is in the thick of the driest part of the desert, particularly inland from this coastal city. However, the coast is full of life, where gulls, shorebirds, and seabirds congregate. The coast boasts flocks of Belcher's and Grey Gulls, gorgeous Inca Terns, migrant shorebirds and maybe a lost vagrant or two. Since water is scarce up in the north, lost birds tend to show up in the verdant spots we visit. The river oases have West Peruvian Doves, Oasis Hummingbirds, and the unusual Slender-billed Finches.

San Pedro de Atacama and the Altiplano – This is a very popular destination for tourists visiting Chile. San Pedro is at the interface between the desert and the highlands, and it is a very picturesque spot. To the north, one can visit the Geysers of El Tatio, where steam plumes color the morning air of the highlands. To the south is the Salar de Atacama with its flamingos, and the high elevation lakes with perhaps the oddest of the world's coots, the Horned Coot. This area will be a highlight, where Andean Avocets and Puna Plovers mix with James's and Andean flamingos. Where Bright-rumped Yellow-Finches may mix with the uncommon Red-backed Sierra-Finch, as well as more widespread species like Black-hooded Sierra-Finch, Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant and some overwintering ground tyrants. If lucky we will find the range restricted Tamarugo Conebill, a species first described in the 70s, which moves to this part of the world in the winter. There is a lot to see here, bird wise as well as the mountain and desert scenery. We also plan to have some of the great local food. It is no wonder so many tourists visit this part of Chile, it has so much to offer.



Black-hooded Sierra-Finch

About the Physical Requirements & Pace

This is a tour of Chile's major habitats, amazing scenery and the full diversity of its birds. Although Chile looks small and skinny on a map, it is very long. This means we have some days where we are spending part of the day on a plane getting from one region to another. Fortunately, we find time to get some birding and more enjoyable activities during the travel days. The pace of the tour is moderate; and in general, the day-by-day physical pace is easy, though there are often long days in the field and days where we will be doing several hours of traveling on the bus. Therefore, the strenuous part of the trip will not be in physical excursions or rugged and difficult trails, instead it will be in some long days and travel. 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. Walks with noticeable slope are not long, and we will take our time. The exception is when we are at higher altitudes in the Andes, at which point we may reach elevations to nearly 14,000 feet although we will be sleeping lower in San Pedro de Atacama which is at 8000 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

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



altitude presents. You may want to consult with a doctor, as there are now medicines that control the effects of high elevation.

The tour includes a morning pelagic trip off Valparaiso. The ocean is seldom flat calm in central Chile, in November we hope for a calm morning and if wind builds up later on in the day we will be heading back to port by then. 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. The ferry heading to Tierra del Fuego, and the one to Chiloe are very stable and we have not had any seasickness issues there. The Antofagasta pelagic is usually calm as up there ocean swells are low, and mornings have very low wind. Similarly our boat in Chiloe is comfortable and stable, and we do not expect choppy seas there as the water is a tad more protected.

Note that restaurants in Chile typically open later than most birders would prefer, often at 7:00 p.m. In order to get earlier in some cases it will be necessary to pre-arrange a set menu at some restaurants. This facilitates the evening meal immensely as 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 lunches and late dinners to be routine, it is just the way things are in the Southern Cone, and one needs to adjust to this situation. Note also that restaurant meals, tend to be three course meals in Chile. So, if you like to eat light, keep this in mind. 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 buffet breakfast. Breakfasts might be continental, although in most hotels eggs are available. Lunches will vary from sit-down lunches at restaurants, to picnics made by the guides, to box lunches provided by hotels. Chile has great fish and seafood which we will try to sample, although commonly chicken and beef are staples.



Aplomado Falcon

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES
birding & nature tours



Itinerary for Chile 2024

October 29, 2024 (Day 1) – Arrival in Santiago, pm birding. Please book flights to arrive in Santiago by early this morning, or you could consider arriving the previous day in order to be better rested and to allow for any travel delays. In the afternoon we will visit the wetlands near Bатуco looking for waterfowl and common land birds. Night at Santiago airport hotel.

October 30, 2024 (Day 2) – Farellones. We will cross Santiago early in the morning, and then head up into the Andes. We will visit a ski area this time, and one of our goals will be to find the uncommon Creamy-rumped Miner, but you may remember the Andean Condor more than the miner. This will be our first venture into the Andes, and many species will be novel. We hope to sample a wide variety today, from lower elevation to higher elevation species. In the lower reaches, we will look for Dusky-tailed Canasteros and other matorral species such as Chilean Tinamou, as well as White-throated Tapaculo and Moustached Turca. Higher up sierra-finches, ground-tyrants, and maybe even Grey-breasted Seedsnipe will be looked for. Unfortunately to get to Farellones, we have to cross part of Santiago, this can be frustrating due to traffic, but we plan to leave the hotel early. Night at the airport hotel.

October 31, 2024 (Day 3) – Fly to Calama. Birding the Loa River and drive to San Pedro de Atacama. We will take a morning flight to the northern city of Calama, Chile's mining capital. From here we will join our land transportation and begin birding as well as travel to San Pedro de Atacama. We may find Slender-billed Finch and other desert oases species in Calama and will begin to look for highland species in San Pedro. Night in San Pedro de Atacama.

November 1, 2024 (Day 4) – Lagos Meñique and Mescanti. We will spend our day in the Altiplano, with our focus on the highland twin lakes, Meñique and Mescanti. The quest here is the rare and local Horned Coot, one of the world's avian oddities. We will also visit Laguna Chaxa where it is possible to see all three local flamingos, Chilean, James's and Andean. Many waterfowl and shorebirds are possible today, from Crested Duck, and Puna Teal, to Andean Lapwing, Puna Plover and Andean Avocet. Various highland passerines, including Creamy-rumped Miner, Black-hooded Sierra-Finch and many other high mountain specialties. Night in San Pedro de Atacama.

November 2, 2024 (Day 5) – El Tatio Geysers. Today we will venture north of San Pedro, to various highland birding sites. The first place we will visit, likely at sunrise to be able to see the El Tatio Geysers in their most majestic, when still cold such that the steam makes an impression. Here we can find some great and local birds, including the

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



local Red-backed Sierra-Finch and we even have a slight chance for the Diademed Sandpiper-Plover. We will be in the range of Puna Tinamou, Lesser (Puna) Rhea, Andean Goose, Puna Miner, Cream-winged and White-winged Cinclodes. Night in San Pedro de Atacama.

November 3, 2024 (Day 6) – Drive to Antofagasta. We will begin the day with a visit to the Valle de la Luna (Valley of the Moon), to experience the moonscape that is the driest place on earth, the Atacama Desert. Not many birds here, but it will be interesting. We will assess what species we have yet to see in this region before leaving for the coast. Our night will be in the desert coastal city of Antofagasta, and before arriving at the hotel we shall bird some spots along the coast, looking for Humboldt Penguin, Peruvian Booby, Peruvian Pelican, shorebirds, Grey, Kelp and Belcher's gull and perhaps the gorgeous Inca Tern. Night in Antofagasta.

November 4, 2024 (Day 7) – Morning boat trip and return to Santiago. We will do a pre-lunch pelagic trip this morning from the port of Mejillones. The quest here is to find storm-petrels. Although little used for pelagic birding this port has amazing potential, and hopefully it will be fruitful. We have the chance to see the Elliot's, Markham's and Hornby's (Ringed) storm-petrels today, as well as Peruvian Diving petrel and perhaps both Humboldt and Magellanic penguins. Whales and dolphins are a possibility, as is South American Fur Seal. Our flight is in the evening, so some afternoon birding will be possible in the Antofagasta area. Night at Santiago Airport hotel.

November 5, 2024 (Day 8) – 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.

November 6, 2024 (Day 9) – 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 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.

November 7, 2024 (Day 10) – Vilches to the Maipo Valley. We have some time for some morning birding around Vilches before we begin our trip north to the outskirts of Santiago, and then up a side road into the Andes to the Maipo Valley. We will have time to bird along the way, particularly to look for Torrent Duck as we head up the Maipo River.

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



November 8, 2024 (Day 11) – 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 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.

November 9, 2024 (Day 12) – 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.

November 10, 2024 (Day 13) – Pelagic. One of the highlights of a visit to Chile is to get out on the ocean to experience some of the richest pelagic birding on earth. Here we may encounter up to five species of Albatross, White-chinned and Westland petrels, Pink-footed and Sooty shearwaters, Peruvian Diving-Petrel, Chilean Skua, “Fuegian” Wilson’s Storm-Petrel and many more. If we are very lucky the Masatierra Petrel might make an appearance. But on a good day what astounds is the sheer number of birds that are out there, it can get into the thousands! Our pelagic will start early in the morning and we shall be back on land for a late lunch. After a post-lunch break we will have an optional coastal outing nearby for those who want more birding time. Night in Viña del Mar.

November 11, 2024 (Day 14) – Fly to Puerto Montt, cross to Chiloe. Today we take an early flight to Puerto Montt. After arrival, we will first bird on the mainland side, looking for forest species. After lunch we shall then cross the Chacao Channel to Chiloe on a 20-minute-long ferry ride. Seabirds are possible, including Magellanic Penguin and the Pincoya Storm-Petrel (although rare). We will then drive a couple of hours to the hotel in Castro. Night in Chiloe.

November 12, 2024 (Day 15) – Chiloe. We have a full day to explore the forest in Chiloe, at a site called Bosque Piedra. We will search for many of the forest specialties, including Chacao Tapaculo, Slender-billed Parakeet, the endemic cinnamon bellied subspecies of the Thorn-tailed Rayadito, as well as Patagonian Tyrant, Black-throated Huet-Huet and the very cool DesMur’s Wiretail. If extreme luck is with us, we may encounter the miniature deer, the Pudu here. Night in Chiloe.

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



November 13, 2024 (Day 16) – Pincoya Storm-Petrel and dolphins. We will head south from our lodge today to take a pelagic trip within protected waters inside of Chiloe Island. Lately it has been found that this is a great place to see several rare cetaceans, including the Chilean Dolphin, and sometimes the Burmeister's Porpoise, along with the more common Peale's Dolphin. But it is also a place where we have a chance to look for the recently described Pincoya Storm-Petrel. We hope for some luck. We also have a great chance to find the Magellanic Diving-Petrel here. Night in Chiloe.

November 14, 2024 (Day 17) – Visit penguin colony on Chiloe, return to mainland, finish in Puerto Montt. We cross back to the mainland today, hoping that on this or the previous crossing we will have spotted the recently described Pincoya Storm-Petrel. Before that we will visit the mixed penguin colony of Puñuhuil, both Magellanic and Humboldt penguins nest here! This will be an excellent place to see some other specialties including the Kelp Goose, perhaps the endearing Marine Otter, and Flightless Steamerduck. We return to El Tepual Airport in Puerto Montt to

Itinerary for post tour – Torres del Paine and Pumas (Optional)

The post-tour will be led by Ricardo Matus. A second guide will be added for groups of 8 or more.

November 14, 24 (Day 1) – Fly to Punta Arenas. Fly to Punta Arenas from Puerto Montt, with Ricardo. Dinner upon arrival at hotel in Punta Arenas. Night in Punta Arenas.

November 15, 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)

November 16, 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 near Torres del Paine.

November 17 -18, 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,

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



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. Night near Torres del Paine or within the park.

November 19, 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.

November 20, 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.



Torres del Paine

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



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. Alvaro recently wrote a large part of the sparrow chapter for the Handbook of Birds of the World, and is writing a photo guide to the birds and wildlife of Patagonia. He was recently 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.

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 25 years. Ricardo lives in Punta Arenas with his wife, Olivia, and their sons, Alonso and Antonio.



ALVARO'S ADVENTURES
birding & nature tours



Financial Information

FEE: \$7650 from Santiago, ends in Puerto Montt. Price includes multiple internal air flights.

DEPOSIT: \$500 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: July 1, 2024

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$1400

LIMIT: 12.

PUMAS AND PATAGONIA POST-TOUR

FEE: \$3850 from Puerto Montt, does not include flights to and from Punta Arenas. Includes two days dedicated puma tracking, visit to Torres del Paine National Park and great Patagonian birding and sightseeing.

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$600

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

A second guide will be added to the post tour for groups of 8 or more.



Ticking Doradito – a rare, warbler like flycatcher.

Additional Information

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. 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 by early morning on Oct 29, 2024, arriving a day early to rest and avoid the stress of missed connections is always recommended and we can arrange an extra hotel night for you. Flights back home at the end of the tour can be booked for in the afternoon of November 14, 2024 from Puerto Montt (unless you are continuing to Patagonia). Most flights back to North America depart after 8 pm from Santiago, giving plenty of time to return from Puerto Montt to the capital city. Depending on the airline you are flying you may be able to include the internal flight back to Santiago in your international ticket. Various North American

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



airlines as well as Latam airline, fly to Santiago, from several different hubs. Flights tend to be overnight, arriving in the morning in Santiago.

For those in the Post Tour, Ricardo will travel with you to Punta Arenas from Puerto Montt in the afternoon of November 14. The ticket price for this flight is not included in the tour price. You may book a return to Santiago and flights home on the morning of November 20, 2024.

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. 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 \$7650 for one person in double occupancy from Santiago. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 16, all meals from lunch on Day 1 through lunch on Day 17, all ground transportation, internal flights, entrance fees, tips for baggage handling and meal service, and the guide services of the tour leaders. Alcoholic beverages and items of a personal nature are not included. The above fees do not include your airfare to and from Chile, airport taxes, visa fees, optional tips to local drivers and guides, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for the tour is \$1500. 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; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee.

Similarly, the post-tour extension fee of \$3850 (for groups of 5 and over) includes lodging from day 1 to 6, all meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 7. All ground transportation, entrance fees, tips for baggage handling and meals service, guides services including Puma trackers. It does not include the flight to and from Punta Arenas. The single supplement is \$600.

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 July 1, 2024. 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.

SMOKING: This is a non-smoking tour.

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, 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 Adventure'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 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.

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES

birding & nature tours



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 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.

10/23 AJ