



Olrog's Gull – © Jorge La Grotteria

Punta Rasa & Samborombon Bay

3 days/2 nights

A tour to the River Plate's estuary and the heart of the pampas

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Hudson's Canastero – © Andrés Terán

INTRODUCTION

Located 350 kilometres south of Buenos Aires city, Punta Rasa is a renowned place because of its importance as a major migratory bird stop (mainly for boreal waders and terns) but also for the well preserved patches of native grasslands which are present along most of Samborombon Bay surroundings.

Punta Rasa is the southernmost tip of Samborombon Bay, which is part of the River Plate's estuary. The extensive mudflats offer plenty of food resources for thousands of sandpipers, plovers, godwits and more, and it's a strategic meeting and roosting spot for other marine birds, including terns, gulls and skimmers. Some of these species have got very restricted distribution ranges, and one of the most attractive ones is Olrog's Gull, an almost endemic bird of Argentina (also found in Uruguay during the winter).

Native grasslands are globally threatened, and the Pampas are not an exception. Because of the poor soil quality and the low geography of the land (which often gets flooded), the grasslands of Samborombon Bay area are particularly well preserved and represent a stronghold for birds that have disappeared from most of their original range, such as the scarce Hudson's Canastero.

Finally, the many marshes and lagoons present in the area host one of the most diverse waterfowl repertoire in South America, and many attractive and range-restricted reed-dwelling passerines.

Besides the birds, this area is great for spotting native mammals such as armadillos and foxes, which are nevertheless hard to see. In this tour we offer the best possible combination of all these attractions in one single trip specially designed for you.



Bearded Tachuri – © Marcelo Gavensky

TOUR DESCRIPTION

The tour starts with an early pick up at the hotel in Buenos Aires, from where we will travel southwards until we reach the first fields without much human intervention, where we will make our first birding stop, looking for birds along rural dirt roads. The list of targets is long, with fairly common species such as **White-browed Meadowlark**, **Grassland Sparrow**, **Great Pampa Finch** and **Firewood Gatherer**, but also scarce ones that we will focus on, such as **Bearded Tachuri**, **Hellmayr's Pipit** and our first chances for **Hudson's Canastero**. Other iconic species from the pampas that we could start seeing from the beginning of the tour are **Spotted Nothura** and **Greater Rhea**. This will be our best chance for finding **Upland Sandpipers** in the grasslands of the higher fields, which are preferred by this declining species that visits the pampas during the austral summer.

After that stop we will continue traveling southwards and make another birding stop in one of the best spots for **Hudson's Canastero**, adding the chance of finding another special bird from the pampas marshes: **Bay-capped Wren-Spinetail**. Other possibilities along the road to our night accommodations are **Freckle-breasted Thornbird**, **Maguari Stork**, **Southern Screamer**, **Roseate Spoonbill**, **South American Snipe**, **Aplomado Falcon**, **White-tailed Hawk** and the scarce **Swainson's Hawk**.

The following day we will spend it visiting Punta Rasa and its surroundings, looking for our many different targets. We will specially focus in finding **Olrog's Gull**, which is present all year round in the area but with very low densities during the austral summer, when most birds congregate on their breeding colonies (the nearest to Buenos Aires is found over 800 kilometres south). While looking for this specialty we will have the chance of seeing thousands of waders and marine birds from species such as **White-rumped Sandpiper**, **Hudsonian Godwit**, **Greater** and **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **Black-bellied Plover**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Snowy-crowned** and **Royal Terns**, among many more. Together with them, immense flocks of **Black Skimmers** and **Common Terns** are impressive when seen in flight.



South American Pinted-Snipe – © Marcelo Gavensky

The estuarine marsh found in Punta Rasa Natural Reserve is one of the best places to try seeing the skulking **Dot-winged Crake** (which is present but always hard to see). Other birds from the marsh include **Spectacled Tyrant**, **Black-and-rufous Warbling-Finch**, **Warbling Doradito**, **Sulphur-throated Spinetail**, **Long-tailed Reed-Finch** and **Sedge Wren**. After lunch at the port, we will take a break from the marsh and estuarine birds to search for hummingbirds at the botanical garden, particularly looking for **White-throated Hummingbird**, a species from the Atlantic Forest of south east Brazil and north Argentina that has increased its territory over the past few decades following the expansion of eucalyptus forestry along Uruguay and Buenos Aires province. Spending the afternoon again in Punta Rasa would serve as a second chance for possible missing targets before going back to our accommodations.

On the third (and last) day we will start making our way back to Buenos Aires, with a very important birding spot in El Palenque, a well known place to look for waterfowl and reed specialties. Among the first group, possibilities include **Black-necked** and **Coscoroba Swans**, **Chiloe Wigeon**, **White-cheeked Pintail**, **Silver Teal**, **Red Shoveler** and the scarce **Black-headed Duck** (the only breeding parasite among ducks in the world). Also, three species of coots (**White-winged**, **Red-fronted** and **Red-gartered**) can be spotted in the lagoons, besides **Great** and **White-cheeked Grebes**. In the reeds, the stunning **Many-colored Rush-Tyrant** is one of the main targets of the day, and shares habitat with **Wren-like Rushbird** and **Yellow-chinned Spinetail**. This is a great place to try spotting the cryptic **Stripe-backed Bittern** and the scarce **South American Pinted-Snipe**. This last species is high on anyone's wish-list, and the marshes of this area constitute a perfect habitat for it, although its unpredictable behavior makes it a challenging but very rewarding target.

The surrounding short grassland of El Palenque hosts good numbers of **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**, which usually shares territory with the more common **American Golden Plover**. **Short-billed** and **Correndera Pipits** add to the diversity of this place, from where we plan to go back to Buenos Aires, after three days of birding in the heart of the Pampas.



Many-colored Rush-Tyrant – © Alec Earnshaw

ITINERARY*

DAY 1: Pick up at 6 AM in Buenos Aires city. Transfer to General Lavalle with birding stops AM and PM along the way in Samborombon Bay proximities (lunch is on a restaurant by the route). Check-inn at hotel in General Lavalle. Dinner and night in General Lavalle.

DAY 2: AM visit to San Clemente del Tuyú port and Paunta Rasa, looking for Olrog's Gull and other estuarine targets. Lunch in San Clemente del Tuyú port restaurant. PM visiting the town's botanical garden and Punta Rasa. Transfer to General Lavalle. Dinner and night in General Lavalle.

DAY 3: Check-out from hotel and AM birding in El Palenque. PM transfer back to Buenos Aires with possible birding stops along the way (depending on the needs and time left). End of tour in Buenos Aires city.

** The itinerary may change due to force majeure*

TOUR DETAILS

Price

Please contact us to find out about our prices for the current and/or following seasons.

Our prices **include** full board accommodations, land transfers in private vehicle, local guide with quality spotting scope, snacks and drinks (bottled water) during the excursions. Our prices **do not include** personal insurance, drinks during dinners, tips nor anything not mentioned on previous sentence.

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Upland Sandpipers – © Marcelo Gavensky

Group size

We run this tour on request for a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 10 passengers. Please contact us for information about larger groups.

Physical difficulty

Easy.

Accommodations

Comfortable inn accommodations in General Lavalle town (recommended). Upgrade to 3 or 4 star hotels in San Clemente del Tuyú is available on request.

Weather in southern Entre Ríos

This is a temperate and humid region which can get high temperatures during the summer (over 30° C at times) and winter temperatures that usually vary from 5 to 18° C, but can be lower. Punta Rasa can be very windy and cold in the winter (cold wind is frequent in all open fields in such time of the year). On intermediate seasons (autumn and spring) temperature will depend on the direction of the wind (northern wind brings warm temperatures, and southern wind does the opposite). Rain fall could be expected but it's hard to predict with anticipation. Normally winter has weak (though cold and steady) rain and summer has strong (though passing) storms.



Dot-winged Crake – © Jorge La Grotteria

Packing for the trip

During austral summer bring light clothing (long-sleeves shirts and long pants to avoid insect bites) and a light coat. We also recommend to bring closed hiking shoes, a rain coat (“ponchos” are very useful) and a good hat. Along with that you should bring sun glasses, sun screen and insect repellent. If you are coming in winter you should add warm clothing (a good jacket that protects from the wind is recommended).

Best time of the year

This is a tour that can be made at any time of the year, although the species composition change from austral summer to austral winter. Early spring (September-October) is great for more bird activity with most of summer visitors already in the area. Winter time (April to August) increases the numbers of Olrog’s Gull in the region, and adds other species to the list of possibilities, such as Chilean Flamingo, and south Patagonian visitors like Tawny-throated Dotterel, Rufous-chested dotterel, Two-banded Plover, Snowy Sheathbill, Austral Negrito, Buff-winged Cinclodes and even chances of seeing Black-browed Albatross and Southern Giant Petrel from the beach on windy days.

Best combined with

Southern Entre Ríos 3 days/2 nights tour

Costanera Sur reserve (Buenos Aires) Half Day tour



Snowy-crowned Tern – © Jorge La Grotteria

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

CONTACT INFORMATION

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