



Maguari Stork – © Jorge La Grotteria

Southern Entre Rios Birding Hotspot

3 days/2 nights

The most complete tour to the best birding destination near BA

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Straight-billed Reedhaunter – © Jorge La Grotteria

INTRODUCTION

The south of Entre Ríos province is one of the most productive birding areas in Argentina, and the best place in Buenos Aires surroundings. Although not being formally protected, the region preserves very good habitat for birds and wildlife, with an interesting combination of Espinal forest, immense wetlands and patches of natural grasslands, as well as agricultural land. This mixture gives refuge to a great diversity of birds, including iconic species such as Greater Rhea, as well as endangered and range restricted specialties such as Saffron-cowled Blackbird, Straight-billed Reedhaunter and Marsh Seed eater, among many others.

But southern Entre Ríos is not just about birds diversity: it can also be a land of abundance. This is especially evident on a visit during the summer on a rainy year, where it is possible to see hundreds of Maguari and Wood storks, Southern Screammers, Snail Kites and a plethora of herons and egrets. That, combined with the typical Argentine pampas landscape, with real gauchos (southern South American cowboys) and warm small town people, plus great food and wine, makes this area an incredible birding destination, and a “must go” place because of its proximity to Buenos Aires.

This tour offers a good insight to the south of Entre Ríos, visiting the best spots within it, starting and ending in Buenos Aires city.



White-fronted Woodpecker – © Jorge La Grotteria

TOUR DESCRIPTION

The tour starts with an early pick up at the hotel in Buenos Aires, from where we will travel to our first birding stop: *Ciervo de los Pantanos National Park* (formerly called “Otamendi Natural Reserve”).

This is the nearest fairly well preserved natural area to Buenos Aires city, and one of the best places for a couple of bird specialties: **Straight-billed** and **Curve-billed Reedhaunters**. Both species have breeding populations in the area, although they are skulking and not easy to spot. Other birds we will be looking for in this reserve include **Rufous-capped** and **Variable Antshrikes**, **Diademed Tanager**, **Long-tailed Reed-Finch** and **Scarlet-headed Backbird**.

After making that half-morning birding stop, we will continue traveling northwards to get to our first destination in southern Entre Ríos, in the surroundings of Ceibas town. Birding along public rural dirt roads, we will bird across different habitats looking for wetland and Espinal forest species. Good numbers of **Southern Screamer**, **Maguari Stork**, **Snail Kite** and **Giant Woodrail** are expected in the marshes, as well as many waders such as the migrant **Pectoral Sandpiper**, **Greater** and **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **American Golden Plover** and the scarce **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**, and the resident **South American Snipe**. Passerines in the humid grasslands include **Spectacled Tyrant**, **Brown-and-yellow Marshbird**, **Warbling Doradito**, **Sulphur-throated Reedhaunter (Spinetail)** and some endangered ones such as **Marsh** and **Chestnut Seedeaters**, which are rare but still possible in the right time of the year. The Espinal forest is rich in specialties from the closely related dry Chaco forest, such as **White-fronted Woodpecker**, **Brown Cacholote** and **Scimitar-billed Woodcreeper**. In the open savanas the **White Monjita** is remarkable for its almost all white plumage. **Greater Rhea** (the largest bird in the New World) is one of our targets as well in the open fields.



Dark-throated Seedeater – © Andrés Terán

Before arriving to our night accommodations, we will visit a spot where we will be waiting for dusk in order to see nocturnal birds, such as the stunning **Scissor-tailed Nightjar**, whose males carry very long tails and use them on their breeding displays. **Nacunda Nighthawk** (which we may see as well roosting in the fields during the day) and **Little Nightjar** are other attractive possibilities in the area.

The following day we will be birding in the surroundings of Gualaguay (the town where we will be spending both nights), in an even richer Espinal forest where we will be looking for **Little Thornbird**, **Lark-like Brushrunner**, **Short-billed Canastero**, **Tufted Tit-Spinetail**, **White-barred Piculet**, **White Woodpecker**, **White-naped Xenopsaris**, **Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant**, **Tawny-crowned Pygmy-Tyrant**, **Ash-colored** and **Dark-billed Cuckoos**, **Suiriri Flycatcher** and **Great Antshrike**, among many others. This is a great place to see **White-tipped Plantcutter**, which is resident in the area. The patches of native grass in the sides of the rural roads offer great chances for other declining species such as **Tawny-bellied** and **Dark-throated Seedeaters**, and the marshy areas found in some places along the same roads are also good to look for **Unicolor Blackbird**, **Spotted Rail** and even **South American Painted-Snipe**, which is very hard to find but we always give it a try.

On the third and last day we start heading back to Buenos Aires, not before making an important birding stop near the town of Médanos, where we will visit a marsh and flood valley looking for the beautiful **Many-colored Rush-Tyrant** and other reed dwelling birds such as the **Wren-like Rushbird** and **Bay-capped Wren-Spinetail**. This is also one of the few places where it is possible to have chances of seeing the very scarce **Saffron-cowled Blackbird**, which is hard to find because of its continuous change of territory and selection of new breeding grounds every season (depending on the time of the year we may have better chances to see it in this spot or in the other places that we know for it in Southern Entre Ríos), apart from being threatened by habitat modification and other issues.

We will plan to be back in BA by 7 PM, after three days of quality birding in the Argentine pampas.



White-tipped Plantcutter – © Marcelo Gavensky

ITINERARY*

DAY 1: Pick up at 6 AM in Buenos Aires city. Transfer to southern Entre Ríos with birding stop in Otamendi area. Pic nic lunch while birding in the fields. PM birding in Ceibas and Gualeguay surroundings (owling after dusk is scheduled for this day but can be moved to DAY 2 if needed). Check-in at hotel in Gualeguay. Dinner and night in Gualeguay.

DAY 2: AM clearing up the list of Espinal forest specialties and visiting Puerto Ruiz, looking for gulls and kingfishers. Pic nic lunch while birding in a park by the river. PM birding along rural roads in Gualeguay surroundings. Dinner and night in Gualeguay.

DAY 3: Check-out from hotel and AM transfer to Médanos surroundings. Pic nic lunch while birding in the fields. 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.



White-naped Xenopsaris – © Jorge La Grotteria

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 3 star hotel built on historical building of Gualeguay town. Upgrade to newer (and more comfortable) accommodations 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 35° C at times) and winter temperatures that usually vary from 5 to 20° C. On intermediate seasons (autumn and spring) this 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.



Greater Rheas – © Sergio Castedo

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 (ie: White-naped Xenopsaris and boreal waders) already in the area, although for the endangered seedeaters (ie: Marsh, Chestnut, Rufous-rumped, Dark-throated and Tawny-bellied) the best is to try from November to February. In winter time (April to August) those species are gone but instead we have winter visitors from Patagonia, such as Black-crowned Monjita, Austral Negrito, Buff-winged Cinclodes and more.

Best combined with

Punta Rasa & surroundings 3 days/2 nights tour

Costanera Sur reserve (Buenos Aires) Half Day tour

South Patagonia 7 days/6 nights tour

North East Patagonia 8 days/7 nights tour



Southern Screamer – © 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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