

Argentine Patagonia

Naturetrek Tour itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Depart London.
Day 2	Buenos Aires.
Day 3/5	El Calafate & Los Glaciares NP
Day 6/9	Rio Grande & Ushuaia.
Day 10/11	Peninsula Valdez.
Day 12	Trelew & Punta Tombo.
Day 13	Buenos Aires.
Day 14	Depart Buenos Aires.
Day 15	Arrive London.

Extension

Day 14/16	Pampas.
Day 17	Buenos Aires.
Day 18	Depart Buenos Aires.
Day 19	Arrive London.

Departs

November.

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code ARG04) or Naturetrek brochure.

Grading

Grade A. Birdwatching walks only.

Focus

Birds, mammals and scenery.

Highlights

- Spectacular Andean scenery.
- Numerous birds including Andean Condor and Magellanic Woodpecker.
- Visit the Moreno Glacier.
- Enjoy the Magellanic Penguins & Southern Right Whales of Peninsula Valdes.
- Take a wildlife cruise along the Beagle Channel.
- Led by expert naturalist guides.



Images from top: Magellanic Penguins, Beagle Channel near Ushuaia and Magellanic Woodpecker



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Introduction

Argentina is a huge country with an equally large diversity of habitats and landscapes ranging from the humid rainforests on the border with Brazil to the sub-Antarctic scenery of Tierra del Fuego. Despite a good network of domestic flights and roads, it is impossible to include all of this vast country in a single natural history tour and so we have chosen to concentrate this particular itinerary on two distinct areas, the dramatic Andes-cut landscapes of southern Patagonia and Peninsula Valdés where large numbers of marine mammals and seabirds congregate. This is a tour designed to offer an abundance of exciting birds and mammals, some of the finest scenery in the Americas, and an opportunity to sample the warm hospitality of the Argentinean people.

Itinerary

NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

Depart London

We depart from London's Heathrow Airport on a British Airways overnight service to Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina.

Day 2

Buenos Aires



Many-coloured Rush-tyrant

We arrive in the Argentine capital mid-morning and meet our local naturalist guide at the airport. We then transfer for around an hour to a downtown hotel. The cosmopolitan city of Buenos Aires has a population of over three million people, but is considered to be one of the safest capitals in South America. At the time of our visit it will be spring in Argentina and the many parks and gardens in Buenos Aires will be ablaze with colour as countless jacarandas and other tropical flowers burst into bloom. After we have checked in at our hotel there will be plenty of time to relax after the long flight, but for those eager to sample the new avifauna there is a wonderful reserve just a short distance from the city centre. Costanera Sur Ecological Reserve is a remnant of the marshes which once extended the length of the River Plate and is preserved as perhaps the most exciting urban bird sanctuary in South America. Within sight of the city buildings we enter a wilderness of lagoons, marsh and scrub inhabited by a host of wetland species. Coypus sprawl in the sun or graze the reedbed margins, Black-necked Swans sail serenely on the open water and Snail Kites are plentiful over the marshes. In this incongruous setting we can expect to find 60 or 70 species of birds including Limpkin, Southern Screamer, Coscoroba Swan, Rosy-billed Pochard, Chimango Caracara, Red-fronted, White-winged and Red-gartered Coots, Wattled Jacana, Picazuro Pigeon, Monk Parakeet, Great Kiskadee, Rufous-collared Sparrow and Yellow-winged Blackbird, and Argentina's national bird, the Rufous Hornero. A particular jewel we will be hoping to see in the waterside sedges is the Many-coloured Rush-Tyrant, a stunning little bird worthy of nomination as the most attractive of all the flycatchers!

In the evening we will visit one of the many excellent restaurants in Buenos Aires to enjoy a traditional 'asado' or roast. In convivial surroundings we can choose from a selection of roast meats and both the quality and quantity of the servings are certain to exceed anything you are likely to have experienced in Britain! Vegetarians options are also available!

Day 3

El Calafate

We leave Buenos Aires on a mid-morning flight to El Calafate in southern Patagonia. El Calafate derives its name from a blue-berried bush which grows abundantly in the region and is an attractive little resort popular with visitors to the nearby Los Glaciares National Park. We will stay here for three nights. After arrival and check-in to our hotel we leave on an afternoon excursion to a small lake at the edge of town where Chiloie Wigeon, Red Shoveler, Lake Duck and Andean Ruddy Duck may be found. Cinereous Harriers nest in the waterside vegetation here and are amazingly indifferent to human spectators as they indulge in aerial displays and food passes over their chosen nest sites.



Day 4

El Calafate



Today we will enter the Los Glaciares National Park, the most scenic of all the places we visit in Patagonia. As we leave El Calafate, the river plains outside the town which extend to the shoreline of a huge glacial lake, Lago Argentino, are populated by Upland Geese and a variety of wildfowl, many of them guarding young on small roadside pools. The hills and mountains surrounding El Calafate are patrolled by a number of Andean Condors and the presence of a dead cow on one of the ranches can attract impressive numbers of these spectacular vultures, with up to 30 birds gathered

around the carcass. The sight of an Andean Condor soaring and gliding over the mountain ridges epitomises the Andes and hopefully we will be able to enjoy several encounters during the day.

The road into Los Glaciares National Park presents stunning vistas at every turn as it weaves through stretches of ancient *Nothofagus* forest and follows the course of a wide river valley flanked by high mountains. This is the territory of many southern bird species including Magellanic Woodpecker, Chilean Flicker, Austral Parakeet and the shy Spectacled Duck. White-crested Elaenias occur with increasing frequency in the areas of scattered forest alongside other passerines such as Fire-eyed Diucon, Grey-hooded Sierra Finch, Black-chinned Siskin and Austral Thrush. Patagonian Maras are the most conspicuous mammals of this landscape. Eventually the Moreno Glacier appears in the distance and as we draw nearer the scale of this fantastic ice-field becomes apparent. Although the national park embraces 12 other glaciers, the Perito Moreno is by far the most spectacular; a wall of ice 70 metres



high stretching for over four kilometres to jagged snow-capped peaks at the head of the valley. The inexorable advance of the glacier causes the ice to crack and groan and periodically large sections break off to fall in the lake below with an impressive splash. A viewing area allows spectators to stand opposite the glistening ice cliffs and we can stand and marvel at the subtle changes in the colour of the glacier, as it alternates from white to blue according to light conditions. Scores of visitors arrive every day to witness this scene of stunning natural beauty, but few will also appreciate the

diverse birdlife which will make this one of the most interesting days of our Patagonian tour. We will eat a picnic lunch in one of the park's camping sites and further birding in the surrounding forest could produce Austral Pygmy-Owl, Austral Blackbird, Thorn-tailed Rayadito and Rufous-tailed Plantcutter.

Later in the day, if time permits after returning to El Calafate, we will pay another visit to the town lake or perhaps indulge in a little shopping at one of the many gift shops in this busy little tourist centre before enjoying a Patagonian barbeque of roast lamb at one of the town's best known restaurants.

Day 5

El Calafate

A full day devoted to exploring the very distinctive Patagonian steppe habitats. Superficially lacking in variety of vegetation or wildlife, and looking not unlike a stretch of Scottish moorland, the steppe is in fact populated by a surprising diversity of small flowers, butterflies and some exciting birds. We are likely to see both Tawny-throated and Rufous-chested Dotterels, Least and Grey-breasted Seedsnipe, and possibly the beautiful Chocolate-vented Tyrant. A few small roadside pools are always worth scrutiny and are a magnet for waders including Two-banded Plovers, White-rumped and Baird's Sandpipers. In the open steppe we are likely to see a number of birds that favour this desolate habitat including Lesser Rhea, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Crested Caracara, Cinereous Harrier, Least Seedsnipe and Long-tailed Meadowlark. Upland Geese are also numerous wherever any water is present.



Rufous-chested Dotterel

Large numbers of sheep are reared here and are enclosed by endless stretches of wire fence, which can present obstacles for the small population of Guanaco which occasionally appear at the roadside. As we drive northwest the snowy peaks of the Andes can be discerned in the distance and gradually they assume more clarity as we head towards the mountains. Highest among these is Mount Fitz Roy which can be clearly identified among the peaks, although over 100 kilometres away. We aim to visit La Leona River and Viedma Lake, a remarkable lake set amid a stony windswept landscape where any stretch of water acts as a magnet for birds. The very rare Hooded Grebe was first discovered



Mount Fitz Roy

not far from this site and, though no longer a regular nester, still does so in years when the water level suits its precise habitat requirements. Magellanic Plovers can be found around the shoreline along with Magellanic Oystercatchers, Two-banded Plovers, Baird's and White-rumped Sandpipers. Out on the water we may see Black-necked Swans, Silvery Grebes, Crested Ducks, Flying Steamer Ducks and Red Shoveler. The stony shores are home to breeding Least Seedsnipe and they may be performing their parachute 'song-flight' as we walk to the water's edge. Wild and desolate are descriptions which could be applied to this remote lake, but it supports a fascinating selection of birds and will be a welcome diversion during a day of travel.

Day 6

Rio Grande

Today, we catch a morning flight to the southern-most city in the world. Ushuaia is an attractive settlement on the shores of the Beagle Channel, a collection of red-roofed buildings overlooked by snow-capped mountains in the most picturesque of settings. Antarctic-bound cruise ships regularly call here, and it is also a favourite holiday destination for many Argentines too, hence the presence of more hotels than might otherwise be expected in such a remote outpost. The weather is capricious and warm sunny conditions can rapidly change to plummeting temperatures and snow, particularly when southerly winds blow in from Antarctica.

After arrival into Ushuaia we board our coach and travel northwards, crossing the Fuegian Andes chain on a scenic journey to the town of Rio Grande, located on the Atlantic coast. After several birding and landscape stops, we will have an authentic open-fire lamb barbeque for lunch at a typical Patagonian ranch. The landscapes of Tierra del Fuego are vast and inspiring and even today the region retains a sense of isolation and remoteness that is rarely experienced in our crowded part of the world. Apart from Ushuaia and Río Grande on the Atlantic coast, there are few other settlements in this part of the world, and we will likely see more Guanaco than people on the journey! We will overnight in a comfortable hotel in Rio Grande.

Day 7

Ushuaia

This morning we will visit the sandy coast at the mouth of the Rio Grande river, the shoreline and several nearby lagoons in search of some of the avian specialities of the region that might include waders such as Magellanic



Plover, Rufous-chested Dotterel, Two-banded Plover, Whimbrel, Magellanic Snipe and other coastal species including Arctic Tern, at the start of their second summer of the year! Even the rare Ruddy-headed Goose is a possibility.

After lunch we will begin our drive back to Ushuaia for a 3-night stay. If time permits, we will take a walk along the waterfront to look for Southern Giant Petrels, Dolphin Gulls, Flightless Steamer Ducks, Kelp Geese and Chilean Skuas

Days 8 – 9

Ushuaia

We have the next two full days to visit a number of localities in the Ushuaia area and to undertake a cruise on the Beagle Channel to Harberton Ranch. The latter excursion will give an opportunity to obtain close views of various seabirds including Southern Giant Petrel, Black-browed Albatross, Magellanic Diving Petrel, Rock Shag and Imperial Shag, but it is also a voyage which takes us past stunning scenery, as mountains and forest fringe both

shores of the Channel. It will also add another country to our itinerary as some of the little settlements we sail past are in Chilean territory!

A small assembly of Magellanic Penguins can be viewed on one sandy headland and although not quite the impressive spectacle of Punta Tombo, they have been joined more recently by a several pairs of Gentoo Penguins, wanderers from the Falklands or further south. Also along the shore we will see pairs of the attractive Kelp Geese, many Upland Geese and possibly waders such as Magellanic Oystercatcher and White-rumped Sandpiper. Colonies of South American Tern are located on rocky islands in the Channel and South American Fur Seals can be seen at several places, often sharing their nursery with Imperial Shags, Dolphin Gulls and Snowy Sheathbills. Other possibilities during the cruise include Black-chested Buzzard Eagles and Andean Condors over the mountains, Black-faced Ibis, Ashy-headed Goose, and Flightless and Flying Steamer Ducks.

The Tierra del Fuego National Park just outside Ushuaia is a pleasantly wooded park which follows the meanderings of a fast-flowing river rushing down from the nearby mountains. The impressive, and absurdly confiding, Magellanic Woodpecker is one of the star birds found in the park but other attractions include Dark-bellied and Bar-winged Cinclodes, Thorn-tailed Rayadito, Tufted Tit-Tyrant, Rufous-backed Negrito, Chilean Swallow, and Austral Thrush. Water meadows beside the river are inhabited by family parties of Upland and Ashy-headed Geese and a small lake contains Speckled Teal, Chiloe Wigeon, Flying Steamer Ducks and the scarce Spectacled Duck. Until recent years Torrent Ducks were often to be seen along the river but they seem to be no longer present, although we can venture along the bank in hope of finding one.



Those interested in a longer hike may wish to walk to a glacier on a mountain overlooking the town. This is a walk of a couple of hours, but those taking part may be rewarded with White-bellied Seedsnipe and other Páramo species which may include Grey-flanked Cinclodes, Ochre-naped Ground Tyrant and Yellow-bridled Finch. Wherever we may choose to venture, our time in Tierra del Fuego will provide a fascinating insight into the landscapes, wildlife and way of life of the southern-most extremity of the South American continent.

Day 10

Puerto Pirámides, Peninsula Valdes



This morning we will return to Ushuaia Airport and take a flight north to Trelew on the coast of Chubut province. On arrival in Trelew we will travel by coach to a coastal hotel in the Peninsula Valdes resort of Puerto Pirámides. The local economy here owes a great deal to two particular aquatic creatures and as we leave the airport their images are spread on almost every advertising hoarding: the Southern Right Whale and the Magellanic Penguin. Both attract thousands of visitors to the area each year, indeed it is claimed that the numbers of visitors

to the Punta Tombo penguin colony each year exceed the figures for the Galapagos Islands! The journey will take approximately two hours on the long straight roads typical of the area around Trelew, but our first sightings of Lesser (Darwin's) Rhea and family parties of Elegant Crested Tinamous running along the roadside will keep us

entertained. Once checked in and settled into our hotel an afternoon walk in the surroundings will offer us a fine selection of smaller birds typical of the Patagonian grassland such as canasteros, earthcreepers and sierra-finches. We have one night in Puerto Pirámides.

The little resort of Puerto Pirámides is situated on the south coast of Peninsula Valdés and overlooks the Nuevo Gulf where Southern Right Whales gather. One of the largest of the great whales, these magnificent creatures were once hunted to the verge of extinction but numbers have gradually recovered and the population is now closely studied by scientists based locally. Many cows spend the Patagonian summer in the waters off Valdés, and at the time of our visit we may see some of the newly born young swimming with their mothers. Looking out to sea from the shore we are likely to see whales blowing and witness their huge tails lifting above the waves as they dive deeper beneath the surface. Occasionally a whale will leap clear of the water and to see this spectacular performance will be one of the undoubted highlights of the tour. Later in the afternoon, we will undertake a short boat trip for closer views of these amazing animals.



Southern Right Whale

Day 11

The vastness of Peninsula Valdés will become apparent as we spend a day visiting the principal natural history sites on the north and east coasts. Much of the interior could best be described as moorland with extensive thickets of scrub and occasional marshy pools. Unusual species of plants grow here and we will hopefully encounter parties of Guanaco, a small very attractive member of the camel family which still occurs on Valdés but is often hunted elsewhere in Patagonia. Not surprisingly these graceful animals are somewhat shy but another resident mammal, the Patagonian Mara, is frequently



Patagonian Mara

more confiding. An odd-looking creature with long thin legs, plump body and deer-like head, the Mara lives colonially in burrows and the occupants graze vegetation at a safe distance from the holes ready to rush back if alarmed. A handful of birds are typical of the bushy areas: Patagonian Mockingbird, Carbonated and Mourning Sierra-Finches and Yellow Finches. Other more elusive passerines also occur in the scrub including Band-tailed Earthcreeper, Rusty-backed Monjita and Grey-bellied Shrike-Tyrant. More open expanses are frequented by Southern Lapwing, Long-tailed Meadowlark and Rufous-backed Negrito and it is in this habitat that we may find Tawny-throated Dotterel and Least Seedsnipe.

It is the coastline of the Peninsula which most excites attention, however, and on favoured beaches we can enjoy the sight of large numbers of Southern Sealions and Southern Elephant Seals, together with attendant scavenging Kelp Gulls and Snowy Sheathbills. The mammals will be females and young males, the adult males having dispersed out to sea earlier in the spring. It is on these very beaches that the famous sequence was filmed showing Killer Whales beaching themselves to snatch seals. Sadly these awesome predators are likely to be further out to

sea at the time of our visit and, as such, we will need good fortune to spot one. The rugged coastline is only accessible by road at particular vantage points and from these we can look down on the concentration of animals. Some of the young bulls interrupt long periods of loafing to indulge in practice fights with other young pretenders and there is much roaring and bellowing to disturb the tranquility of the scene. Birdlife is relatively sparse but Rock Shags breed on the cliffs, Northern Giant Petrels and Black-browed Albatrosses glide offshore and both American and Blackish Oystercatchers inhabit the shoreline pools. Birds of prey include Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Turkey Vulture, Red-backed Hawk, Chimango Caracara and American Kestrel. A day on Peninsula Valdés inevitably involves a degree of coach travel, (it is over 100 kilometres from the tip of the Peninsula to the 'mainland'), but the assemblies of animals make the journey worthwhile and a surprising variety of birds can be discovered in this unspoilt corner of Argentina. We will spend our second night in the area at Puerto Madryn.

Day 12

Trelew, Punta Tombo

We will spend today visiting the huge Magellanic Penguin colony at Punta Tombo. En route we will keep an eye on the patches of roadside scrub and bushes which often hold such typically Patagonian birds as Lesser and Patagonian Canasteros, Scale-throated and Band-tailed Earthcreepers, White-throated Cachalote, Diuca Finch, Carbonated and Mourning Sierra Finches. After looking for all these 'LBJs' it will make a refreshing change to arrive at Punta Tombo where the birdwatching becomes a lot easier. Over 250,000 pairs of Magellanic Penguins breed at Punta Tombo and there is certainly no shortage of the creatures to watch, photograph and enjoy! Visitors are allowed to enter a small section of the colony on boardwalks and, of course, the penguins treat the humans with massive indifference, going about their business as if oblivious to the pointing cameras or chattering children. The birds are a constant source of amusement and their braying calls resound over the sand dunes which are riddled with nest burrows. Tiny chicks should be evident during our visit, whilst other pairs will still be incubating eggs. When we are sated with the penguin city we can turn our attention to other occupants of the headland which might include Lesser Rhea, Crested Duck, the endemic Chubut (White-headed) Steamer Duck and Lesser Cavy, a medium-sized rodent that cohabits some of the penguin burrows. These amusing little penguins give pleasure to hundreds of visitors each day and one can only admire the skillful way the local park service has exploited their attraction, yet taken care to ensure that the colony is not disturbed. Like the whales at Valdés, the penguins are a valuable commodity and in many ways this is their best guarantee of future survival.



Later in the day we will drive into a very different habitat as we enter the cultivated Chubut Valley. This green and fertile oasis amid the bleakness of Patagonia was created by Welsh immigrants during the 19th century and many of their descendants still converse in Welsh rather than Spanish. The story of their arrival in Patagonia is an extraordinary tale. The original group of immigrants, unhappy with the government in England, were delighted to be offered land by the Argentine government, but the latter somehow neglected to explain that the land was in windblown Patagonia, which at that time was virtually unexplored. The settlers left Britain full of enthusiasm having - presumably overlooked the small-print - and arrived after a horrendous sea voyage to find a landscape far removed from their expectations. There followed years of privation during which many of the settlers died, but the survivors battled on and eventually created the farming community that exists today.



Burrowing Parrot

Gaiman, the main town is very Welsh in character and a thriving industry has developed selling their 'Welshness' to the many visitors who come to see these geographical oddities. Perhaps the presence of the Welsh community explains the homesick Manx Shearwaters off Valdés! The change of habitat will give us some different species to look for and among these are the cliff-nesting Black-faced Ibises, handsome Burrowing Parrots and Picui Ground Doves.

Day 13

Buenos Aires

Our return flight to Buenos Aires will arrive late morning. On arrival at the capital's international airport we will transfer to a comfortable city hotel for the night. Your guide will offer an afternoon birdwatching excursion should you so wish, or you are free to explore the city if you prefer.

Day 14

Depart Buenos Aires

Our return flight to London Heathrow departs around midday so we are likely to need to return to the International Airport – a one hour drive from the city centre – shortly after breakfast.

Day 15

Arrive London

We are scheduled to arrive back at London in the morning.

Post-tour Extension to Pampas

Day 14

San Clemente Del Tuyu



Guira Cuckoo

We leave Buenos Aires after breakfast and drive south-east parallel with the River Plate. The suburbs of the city seem to stretch a long way but eventually we enter more open country and patches of marsh begin appearing at the roadside. Fork-tailed Flycatchers can be common, often occurring in little flocks perched on the fence wires. Variable numbers of waterbirds can frequent the wetlands depending on the availability of open water elsewhere, and as we progress south we may encounter herons, Maguari Storks, Southern Screammers, White-faced and Bare-faced Ibises.

Crested and Chimango Caracaras are numerous in this habitat and every pool seems to contain several Snail Kites. Impromptu stops for roadside birds are inevitable but later in the morning we will halt for lunch in an area of trees and bushes near the River Plate, and here we can look for a variety of passerines including such species

as Tufted Tit-Spinetail, Blue & Yellow Tanager, Vermilion Flycatcher, and Spectacled Tyrant. Giant Wood Rails occasionally amble into view along the road here and Glittering-bellied Emerald Hummingbirds add unexpected dashes of colour. Other common birds of the countryside include Eared Dove, Monk Parakeet, Guira Cuckoo and Rufous Hornero. This plump, thrush-like bird is abundant in open areas and the football-sized earth nests which earn it the popular name of 'ovenbird' adorn many of the fence posts in the Pampas.

Later in the journey as we approach our destination we may see the nests of the closely related Firewood-gatherer, a plain-looking little bird which as its name suggests, gathers sticks together to form an enormous nest structure more like a squirrel drey than a bird nest. The extensive flat grasslands of the Pampas are intersected by wide drainage ditches and around these form temporary floods which attract hundreds of birds. We will see more of this type of wetland during the following day, but en route to San Clemente the land is somewhat drier and this is the habitat where we could see Greater Rheas stalking across the fields, or pass Burrowing Owls standing by their nest holes. Pampas Cavys sometimes scuttle from beside the road and Maras appear among the herds of grazing cattle which characterise the Pampas landscape. Another raptor which becomes increasingly numerous as we enter the Pampas is the very elegant Long-winged Harrier, the male of which is strikingly white and dark. Flocks of starling-sized birds become increasingly frequent and these will be a mixture of Yellow-winged Blackbirds and Brown-and-yellow Marshbirds, although we should not overlook the much rarer Scarlet-headed Blackbird which also occurs here.

We should reach the coastal resort of San Clemente by early evening and if time permits after the evening meal, a walk along the wide sandy beach may seem a good way to stretch our legs!

Day 15 – 16

San Clemente Del Tuyu

The romantic wilderness of the vast Pampas has long since been tamed by man's ranching activities, but here and there tracts of land remain largely untouched. Amid what is in effect a large reserve, we can see a representative selection of birds which might include hundreds of herons and egrets, flocks of ibises, Southern Screamers, Black-necked Swans, various ducks, Southern Lapwing, Black Skimmer, Wren-like Rushbird, Cattle Tyrant and White-rumped Swallow. We may chance upon a South American Painted Snipe in the boggy margins of a pool and are very likely to encounter more Greater Rheas in the grasslands.

Later in our stay we shall visit Punta Rasa, a headland at the mouth of the Plate estuary. Hudsonian Godwits probe the mudflats along with other waders including American Oystercatchers, White-rumped Sandpipers and both yellowlegs. Large numbers of terns collect on the exposed mud and whilst the majority will be winter-plumaged Common Terns, they are likely to be accompanied by Black Skimmers, Royal, Cayenne and Snowy-crowned Terns, Kelp and Brown-hooded Gulls. This is also a good locality to find the scarce Olog's Gull and other coastal species. There is an old lighthouse on the point and the surrounding bushes have a reputation for attracting migrants which has led to the establishment of a ringing station here. We may find an interesting variety of passerines but do not be surprised if you hear a Greenfinch-like song coming from the trees. This familiar British finch was introduced to Punta Rasa many years ago and seems to be thriving on the other side of the Atlantic! The coastal marshes and reedbeds near the point are home to four very local species of spinetails: Wren-like Rushbird, Bay-capped Wren-Spinetail, Freckle-breasted Thornbird and Hudson's Canastero. All are hard to see but we will try our luck and doubtless find other birds in the same habitat such as Correndera Pipit, Long-tailed Reed Finch and Great Pampa-Finch. Before leaving Punta Rasa we will take a look at another stretch of estuary where Wood-

Storks sometimes winter but another good motive for visiting this locality is the presence of several superb fish restaurants, where a local specialty called 'Lisa' is prepared in mouth-watering fashion by a traditional method of cooking.

Day 17

Buenos Aires

Today we drive back to Buenos Aires city, birdwatching along the way and exploring new places where we plan to look for any missing species from previous days, perhaps Red-winged Tinamou, Buff-breasted Sandpiper or the scarce Black-headed Duck. We plan to arrive in the early afternoon back to our hotel in downtown location where there is a wide offer of nice restaurants to enjoy a good farewell dinner.

Day 18

Depart Buenos Aires

Transfer to the International Airport in time to catch a return flight to London Heathrow.

Day 19

Arrive London

We are due to arrive at London in the morning.

Weather

This is a tour which could encounter a variety of weather conditions. Typically it will be warm and humid at Buenos Aires and in the Pampas with a risk of heavy showers at any time. In Patagonia it can be warm and sunny with temperatures as high as 18-20°C, but it can also be bitterly cold and a wind-chill effect is caused by strong winds which sweep the region. October/November is generally a period of pleasant conditions but these can change overnight and snow is possible if southerly winds prevail from Antarctica. It would be prudent to prepare for all eventualities and hope that the warmer clothing remains unused in the suitcase, except for the Beagle Channel cruise when it will be needed!

Accommodation & food

We shall be using comfortable, but simple, tourist hotels of three-star standard or equivalent. All accommodation on this tour is in twin-bedded rooms with private facilities, but single rooms are available on request. All food is included in the price of this tour.

Extra expenses

Please note that we do not include all items of a personal nature such as drinks, tips, laundry etc. in the cost of this holiday. At present all airport taxes are included in the airline ticket and there are no departure taxes to pay (subject to change).

Grading

This tour is graded A/B. Most walks are for short distances along tracks or roads but a few longer walks are included up to a maximum of 5-6 kilometres. The terrain can be rough underfoot, compounded at times by the sometimes fickle weather. This tour is suitable for those of an average level of fitness who enjoy walking and the outdoors.

Your safety & security

You have chosen to travel to Argentina. Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website – www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/argentina or telephone 0870 6060 290 prior to travel.

How to book your place

In order to book a place on this holiday, you will need to read the Naturetrek terms and conditions in the back of our brochure or on our website, and then book either online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, by calling us on 01962 733051, or by completing and returning the booking form in the brochure together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost. If you do not have a copy of this brochure, please call us on 01962 733051.
