

Argentina

Birds & Wine

Saturday 20 November – Friday 03 December 2010

Leaders: Luis Segura and Mike Witherick

2010 Cost **£4,199** single room supplement **£340**



This is the next in our series of "Birds and Wine tours" and we have chosen Argentina as our port of call. It has the two main elements that we look for in such a tour, rich birdlife and an interesting selection of wines. The main wine growing areas are in the north-west of the country and area is also rich in a variety of different habitats and birdlife. Around Buenos Aires we visit some lakes and a small area of Pampa and dry woodland. We then take a flight north-westwards to Tucuman to the Andean chain, covered with areas of Yungas Cloudforest. The Yungas supports one of the greatest biological diversities in the Neotropics, with a wide variety of forest and woodland types, each hosting its own and unique community of flora and fauna. Here we shall find some endemic bird species as well as a large variety of other south American families, including seedsnipes, tinamous, canasteros, miners and earthcreepers. We also visit the Chaco (dry woodland) as well as the high Andean Puna in search of Andean specialties, including three species of flamingo.

The Argentine wine industry is the fifth leading producer of wine in the world. Argentine wine, as with some aspects of Argentine cuisine, of course has its roots in Spain. Argentina produces a wide variety of grapes, which were originally brought into the country by different groups of immigrants. The French for instance, brought Auxerrois, known nowadays as Malbec, one of Argentina's best known wines. The Torrontés is another classic Argentine grape and is mostly found in the provinces of La Rioja, San Juan, and Salta. This grape produces fruity and aromatic white wines. Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Chardonnay are also some of the most popular grapes rapidly spreading throughout wineries along the country in recent years. We shall make sure we sample both Malbec and Torrontés while on this tour and there is wine included with dinner each evening.

Travel with Luis and Mike on this fascinating tour to sample both the avifauna and viticulture of this lovely country.

ITINERARY

Days 1 to 3

We take an evening flight from London to Buenos Aires, where we arrive in the late morning of the next day and are met by our local guide. We transfer to our hotel in the outskirts of the city, where we stay for two nights. In the afternoon, we visit the famous Costanera Sur Reserve in the heart of the city. It is possible to see almost 70

species here in an afternoon including Southern Screamer, Coscoroba and Black-necked Swans, Black-headed Duck, three species of coots, Plumbeous Rail, Monk Parakeet, Green-barred Woodpecker and many passerines, such as Many-coloured Rush-Tyrant, Masked Gnatcatcher, Yellow-billed Cardinal, Black-and-rufous Warbling-Finch, Spectacled Tyrant and Great Pampa-Finch. Several species of mammals and reptiles live here as well, and it is not unusual

to find South American Coypu or Nutria, two species of opossums, Lesser Cavy, Teju Lizard, Hillary's Side-necked Turtle and many others. We have the whole of the next day to explore areas north of Buenos Aires around Otamendi and Ceibas. The habitats here comprise a mixture of thorny woodlands, marshes and grasslands where we may find Greater Rhea, Limpkin, Wood and Maguari Storks, Giant Wood-Rail, Rufous-thighed Hawk, Curve-billed and Straight-billed Reedhaunters, Firewood Gatherer, White Monjita, Brown Cachalote, White-tipped Plantcutter, Fork-tailed Flycatchers and both White-browed and Chestnut-capped Blackbirds.



Grey-hooded Parakeet

Day 4

Today we catch the flight to Tucuman and drive to Tafi del Valle for an overnight stay. As we leave Tucuman City the road starts to ascend and soon follows the Los Sosa River where sections of rapids are home to Rufous-throated Dipper and Torrent Duck. The forest supports Mitred Parakeet, Red-tailed Comet, Cinnamon Flycatcher, Andean Tyrant, Rusty-browed Warbling-Finch and Black-backed Grosbeak. As we leave the forest we pass a large reservoir that holds Andean Coot, Andean Lapwing and Speckled Teal. If time permits we shall visit some of the valleys above Tafi to look for Grey-hooded Parakeet, Rock Earthcreepers, Andean Hillstar, Slender-billed Miner and various sierra-finches.

Days 5 & 6

This morning we can spend some time birding the local area looking for White-winged Cinclodes, Spot-billed Ground-tyrant and Band-tailed Seed-eater and perhaps look at the Parque de los Menhires which is an archaeological site nearby which was occupied by indigenous people over 2,000 years ago. We may well take one of the roads which lead to a high valley pass where we can look for Andean Condor, Andean Flicker, Puna Canastero, Andean Tinamou and the endemic Moreno's Ground-Dove. Later, we transfer to the Cafayate Wine Resort where we stay for two nights. Here we have a mountain backdrop to the lodge with vineyards in the



Lark-like Brushrunner



Long-tailed Meadowlark

foreground and a fine swimming pool. The next morning gives us a chance to look for Burrowing Parrot, Andean Swift, Black-capped Monjita and lots of Chaco specialties. In the afternoon we can indulge in some wine tasting and sample the local produce from the Torrontés grapes.

Day 7

As we move northwards the area becomes drier, with cacti growing on the slopes. The bird species reflect this change and we shall look for the endemic Sandy Gallito, Tucuman Parrots, Ornate and Andean Tinamous, Sayaca Tanager, Rufous-bellied and Golden-billed Saltators. In the afternoon we can stop and visit some local wineries again to sample what they have to offer. Later, we transfer to Cachi where we stay for one night, with the snow-capped Andean peaks towering above the village.

Days 8 & 9

This morning we take the famous Cachi Road on our way to Los Cardones National Park, looking for birds such as Aplomado Falcon, Andean Flicker, Rock Earthcreeper, White-tipped Plantcutter, Brown-capped Tit-Spinetail, Yellow-billed Tit-Tyrant, White-winged Black-Tyrant, Black Siskin, Rufous-sided Warbling-Finch and the localised Rufous-bellied Saltator. The Cardones (or Thistle-like Cactus) National Park hosts not only many of these ancient cacti but also Andean Tinamou, Moreno's Ground-Dove, Scribble-tailed and Maquis Canasteros, Rufous-bellied Saltator and Tucuman Mountain-Finch. Later, we transfer to Salta where we stay for two nights. Next day our plan is to birdwatch in the dry Chaco area (near to the village of Palomitas), which is xerophytic scrub woodland dominated by quebracho and mesquite. Birds to look for include Brushland Tinamou, Harris' Hawk, Cinereous Harrier, Aplomado Falcon, Chaco Chachalaca, Guira and Striped Cuckoos, White-fronted and Checkered Woodpeckers, Lark-like Brushrunner, Chaco Earthcreeper, Red-crested Cardinal, Hepatic and Blue-and-yellow Tanagers, plus, Bay-winged and Screaming Cowbirds.

Day 10

We head northwards today to visit Yungas Cloudforest, where yellow and white orchids throng moss-laden trees, and where we can look for the richest variety of birds in the Argentine Andes. Some interesting species to look for include King Vulture, Red-faced Guan, Red-legged Seriema, Burrowing Owl, Plush-crested Jay, Chiguanco and Rufous-bellied Thrushes, Mountain Wren, Tawny-headed Swallow, Stripe-capped and Saffron-billed Sparrows, Stripe-headed Brush-Finch, Orange-headed Sayaca, Blue-and-yellow and Fawn-breasted Tanagers, and Hooded Siskin. Later, we arrive in Yala where we stay overnight.

Days 11 & 12

This morning we can bird in the Yungas Cloudforest and by the river looking for Torrent Duck, Rufous-throated Dipper, Red-faced Guan, Rothschild's Swift, Spot-breasted Thornbird, Rusty Flower-piercer and Red-tailed Comet. We make our way northwards, birding en route, until we reach Uquia, where we stay for two nights. The next day we birdwatch in the Quebrada de Humahuaca, a long mountainous valley that is an old Inca road. We gain elevation and reach the Altiplano, the high plateau, or Puna. This is an area of endless barren plains and mountain peaks. Vicuna herds mingle with Darwin's Rhea, and Andean Condors sweep overhead. This is also home to Mountain Caracara, Least Seedsnipe, Puna Miner and Bright-rumped Yellow-Finch. We visit the Runtuyoc Lagoon where we can hope to see three species of flamingo – Chilean, Andean and Puna along with Giant, Horned and Andean Coots, Andean Goose, Andean Avocet and Puna Plover. This evening we have our farewell dinner, with our last chance to sample some fine wines!

Days 13 & 14

We return to Jujuy where we catch our flight back to Buenos Aires. Later we catch our return flight to London, where we arrive the next day.

Outline Itinerary

Day 1	Depart London
Days 2-3	Buenos Aires
Day 4	Tafi del Valle
Days 5-6	Cafayate
Day 7	Cachi
Days 8-9	Salta
Day 10	Yala
Days 11-12	Uquia
Day 13	Depart Buenos Aires
Day 14	Arrive London

Party Size

Maximum of 12 clients (two leaders with more than six clients).

Accommodation

Comfortable accommodation in twin/double and single rooms, with private facilities.

Transport

By private coach and minibus.

Includes

All flights, meals, accommodation, transport, entry fees, services of the leaders, airport taxes and tips.

Gradings

-  Good

-  290

-  Cool to Hot

-  High

-  Special

-  Moderate

-  Good

-  Easy

-  Scheduled



Vicuna