

**WELCOME TO THE HEART OF THE ANDES**



This customized itinerary focuses on the extraordinarily rich corner of the Andes in northwest Argentina and neighboring Chile that contains a truly splendid variety of exquisite (sometimes bizarre) landscapes and a wonderful variety of habitats; including the humid forests of the legendary yungas, the cactus deserts, the altiplano soda lakes, puna bogs and Pacific beaches.

Because of this great diversity of habitats, the birding throughout is brilliant in terms of both quantity and quality. The yungas forests of Reserva del Huaico and Callilegua National Park hold tropical splendors such as guans, trogons, parrots and antpittas. The high deserts contain a diverting variety of specialist ovenbirds like earthcreepers, miners and canasteros. The altiplano lakes are home to up to three species of flamingos and hosts of other waterbirds – including the world's rarest coot! The puna has its own endemic rhea, teal, ibis, flamingo, plover, snipe and miner. And the coast of course is its own world of pelicans, boobies and other specialties of the sea and shore.

Far from just amassing a long list however we have excellent chances of finding many truly spectacular species (rheas, condors, Torrent Ducks, a great assortment of hummingbirds) including many possible local rarities such as Golden-collared Macaw, Sandy Gallito, Rufous-throated Dipper and Diademned Sandpiper-Plover. Even those who have been birding in Chile and Argentina or elsewhere in the Andes are likely to add many new species on this trip. I hope you can join us! Chris Leahy

**DAY-TO-DAY ITINERARY**

**Wednesday, March 14 - DAY 1** Depart USA on overnight flight

**Thursday, March 15 - DAY 2**

Arrive **Buenos Aires**, city tour with a visit to Costanera Sur Reserve where many species of typical pampas birds are easily seen near the heart of the capitol, early dinner. *Hotel Emperador (L,D)*

**Friday, March 16 -DAY 3**

This morning we fly to **Salta a handsome colonial city**, then drive to San Lorenzo village located on the slopes of Sub-andean Mountains that frame the Lerma's Valley. After enjoying some regional food for lunch, we will explore the town, including a visit to a local museum, where a local archaeologist will give us a talk about the culture of earlier Andean peoples. *Hostal Selva Montana (B,L,D)*

**Saturday, March 17 - DAY 4**

**The Reserva del Huaico** protects yungas cloud forest that covers the slopes of the San Lorenzo ridge. It offers an attractive network of trails where we will search for forest birds such as Dusky-legged Guan, Cream-backed Woodpecker, Scaly-headed Parrot, Slender-tailed Woodstar, and Gray-necked Wood-Rail plus a long list of local songbirds such as Crested Becards, Stripe-crowned Spinetails, Black-and-Chestnut Warbling-Finch, Golden-winged Cacique and Rufous-capped Antshrike. Picnic lunch in the Reserve with the afternoon devoted to visiting a small lagoon on a private ranch where an amazing abundance of waterfowl usually congregates including Coscoroba Swan, White-tufted Grebe, Southern Screamer, Black-headed Duck and raptors such as Great Black-Hawk. *Hostal Selva Montana (B,L,D)*

**Sunday, March 18 -DAY 5**

A full day excursion to **Los Cardones National Park** with its spectacular cactus-clad slopes and



towering peaks rising to more than 16,000 feet. Andean Condors soar over the ridges or just below us along deep valleys, while herds of Guanacos gallop across the puna grassland. The unpaved winding road climbs up the Bishop's Cordillera to over 11,000 feet where Variable Hawk, Aplomado Falcon, Andean Flicker and Rock Earthcreeper are possible. The vegetated gullies support White-tipped Plantcutter, Yellow-billed Tit-Tyrant, White-winged Black-Tyrant, Black Siskin, Rusty Flower-piercer, and the scarce Rufous-bellied Saltator.

Flowering tobacco bushes attract the amazing Red-tailed Comet and Giant Hummingbird while Andean Tinamou can be spotted in the drier slopes. In the afternoon we continue our trip westward across the cordillera along the magnificent Tin-Tin valley towards La Paya private ranch, surrounded by Pre-Inca ruins, for one night. *Hosteria La Paya (B,L,D)*

**Monday, March 19 -DAY 6**

**La Paya** is a working farm and a comfortable resort. We will hike mesquite forest and cactus fields surrounding La Paya, particularly in search of the endemic Steinbach's Canastero, the attractive White-fronted Woodpecker and the rare Sandy Gallito. Other local specialities include Andean Hillstar, Cliff Flycatcher and the handsome Burrowing Parrot.

In the afternoon we revisit Los Cardones National Park but we also will be on the lookout for Guanacos, Andean Red Fox, Mountain Viscacha and any Andean bird specialities we may be missing. Our descent towards the deep Lerma Valley will provide more scenic vistas and new opportunities for condor, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle and Peregrine Falcon soaring over the Andean landscape. *Hostal Selva Montana (B,L,D)*

**Tuesday, March 20 - DAY 7**

**Calilegua National Park** encompasses 70,000 hectares of rugged country with deep valleys and vertical slopes carpeted by dense Yungas Forest, almost permanently shrouded life-giving mists during summertime. The birds in these southern cloud forests are quite different from those one finds in similar forests of the northern Andes. Here, we hope to find specialties such as White-throated Antpitta foraging among leaf debris, the shy Giant Antshrike, creeping through under story and, if lucky, Golden-collared Macaw. The Blue-crowned Trogon, Crested Oropendola, Andean-Slaty Thrush and the colorful Plush-crested Jay are just a few of the more easily seen species in this incredibly rich habitat. Overnight in *Hotel Posada del Sol* in the small town of Libertador San Martin. (B,L,D)

**Wednesday, March 21 - DAY 8**

We start early this morning in order to reach the higher zone of **Calilegua National Park** where we will look for such species as White-rumped Hawk, the endangered Red-Faced Guan which is suffering badly from habitat loss in Bolivia, the scarce Solitary Eagle and other specialties. *Overnight at the Hotel Posada del Sol.* (B,L,D)

**Thursday, March 22 - DAY 9**

After breakfast we leave San Martin and travel westwards passing by the city of Jujuy. By mid morning we should reach the **Yala River** and our best chance for finding the scarce Rufous-throated Dipper bobbing on rocks amid the fast flowing roadside river and to watch Torrent Ducks diving through the maelstroms in their unique fashion. We will devote some time to finding these two “priorities”, but this protected site also holds other specialties such as Spot-breasted Thornbird, Streak-throated Bush-Tyrant, Rothschild’s Swift, and Rust-and-Yellow Tanager.

Then we drive northwards and climb up into the **Humahuaca Canyon to picturesque Purmamarca**, which has the best regional market with llama and alpaca sweaters and ponchos around its main square. We will spend two nights at the Hotel Manantial del Silencio and enjoy excellent regional food at its restaurant while we acclimatize to the puna atmosphere. *Hotel Manantial del Silencio* (B,L,D)

**Friday, March 23 - DAY 10**

**The Quebrada de Humahuaca** follows the line of a major cultural route, the Camino Inca, along the spectacular valley of the Rio Grande, from its source in the cold high desert plateau of the High Andes to its confluence with the Rio Leon some 150 km to the south. The valley shows substantial evidence of its use as a major trade route over the past 10,000 years. It features visible traces of prehistoric hunter-gatherer communities, of the Inca Empire (15th to 16th centuries) and of the fight for independence in the 19th and 20th centuries. This colourful ravine was recently declared a World Heritage Site and its bright earth tones are found not only in the rocks and “pachamama” (mother earth) but also in the clothes wonderful handicrafts of the inhabitants. Small adobe villages, which hang from the mountain slopes, the Quechua Indians walking the streets in multilayered skirts, while they tend their goats or llamas, add immeasurably the human aspect of this tour.

The **Pucara de Tilcara** archeological site perches on a hill overlooking the Rio Grande. The botanical garden next to the ruins has an excellent exhibit of the area's native desert cactuses. After crossing the tropic of Capricorn, we reach Humahuaca (alt. 9646ft), and walk the narrow streets of this old town, looking as we go for: Brownbacked Mockingbird, White-tipped Plantcutter, Black-hooded Sierra Finch, Rusty-vented Canastero, and Band-tailed Seed eater. *Hotel Manantial del Silencio* (B,L,D)

### Saturday, March 24 - DAY 11

**Jama Pass to San Pedro de Atacama.** Today we have an excellent chance to learn about the wildlife that is specially adapted to the harsh, high altitude conditions, including: Vicuñas –a delicate cousin of llamas, a few attractive rodents including Brush-tailed Viscacha and the colonial Highland Tuco-Tuco, and even the rare Andean Cat are all possible on our journey. Spectacular landscapes with deep canyons, vast saltpans and boundless high-Andean grassland accompany us on our way to the border with Chile in the Jama Pass. Then we descend past more colourful cliffs, deep-blue lagoons and gorgeous skies, to the town of San Pedro de Atacama located at 7680 feet on the eastern edge of Atacama Desert. *Hotel Altiplanico (B,L,D)*



### Sunday, March 25 - DAY 12

Chile's **Atacama Desert** is arguably the driest place on Earth - parts of which no rainfall has ever been recorded. The desert changes abruptly as it rises through the foothills of the Andes to the altiplano, with its alluvial salt basins, fabulous snow-capped volcanoes and a surprising variety of wildlife. This morning we shall visit the Salar de Atacama and the Chaxa lagoon where we hope to find all three species of South American flamingos: Chilean, Andean and the rare Puna (also known as James') In the afternoon we'll explore high, dry plains known as Puna on our way south to Toconao, a small village of artisans with an impressive tower in its centre. Later we proceed to the Miscanti Lagoon, where we hope to find the Horned Coot – rarest of its kind in the world! - and other attractions will include Lesser Rhea, Ornate Tinamou and a number of sierra-finches. *Hotel Altiplanico (B,L,D)*

### Monday, March 26 - DAY 13

**Geysers and Volcanoes:** El Tatio geysers, at an altitude of 13,800 feet constitute one of the highest geothermal fields in the world. We must leave from our hotel very early in order to drive the 100 kilometers north of San Pedro climbing up towards El Tatio. We will have a picnic lunch in this amazing place and spend time walking along footpaths, visiting several viewpoints and looking for birds (ground tyrants and Red-Backed Sierra Finch, for example). *Hotel Altiplanico (B,L,D)*

### Tuesday, March 27 - DAY 14

Today will be a day of stunning contrasts as we drive down to **Antofagasta** at sea level and then fly to **Arica on the Pacific coast**. Checking in to our beachfront hotel in Arica, we will look out at hundreds of Gray Gulls, Elegant Terns and other coastal birds. In the afternoon we'll bird the rocky coastline near the town where we should find many other species of seabirds and shorebirds including; Peruvian Booby, Peruvian Pelican, Guanay and Red-footed Cormorants, Surfbird, American and Blackish Oystercatchers. The very local Band-tailed Gull is another bird we may find here and there is a good chance of finding the attractive Inca Tern. In the gardens and Azapa Valley, in the outskirts of Arica the many flowering plants are often a magnet for hummingbirds including Chilean Woodstar and Oasis Hummingbird. *Hotel Arica & Resort. (B,L) Dinner on your own tonight*

### Wednesday, March 28 - DAY 15

A travel day but a fascinating one as we travel from Arica up to **Putre** We will make frequent stops along the way to investigate the many different habitats we pass through and look for new birds such as Mountain Parakeet, Black-winged Ground-Dove, , Straight-billed Earthcreeper, Greyish Miner, Chiguanco Thrush, Red-breasted Meadowlark, and at least four species of Sierra-Finch. Putre was founded in 1580, as the Spaniards who traded silver, transporting it between Potosí and Arica, used it as a resting place. *Hosteria Las Vicuñas. (B,L,D)*

## Thursday, March 29 -DAY 16

We'll explore an almost completely new avifauna around **Putre** while we get use to the higher elevations once again. The terraced alfalfa fields and herds of Llamas and Alpacas, tended by Indians clad in brightly colored wool garments, reflect the close cultural ties between northern Chile and the high Andes of Peru, Argentina and Bolivia. Birds we can expect to see around Putre include Bare-faced Ground-Dove, Yellow-billed Tit-Tyrant, White-browed Chat-Tyrant, Black-throated Flowerpiercer and Blue-and-yellow Tanager, and there's a chance for Ornate Tinamou, White-throated Earthcreeper and Golden-billed Saltator. *Hosteria Las Vicuñas. (B,L,D)*

## Friday, March 30 - DAY 17

The immensely scenic **Lauca National Park** will be our destination for the day and a superb culmination for our Andean adventure. The park encompasses 140,000 hectares of puna habitats at an elevation of between 10,000 and 20,000 feet on the Bolivian border. We will visit Lake Chungara, one of the highest lakes in the world and full of birds including Silvery Grebe, Giant Coot, Andean Ruddy and Crested Ducks, Puna Teal, Puna Ibis, Puna Plover, and Andean, Chilean and Puna Flamingoes. As we travel around the park we will not only be rewarded by spectacular mountain scenery but a unsurpassed variety of high altitude birds including Torrent Duck, Puna Rhea, Puna Tinamou, Andean Lapwing, Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe, Andean Avocet, Andean Gull, Andean Flicker, Peruvian Martin, Puna Miner, White-winged Cinclodes, and five species of Ground-Tyrant. Some highly adapted mammals manage to exist in this harsh terrain as well, including domestic herds of Alpaca and Llama and hundreds of Vicuna. The scarce Chinchillon or Mountain Viscacha also occurs here and we may find the endearing little Degu, a cross between a Vole and a Guinea Pig!

After sampling the birdlife of **Lake Chungara** and the more accessible areas of the National Park we will search the wetter grasslands and bogs for the rare Diademed Sandpiper-Plover, one of the world's most unusual – and sought-after! – shorebirds.. This peculiar wader is never easy to locate but we may be lucky and while looking in its damper habitat could find other montane birds such as Puna Snipe, White-winged Diuca-Finch and Red-backed Sierra-Finch. *Hosteria Las Vicuñas. (B,L,D)*  
(note: Average elevation of Lauca National Park 14,500 feet.)

## Saturday, March 31 - DAY 18

We drive today down the cordilleras back to Arica. Then transfer to the airport for an afternoon flight to Santiago, Chile's capital, and then transfer to your evening flight home. *(B)*

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### WHAT'S INCLUDED:

- Services of Chris Leahy, qualified Massachusetts Audubon Society naturalist, and local guide, Carol Mackie de Passera
- All scheduled land transport and internal flights
- All hotels and meals as indicated in the itinerary
- All scheduled transfers, portages, service charges, and taxes
- Tips to local guide/drivers

### WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED:

- Round-trip airfare from the US to Buenos Aires and return from Santiago, Chile
- Items of a personal nature
- Airport departure taxes, passport fees, or other fees not listed in program

**ABOUT OUR NATURALIST GUIDE**



Madagascar and Bhutan.

**Christopher Leahy** holds the Bertrand Chair of Natural History and Field Ornithology at the Massachusetts Audubon Society. He has been a professional conservationist for more than thirty years and his interests in natural history are comprehensive. He is a recognized authority on birds and insects. His published works include *The Birdwatcher's Companion*, *The First Guide to Insects*, *Introduction to New England Birds*, *An Introduction to Massachusetts Insects*, and *The Nature of Massachusetts*. Chris has designed and led natural history explorations to over 60 countries on all of the continents. He is especially fascinated with the world's great remaining wilderness areas and biodiversity hot spots such as Antarctica, Mongolia,

## TERMS & CONDITIONS

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**PRICE:** \$6,990 double occupancy. Single Supplement: \$1,000 (singles are limited).

**A \$1,000 per person deposit is required.**

**GROUP SIZE:** A minimum of 10 participants is required. The group size will be limited to 16 participants.

**TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:** A U.S. Passport, valid for *at least* six months *beyond* the trip's departure date. Those not citizens of the U.S. should contact the Argentine and Chilean Embassies for visa requirements.

**RESERVATIONS, APPLICATIONS, DEPOSITS:** Early reservations are required to ensure your place on this trip. All reservations must be accompanied by a completed reservation form and a \$1000 deposit. In the case of questionable health, we reserve the right to require a physician's certification to affirm you are capable of the activities. You will receive a final invoice 90 days prior to departure with final payment due by 75 days prior to departure.

**RATES:** All forms and fares are accurate at the time of publication, May 2006, but are subject to change at any time prior to departure. It is our policy to only pass on the actual amount of any increases in airfares or land costs such as those increases due to the devaluation of the dollar. A price increase may be called for if the group falls below the minimum of 10. The maximum number of participants is approximately 16.

**FLIGHTS:** Travelers are responsible for arranging their own flights. We work with a local travel agent, The Travel Station, in Lincoln to book our tour leader's flights. They will have the most up-to-date information on the flight arrival and departure times that we recommend for our travelers (there is a \$35 charge for all bookings). Once your deposit and reservation form have been sent to us, we will send you flight and contact information. Please be aware that most tickets are non-refundable, therefore you should not book your flight arrangements until you have checked with us to be sure the tour has the minimum number of participants for the trip to go.

**CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS:** All cancellations must be done in writing and are effective upon receipt in the Massachusetts Audubon Travel Office. Cancellations received up to 91 days prior to departure will be refunded all money less a \$250 per person service fee. For cancellations between 90 and 61 days prior to departure, all deposits will not be refunded. There are no refunds for cancellations 60 days or less from departure. We strongly urge all travelers to purchase trip cancellation insurance. You will be sent information from the Massachusetts Audubon Society upon receipt of your deposit.

**RESPONSIBILITIES AND CONDITIONS:** The Massachusetts Audubon Society (the "Society") and/or its agents assume no responsibility or liability in connection with the service of any train, vessel, carriage, aircraft, motor, or other vehicle or conveyance that may be used wholly or in part, in the performance of their duty to the passengers; neither will they be responsible for any act, error, or omission, or for any injury (including death), loss, accident, delay or irregularity that may be occasioned by reason of any defect in any vehicle or conveyance, or through neglect or default of any company or persons engaged in conveying the passenger; or for any hotel proprietor, or for any other person, engaged in carrying out the purpose for which tickets or coupons are issued.

In the event that the tour operators deem it necessary or advisable for the comfort or well being of the passengers, or for any other reason whatsoever, to alter the itinerary or arrangements, such alterations shall be made without penalty to the tour operators. Additional expenses, if any, shall be borne by the passengers. The Society reserves the right to withdraw any or all tours offered should conditions warrant. The Society also reserves the right to decline to accept or retain any passenger as a member of the tour. In such instances, the full, or an equitable, amount will be refunded to the passenger, but this amount shall not exceed the amount paid by the passenger. No refund shall be made for any passenger during operation of the tour.

The sole responsibility for any airline used in these tours is limited to that set out in the passenger contract evidenced by the ticket. Airlines and other carriers are not responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their planes or conveyances. This restriction shall also apply to all other types of carriers, including car rental companies. The services of any IATA and ATC carrier may be used in connection with these tours. The Society shall not be held responsible for any penalties or charges made on special purchase or discount tickets that, due to schedule changes or cancellations, must be changed by the participants.

We strongly advise that travelers read the itinerary and trip preparation material carefully and assess their own health and physical capabilities. The trip will involve some hikes, long drives, high altitudes and we will often be far from a hospital.