

Patagonia Birds & Wildlife with Canadian Geographic Itinerary

[Link: Patagonia Birds & Wildlife with Canadian Geographic](#)

Tour Overview

On this tour with Canadian Geographic we explore Patagonia, a land of incredible landscapes filled with abundant marine and terrestrial wildlife. Southern Chile and Argentina offer exceptional close-up viewing of birds and mammals, where one can find King, Gentoo and Magellanic Penguins—as many species of penguins as an average Antarctic journey! Even Leopard Seals are a possibility!

In the mountains and on the pampas we find accessible puma (mountain lion) viewing below the spires of Torres del Paine National Park. We'll be guaranteed to observe and photograph guanacos, rheas, and condors roaming free in their natural settings, and with some patience we hope to see puma up close. A great assortment of breeding birds will be on display, including Austral Parakeet, Chilean Flamingo, Chocolate-vented Tyrant, Flightless Steamer-Duck and perhaps the endangered Magellanic Plover.

In Argentina we'll enjoy the food and wine culture, while in Chile the quaint atmosphere and friendly locals will further enrich our experience. Chilean wine isn't so bad either, paired with the finest of seafood.

This is a wonderful jaunt through magnificent landscapes full of history, culture and of course, wild animals. In comparison with our main Patagonia Wildlife Safari, this tour is shorter and does not include any flights, starting in Ushuaia and ending in El Calafate. Finishing in El Calafate allows us to include the world-famous Perito Moreno Glacier. You also get the pleasure of travelling with an ambassador or two from the Royal Canadian Geographical Society.

Itinerary

Days 1 - 3: Arrival in Ushuaia, Argentina



This Patagonia Birds and Wildlife Tour with Canadian Geographic begins in Ushuaia, known by the Argentines as the world's most southerly city, located on the island of Tierra del Fuego. It is also the country's only community on the western slope of the Andes. This is the sending-off point for most Antarctic cruises. We won't have to go that far to see exciting wildlife, as up to three species of penguins can be found regularly within a short distance of town. On our first day here we'll visit a penguin rookery that features hundreds of Magellanic Penguins and a small number of Gentoos—the only South American colony of this latter species. It's possible to see the penguin's most feared enemy here: Leopard Seals, which are recolonizing the area. This excursion will include a visit to an interesting whale museum and historic farm. We'll ply the waters of the Beagle Channel in a large boat where we'll see South American Sea Lions up close, and seek out a variety of birds such as Dolphin Gull, Flightless Steamer-duck, Snowy Sheathbill, Blackish Cinclodes and Black-browed Albatross. On land we'll have time to check out three species of goose and other birds such as caracaras, eagles, woodpeckers and swallows. The Southern Beech forests spill into the ocean here, providing that "Edge of the world" feeling, not to mention an out-of-this-world experience! During our downtime, along the touristic streets of Ushuaia, there will be a chance to shop for crafts made by local artisans and sample some delicious Argentine food. Three nights in Ushuaia.

Day 4: Traversing Tierra del Fuego



This morning, we embark in our comfy van over the southernmost section of the Andes into the flatlands, showing us the vast scale of Tierra del Fuego. We'll stop at a quaint bakery to try some delicious Argentine treats, such as medialunas and alfajores. Bus drivers fill up on hot water for their mate drinks. We'll pass over Rio Grande—the mouth of the largest river on the island and an area where some of the longest-migrating North American birds spend their off-season. With luck we'll see some Red Knots and Hudsonian Godwits 15,000km from their breeding grounds. In the afternoon, we'll cross into Chile at a backroads border station and continue to Bahia Inútil (Useless Bay) for a special visit to Chile's only King Penguin colony. Hosting around one hundred adults (and growing) and a few fuzzy adolescents, the site is a great example of a well-managed tourism and conservation initiative. It is always a highlight. Night in Cerro Sombrero.

Day 5: Pali Aike National Park



We have an hour drive to arrive at the Magellan Strait, where we'll cross on a car ferry, staying on the lookout for Commerson's and Dusky Dolphins and many ocean birds. The main focus for today is the remote Pali Aike National Park where terrestrial wildlife abounds. This is the guanaco's domain, where herds of this llama-like mammal roam freely on the protected grasslands. Lesser Rheas are abundant here. Where there are guanacos, there are pumas, and we'll be on the lookout for these elusive cats. Several caves in the park present interesting archaeological history and we can enter one of them after we walk into the crater of an extinct volcano! On the roads in Pali Aike we should find some nice-looking birds such as Chocolate-vented Tyrant, Cinnamon-bellied Ground-Tyrant, White-bridled Finch and Tawny-throated Dotterel. Other mammals may include both South American Gray Fox and Humboldt's Hog-nosed Skunk. After a steady drive we will spend the night in Puerto Natales on the shores of the Pacific, our second ocean of the day. Night in Puerto Natales.

Days 6 - 8: Torres del Paine



The next morning we will walk the town's ocean-front promenade to see Black-necked Swans, often with fluffy cygnets on their backs. Not far out of town we stop by the Cueva de Milodon, a massive cavern where these now-extinct mammals lived over 5,000 years ago. Then it's off to the spectacular Torres del Paine National Park. Arguably the single most scenic location in all of South America, this large and wild reserve is a nature lover's dream and on every landscape photographer's bucket list. Based at a cozy hotel inside the park, we'll drive the dirt roads in hopes of tracking down a puma (mountain lion). On previous trips we've seen up to nine cats in several hours! This is the best place in the world to see them and with luck we'll find them hunting among the herds of guanacos. Other highlights in Torres del Paine include Andean Condors soaring overhead looking for scraps, and Chilean Flamingoes walking the shores of Laguna Amarga. Another possibility is the Huemul, a deer known as one of the rarest mammals in South America. Spectacled and Torrent Ducks, Magellanic Woodpecker, White-throated Treerunner and Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle are just some of the exciting birds that round up the park's list. We'll walk the shores of a glacial lake to see turquoise icebergs up close. Nights in Torres del Paine.

Days 9 - 10: El Calafate



We exit the park today and cross back into Argentina at another small border crossing. A drive across the windswept pampas will highlight the importance of sheep farming in the region and we might encounter some Argentine gauchos working the land. Soon we'll arrive in El Calafate, a former gaucho enclave but now one of Argentina's most touristic centres. In the evening we can explore the waterfront on the shores of Lago Argentina then enjoy a fantastic meal. Our main objective is to visit the Perito Moreno Glacier, a river of ice spilling from the Southern Patagonian Icecap. We get amazing views of this behemoth spilling chunks of ice into Lago Argentina, sometimes forming a spectacular ice bridge that collapses every few years. We have plenty of time here to view the majesty of this gigantic glacier as it advances toward the elaborate viewing platforms. Austral Parakeets, Fiery-eyed Diucons and Thorn-tailed Rayaditos are some local birds with strange names and varied morphology. After we've had our fill we return to El Calafate to relax on our last evening of the tour.

Day 11: Departure, El Calafate

Our Patagonia Birds & Wildlife tour with Canadian Geographic ends this morning in El Calafate. You can depart anytime and there are regular flights to Buenos Aires where you can connect to flights home.

What to Expect

Overview

This tour is a moderately paced adventure featuring early mornings, long days in the field, and the occasional midday siesta. Expect extensive travel and activities, including two land border crossings, as we aim to showcase the best of the region's mammals, birds, and scenery. While the tour focuses on wildlife in general, bird enthusiasts will find plenty of opportunities to observe diverse, lesser-known species. Busy days and some late nights mean only a couple of early mornings, except when searching for pumas, which requires a pre-dawn start.

Food

We generally have breakfast at the hotel before we head out for the day. We sometimes take a picnic lunch in the field, but will usually stop at a restaurant. Dinner is usually at the lodge or a nearby restaurant, and is usually served quite late, especially in Argentina. Each evening after dinner we compile the day's checklist, review the day's activities, birds, mammals and other observations, and plan the next day's activities.

Accommodation

Accommodations range from standard hotel rooms to rustic lodges, close to our birding locations.

Walking

The walking on this tour is easy to moderate. In general, we keep all our nature study to a pleasant

stroll, maximizing the number of things we see but allowing enough time to properly enjoy them.

Driving

Most days have a small to moderate amount of driving. There will be two longer drives, but we make several stops along the way.

Climate

Prepare for all kinds of weather on this trip! Weather is usually fairly pleasant, but we can encounter some strong winds and possibly rain while exploring. Participants should be prepared for some cooler days and especially mornings. Gloves and warm hats are useful and comfortable hiking footwear is fine.

Boat rides

We will explore the Beagle Channel in a large boat.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes

- All accommodation
- All meals
- Ground transportation
- 5 - 8 Participants will be guided by one guide and an ambassador. 9 - 12 participants will be guided by two guides and ambassador.
- All park, conservation and entrance fees
- Gratuities to local guides/drivers

Tour Price Does Not Include

- Travel to and from start/end location
 - Travel Insurance
 - Items of a personal nature
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