



THE ALTIPLANO
(HIGH-PLATEAU) AND
**LIFE BETWEEN
THE DESERT
AND THE SEA**



PROGRAMMES
**BIRDING
CHILE**



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The Atacama Desert, located in the extreme north of Chile, is the driest desert in the world, since there are places where no precipitation has ever fallen. In spite of this, its coastline and transversal valleys have considerable biodiversity as the species that live there have made the necessary adaptations in order to survive in this environment. Moreover, migratory birds from the Northern Hemisphere spend the northern winter here. The city of Arica is an excellent starting point for the exploration of the birds of the extreme North of Chile.

We will travel inland, climbing higher, and cross the desert in order to reach the Andean foothills. This environment receives its



ANDEAN HILLSTAR

humidity from the Amazon region and is covered by bushes and offers shelter to diverse species of animals. The village of Putre will serve as our base for a few days, while we visit environmental sites located on higher altitudes.

We will reach the Altiplano (high plateau), which lies above 4,000m (13,100 ft). The ethnic group of the Aymara lives here in little villages. We will find diverse environments, like grasslands, brush and wetlands, each with their very specific birds which have adapted to the rigors of the climate. The harsh environmental conditions with very low temperatures (below zero even in summer) at night and high temperatures and high solar radiation during the day have contributed to the creation of a particularly attractive fauna.



TORRENT DUCK

PROGRAM

DAY 1

ARICA

Early in the morning we will start in Arica. We will visit the river Lluta wetlands delta, the Azapa valley, and go to the coast later. Our aim is to look for: Blackish Oystercatcher, Peruvian Booby, Band-tailed Gull, Grey Gull, Elegant Tern, Inca Tern, Oasis Hummingbird, Peruvian Sheartail, Seaside Cinclodes (endemic), Cinereous Conebill, Slender-billed Finch and Peruvian Meadowlark, among others. Overnight stay in Arica.

DAY 2

ARICA AND PUTRE

Today we will start our excursion at the coast and then travel on to the river Lluta valley. If necessary we will make a short detour to the Azapa valley. Later we will continue to the village of Putre in our search for birds. During this day we will find birds like the Peruvian Thick-knee, Grey Gull, Elegant Tern, Inca Tern, Croaking Ground-Dove, Andean Swift, Blue-Black Grassquit, Chestnut throated Seedeater and Peruvian Meadowlark. Overnight stay in Putre.



VERMILLION FLYCATCHER

DAY 3

PUTRE AND PARINACOTA

We will spend the morning in the environs of Putre, looking for the birds typical of the foothills. Later we will go up to Portezuelo de Putre where the environment changes and the Altiplano (high plateau) species appear, and then drive on to the wet grasslands of Parinacota (4,000 m; 13,100 ft), located in the Lauca National Park. Among the birds to see in this area are: the Ornate Tinamou, Andean Goose, Aplomado Falcon, Giant Coot, Andean Flicker, Bare-faced Ground Dove, White-throated Earthcreeper, Plain-breasted Earthcreeper, Streaked Tit-Spinetail, Puna Ground-Tyrant, Blue-and-Yellow Tanager, Golden-billed Saltator, White-throated Sierra-Finch, White-winged Diuca-Finch, and some mammals like the Vicuña and the Vizcacha (a rodent-like rabbit). Overnight stay in Putre.



ANDEAN-FLICKER



GIANT-COOT

DAY 4 SURIRE SALT FLAT

This will be a long and interesting day. We will visit the Surire salt flat (4,200m; 13,800 ft), where the three species of Flamingos to be found in Chile live. We will also see other species that are highly adapted to this hostile environment, such as the Lesser Rhea, Andean Flamingo, James's Flamingo, Chilean Flamingo, Andean Avocet, Puna Plover, Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe, Andean Swallow, Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant and if we are lucky, White-tailed Shrike-Tyrant. Overnight stay in Putre.

DAY 5 LAKE CHUNGARÁ

On our last day, we will travel to Lake Chungará, the highest lake on earth, located at an altitude of 4,600m (15,000 ft), and in spite of this, is teeming with life. As usual, we will stop on the road as often as necessary in order to observe particular species like the Silvery Grebe, White-tufted Grebe, Ruddy Duck, Puna Teal, Andean Coot, Giant Coot, Andean Lapwing, Andean Gull, Plain-breasted Earthcreeper, Black-headed Sierra-Finch, Plumbeous Sierra-Finch and Black Siskin. After midday we will return to Arica and the trip will be finished. Overnight in Arica.

SUMMARY

Duration: 5 days / 4 nights

Start / End: Arica / Arica

Restrictions: We will stay above 3,600m (11,800ft) for 5 days, and occasionally climb to 4,600m (15,000ft). Some people might feel affected by the altitude.

Climate: Hot climate in Arica. The climate turns cold at higher altitudes, especially at night, with sporadic rain.

Dates: The rainy season is in January and February, with possible landslides. The dry season is between June and August, but it tends to be very cold during those months.

Potential # of species: 180

OUTSTANDING

1. A trip through parallel 18,5°S, from sea level to an altitude of 4,600m (15,000ft), through various environments where life unfolds.
2. On the coast and in the lowlands: the endemic Seaside Cinclodes, the Grey Gull, the Inca Tern, one of the most beautiful terns in the world, and the Peruvian Thick-knee.
3. Possibility of seeing five species of hummingbirds (Sparkling Violet-ear, Andean Hillstar, Oasis Hummingbird, Peruvian Sheartail, Giant Hummingbird and, if we are lucky, the rare Chilean Woodstar).
4. The three species of Flamingo (Chilean, Andean, James's) living in the south of South America.
5. Birds from the Andean environment, like the Puna Ibis, Andean Avocet and the Puna Plover, the Giant Coot, Andean Coot and the Andean Gull.
6. Highly specialised mammals, such as Llama, Alpaca, Guanaco and Vicuña, as well as the Vizcacha, a rodent-like rabbit of the Andes. With great luck, the Taruca, a wild deer living in the mountains.

