



TOUR INFORMATION FOR CHILE

These notes are designed to help you prepare for your tour. Please read carefully.

ENTERING CHILE: All citizens will need a passport which is valid for six months beyond the intended length of stay. Holders of British and Irish passports do not require a visa. UK and Irish citizens do not have to pay an entry fee whereas citizens of other countries might be required to, and should therefore consult their nearest Chilean consulate for entry requirements.

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport and air ticket with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get replacements if your originals are lost or stolen. Obviously, you should keep the photocopies in a separate bag to the originals.

INTRODUCTORY MEETING: This tour will begin with a midday introductory meeting in the lobby of the first night's hotel on Day 1 of the tour. Specific instructions for meeting the leader will be included in your Final Information document, which we will be sent to you about 3 weeks before departure.

DEPARTING CHILE: On the last day of the tour we will fly from Arica back to Santiago Arturo Merino Benitez International Airport. We should arrive around mid-afternoon. This means that the earliest departure time for inter-continental flights back home would be 19.00hrs, thus allowing time to check-in and pass through security. Most European airlines, however, do not depart Santiago this late in the day so it is very likely that you will have to spend an extra night in Santiago.

TIME DIFFERENCE: Chile is 4 hours behind Greenwich Mean Time.

CURRENCY: The currency of Chile is the Chilean Peso. Credit cards and US dollars are widely accepted. Money can be changed at Santiago airport and at ATMs around the country.

There is an opportunity for shopping at Lauca National Park and in the town of Putre, where a variety of hand-made alpaca wool garments (such as hats, sweaters, gloves, scarves) are available – great for Christmas presents. It is possible to pay in US dollars but it would be a good idea to bring smaller notes than the usual 20 and 50 dollar bills.

Like anywhere else in South America, only unmarked and *pristine* notes are accepted. A note with a cut larger than 1 mm will not be accepted, neither for payment or to be changed in local currency.

LANGUAGE: Spanish is the official language of Chile, although many Chileans speak some English. Chilean Spanish tends to be fast with many dropped consonants and a lot of local slang.

CLIMATE: The Austral spring means that weather in the South and Lake District can vary from bright and sunny (though not warm) to cold and rainy, or even snowy; and it tends to be windy and cool in the South (below freezing with the wind chill).

In Central Chile the climate can range from sunny and mild (60°F – 70°F) in the lowlands to cool (and in the afternoons windy) at high elevations (50°F or even 40°F early and late in the day). The coast can be sunny and breezy or cool and foggy.

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The Atacama Desert in the North is the driest place on Earth, and rain at this season would be exceptional; the lowlands are hot (to cool and foggy on the coast; 50° to high 70°F), the highlands cold at night (at times dropping to freezing, though this is less common as the climate warms) and in the early morning, becoming sunny and warm (70°F or higher) in mid-morning, and usually windy in the afternoons.

Although in South America, a trip to Chile will likely involve more days where a light sweater or fleece will be needed than clothes more suited to the tropics.

ALTITUDE: In the South and the Lake District we won't be at elevations higher than about 5,000 feet, but in the Andes of Central Chile we get up to 10,000 feet. In the north, we'll get to 15,000 feet for one day, but it is possible to stay at the hotel at 11,500 feet, near which we'll spend the preceding day to help acclimate. We do not run around at these elevations, and much of the birding is from the vehicles.

Altitude sickness is a possibility at these elevations, although most people are fine. The drug Diamox can help alleviate symptoms of altitude sickness, but can't be taken by everyone. You should consult your doctor if the possibility of altitude sickness is a concern. People with a history of respiratory or coronary problems should consult with their doctors before booking on this tour.

PACE OF THE TOUR AND DAILY ROUTINE: Most days we'll have continental breakfast between 06:00 and 07:00 (earlier before our pelagic or possible very early flight). After breakfast, we usually depart for a day of birding and/or travel, with box lunches and a supply of snacks (fruit, cookies, etc.) and drinks to keep us going. One morning we take a 6 – 8 hour pelagic out into the Humboldt Current. Dinners are at our hotels, and sometimes involve set menus.

Most of the walking is on level to gently sloping terrain, and there are no long hikes; particularly in the South, we do a lot of birding from in or near the vehicle. We may descend a couple of short steep slopes to important birding areas; on one day we may walk around on a (dry) bog at 14,000 feet elevation but in such cases, there is the option to stay in the vehicle.

With increasingly warm climate, wet areas we used to wade in for some birds have been mostly dry for several years, and there seems no longer a need to bring rubber boots; however, if things change there may be a chance of wet feet at one site where we seek Diademed Sandpiper-Plover, although any water there is usually shallow and regular boots (or sandals!) have sufficed in recent years.

HEALTH: It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the regions you are visiting. Please contact your doctor well in advance of your tour's departure as some medication must be initiated weeks before the period of possible exposure.

There are no major health risks in Chile, however it is recommended that you are up-to-date on routine vaccinations. These include measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis, varicella (chickenpox), polio, and your yearly flu jab. Protection against Jeptatitis A and Typhoid are recommended.

Water: Water supplies are excellent, but bottled water is also widely available. Imodium or Pepto Bismol in tablet form can be recommended as the best treatment for occasional travellers' diarrhea.

Insects: We may occasionally encounter mosquitos or biting gnats; Insect repellent will provide adequate protection. Many brands use diethyltoluamide (DEET) which, while providing the best protection, can be corrosive and therefore require care when using. There are many 'natural' and less-harmful repellents available from various camping supply stores.

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Motion Sickness: We will have one or possibly two boat trips.

It may be difficult to obtain any special medication during the tour, so bring all you are likely to need.

For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website www.masta-travel-health.com

ACCOMMODATION: At Punta Arenas we stay in a modern hotel overlooking the Straits of Magellan. On Tierra del Fuego we stay in a hotel/motel. In the Lake District we stay at a ski-resort hotel. None has an outdoor pool, but this hasn't been a concern given the climate. At Valparaíso we stay at in a modern hotel with the usual facilities. In Arica we stay in a resort hotel on the coast. At Putre we stay in a new and very comfortable hosteria (basically a motel). All have private bathrooms and heating; food is abundant and good to excellent. In Santiago, we stay at a modern, comfortable hotel close to the airport.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Available at our hotels in Santiago and Valparaíso.

ELECTRICITY: Current is 220V AC and most outlets accept round-pin double-pronged plugs or three-pin plugs. An international travel plug is useful and can be bought in most airport departure lounges. You may find the following website helpful: <http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com>.

FOOD: Chile has a wide variety of mostly European-style food, featuring good steaks, seafood, empanadas, salads and other dishes, plus of course its "endemic" and justly famous wines. On several days we have picnic lunches of typical make-your-own sandwich fare, plus Chilean specialities such as empanadas.

Sunbird tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Many restaurants offer set menus and are unable to accommodate all special requests within a group. Thus, participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs can, regrettably, not be accommodated. Our tours are carefully scheduled to ensure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time, sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to take supplemental food with them.

DRINKS: Bottled water, a soft drink or a beer (or wine if appropriate) are provided at meals, as is coffee or tea. In addition, we keep a supply of bottled water on the tour vehicles. Bottled or filtered water may also be provided in some rooms where we stay.

INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE ACCESS: Wifi access at the hotels ranges from poor (Putre) to good (Santiago), but access is getting better every year.

Mobile phones can be useful while on tour but keep in mind that many countries operate on a different cellular technology. Your phone may be incompatible with the local system, so please check with your local carrier. Fortunately, with the advent of smartphones, it is easy to download applications such as Skype or Google Voice, which can make calling home free or very inexpensive. Another option is to replace the data ("SIM") card in your phone in-country.

The SIM cards, including data can be very cheap. If you wish to use this option you will need to check that your smart phone has a SIM card slot.

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FIELD CLOTHING: Dress is informal throughout. You need to be prepared for a range of temperatures.

Sunhat	Light-weight walking boots
Sweater	Shirts for warm and cool weather
Waterproof jacket	Warm jacket/fleece
Lightweight trousers	Gloves and warm hat
Waterproof trousers (useful for boat trips and windy conditions)	

Since they weigh almost nothing and are easy to pack, we recommend silk thermal underwear and a "no-frills" nylon shell down vest. These probably will be welcome on our boat trip in the Straits of Magellan and at high Andean elevations.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS:

Alarm clock	Notebook and pencil
Rucksack/Day pack	Plastic bags of various sizes
Wrist watch	Small torch with extra batteries
Sunglasses and sunscreen	Travel clothesline
Insect repellent	Laundry soap
Washcloths	Ear plugs (if you are a light sleeper)
Folding travel umbrella (useful in the Lake District)	Universal bath/sink plug
Water bottle or canteen	Personal medication

Optional: Telescope & tripod (recommended if you have them), camera, film or memory cards, spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage), field guide.

LEADER'S EQUIPMENT:

Telescope	Field library and Maps
Spot Light	Basic First Aid kit
Playback equipment	Laser Pointer

LUGGAGE: Our Final Information document, which will be sent to you approximately three weeks before departure, will give details about baggage weight and size restrictions imposed by the airline used for this tour.

If possible, please bring your luggage in soft-sided bags or cases (rather than large hard 'Samsonite'-type suitcases) as these pack more easily into our vehicles during the tour. Please note that on many tours there are no porters to carry your luggage so please ensure that **no bag is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself**. In addition to using your luggage labels, it is a good idea to fix identification to the *inside* of each piece of luggage.

Note: Airline limits for internal flights are 23 kilos (50 lbs) of checked luggage and 8 kilos (17 lbs) for carry-on luggage. Sometimes an additional duffel bag is useful, and a day pack is essential.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Scenery and memory shots will be plentiful and simple to obtain. Although there will be occasions when bird photography is possible, a birdwatching tour is not normally the best means of pursuing this aim. Bring all your film or memory cards with you as it may be difficult to find precisely what you need during the tour. Camera equipment should be packed in moisture- and dust-proof bags, as a precaution.

"Digiscoping" is perfectly compatible with the tour, though it is recommended you bring your own telescope as the leader's telescope is not available for this activity.

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There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals and scenery and the leaders will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However, if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

TRANSPORT: Most of our land transport will be in minibuses. We will often be on gravel roads in the south, possibly quite dusty. The leader will arrange a seating rotation. Participants should be able to ride in any seat in tour vehicles.

Note that we have five internal flights, potentially two boat trips, and a fair number of windy roads. Anyone susceptible to motion sickness should bring an appropriate remedy. Having rain-proof clothing plus a wind-proof jacket will be useful on the pelagic boat trips.

SMOKING: Smoking or vaping is not allowed in the vehicles or when the group is gathered for meals, checklists etc. If you are sharing a room with a non-smoker, please do not smoke in the room. If you smoke in the field, we ask that you do so well away and downwind from the group if possible.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel insurance is essential and we insist that you take out suitable cover as soon as your tour is booked. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are also adequately insured on your home contents policy, as most travel insurance policies do not cover very expensive individual items. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage. Please also ensure that your policy covers you in the event of a medical emergency, cancellation of a trip or severe delays. Medical costs abroad can often be extremely expensive. Please note that Sunbird is not liable for any medical or repatriation costs resulting from injury or illness during a tour or for covering any costs resulting from a flight delay such as extra hotel accommodation.

If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Helen Fisher, Bullerwell Independent Insurance Brokers, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234-866964. Please contact Helen for a quote and she will send the schedule directly to you.

TOUR DELAYS: This tour includes five internal flights. On rare occasions a trip must be delayed due to severe weather, flight delays, or other reasons. If we are delayed we will do our best to cancel the relevant forward bookings and apply the refunds to the extra costs at our current location. However, the uncovered costs of the delay, if any, are the responsibility of the participant. These extra costs are sometimes recoverable on travel insurance policies.

TIPPING: All tour-based tips are included in the tour price. These include tips to local guides, drivers, hotel porters, and waiters and waitresses. You only need to pay tips for personal services such as room service or drinks from the bar.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Field Guides

Chester, Sharon. 2008. *A Wildlife Guide to Chile: Continental Chile, Chilean Antarctica, Easter Island, Juan Fernández Archipelago*. Helm Field Guides. Nice overview of the common fauna and flora of the country. **Recommended**

Couve, E. and C. Vidal. 2003. *Birds of Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego and the Antarctic Peninsula*. Editorial Fantastico Sur Birding Ltda. Over 2000 color photographs of all species from the region, plus bilingual species accounts. Good value for an additional reference but weighty.

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Howell, S. N. G., and F. Schmitt. 2018. *Birds of Chile: A Photo Guide*. Princeton University Press. A modern-style field guide using 1000+ colour photos and covering all the species we are likely to see. **Recommended. One of the two field guide that will be used during the tour.**

Iriarte, A. W. 2008. *Mamíferos de Chile*. Lynx. The best guide and a good reference about Chilean mammals,

Jaramillo, A. 2003. *Birds of Chile*. Helm Field Guides. A modern-style field guide with 96 color plates, facing-page text, and color range maps. **Recommended. T One of the two field guide that will be used during the tour.**

References

Ridgely, R. S. and G. Tudor. 1989. *The Birds of South America*, Volume I. University of Texas Press, Austin.

Ridgely, R. S. and G. Tudor. 1994. *The Birds of South America*, Volume 2. University of Texas Press, Austin.

Fjeldsa, J. and N. Krabbe. 1990. *Birds of the High Andes*. Zoological Museum, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

Literature: You may also be interested to read novels related to Chile, such as:

Who will remember the People, by Jean Raspail. A beautiful historical novel about the Alacalufs, nomadic tribe living in Tierra del Fuego.

The Voyage of the Beagle, by Charles Darwin. A very inspiring book about the remarkable odyssey realized by Darwin and the Beagle. As Darwin refers to several places he visited in Chile, it is interesting to read this book when doing the Chile tour.

Tierra del Fuego, by Francisco Coloane. A few short novels set in Patagonia.

FINAL INFORMATION: Final information with instructions for meeting the group, hotel addresses, etc., will be posted about three weeks before trip departure. Other news will be sent to you as necessary.