



2026

# *EcoTravel*

*Overnight Natural History Tours and Day Trips*

## *Patagonia: Birds and Mammals*

September 30 – October 10, 2026



# Patagonia

## September/October 2026

### 11 Days

#### Overview

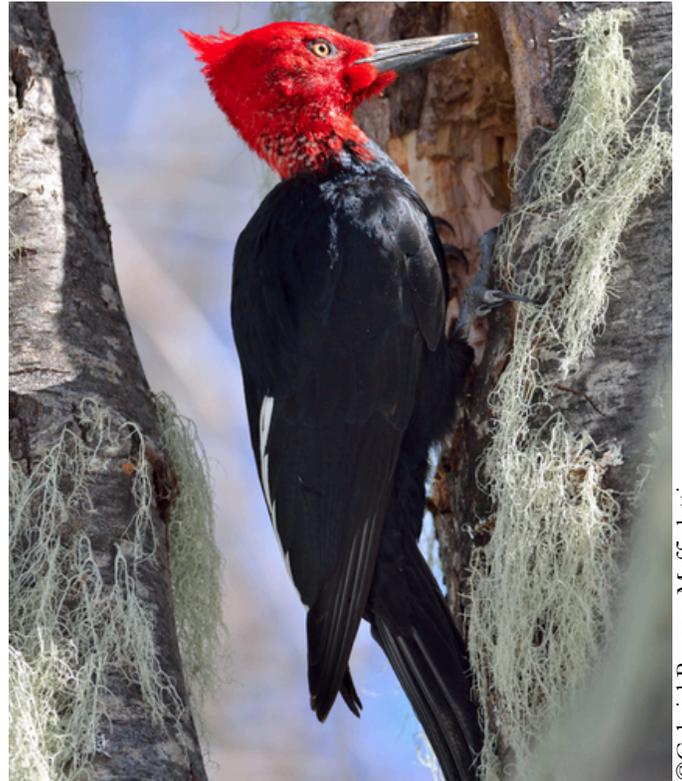
Chile stretches over 2,670 miles along the western coast of South America, and is bordered by the Pacific Ocean to the west and the Andes mountains to the east. Its diverse geography includes deserts, mountains, forests, and islands, offering a wide range of climates and ecosystems.

The varied landscapes host a rich array of wildlife. In the southern forests and wetlands of Patagonia and Chiloé, where our trip is focused, rare creatures like the pudú, the world's smallest deer, and the endangered Darwin's fox can be found. Marine life thrives along Chile's extensive coastline, including whales, sea lions, and penguins, particularly in the southern channels and fjords. We'll dedicate multiple days to searching for pumas across world-famous Patagonia.

Patagonia, shared by Chile and Argentina, is a vast region of wild, untamed landscapes that stretch across the southern tip of South America. It features dramatic fjords, glaciers, and the towering peaks of Torres del Paine National Park. This remote area is known for its windswept plains, rugged mountains, and cold, clear rivers. South of Patagonia lies Tierra del Fuego National Park, an archipelago that marks the southernmost reaches of the continent. Known for its harsh climate and awe-inspiring beauty, Tierra del Fuego includes the famous Strait of Magellan and Cape Horn, which have fascinated explorers for centuries.

Southern Chile and Patagonia feel like the end of the world in the best possible way. This is a land of long horizons, where the Andes tumble into fjords and the weather changes its mind every ten minutes. In southern Chile, dense temperate rainforests stretch toward the sea, threaded with rivers the color of slate and jade. Small towns sit quietly between mountains and water, shaped by a mix of Indigenous Mapuche traditions and the legacy of European settlers who arrived generations ago.

As you move deeper into Patagonia, the landscape opens up and gets dramatic fast. Windswept plains roll on for miles, broken by sudden spires of granite like the Torres del Paine, which rise sharply against wide, restless skies. Glaciers creep down from ice fields, cracking and groaning as they calve into turquoise lakes. Life here feels raw and elemental.



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## Itinerary

### Day 1 – Arrival

Departure from home airports to Santiago, Chile, where we'll have time to relax before embarking on our journey in search of the wide variety of mammals and birds of South America.

Night: Santiago

### Day 2 BLD

After a good night's sleep, we'll take a short flight to Chiloé Island before a three-hour drive towards Tepuhueico Park.

**Chiloé Island**, located off the coast of southern Chile, is the largest island in the Chiloé Archipelago and is known for its rich cultural heritage, unique folklore, and stunning natural landscapes. The island's history is deeply intertwined with both indigenous Chono and Huilliche peoples, as well as Spanish colonization, which has shaped its distinctive identity.

Night: Tepuhueico Lodge, Chiloé Island

### Day 3 BLD

Today will be spent exploring **Tepuhueico Park**. A private nature reserve known for its pristine landscapes and rich biodiversity, it spans over 20,000 hectares and features a mix of ancient temperate rainforests, crystal-clear lakes, and wetlands. The park is home to several native species, including the elusive, endangered **Darwin's Fox**, the **Pudú** (the world's second smallest deer), and the **Kodkod** or **Guigna** (a very rare woodland cat). While searching for this array of enigmatic and poorly known mammals, we'll find several endemic birds of the Patagonian woodlands such as **Black-throated Huet-huet**, **Chucao**, **Ochre-flanked** and **Magellanic tapaculos**, **Patagonian Tyrant**, **Des Murs's Wiretail**, **Chilean Pigeon**, **Magellanic Woodpecker**, **Chilean Hawk**, and **Green-backed Firecrown**.

Night: Tepuhueico Lodge, Chiloé Island

### Day 4 BLD

The morning will be spent exploring the Chepu River. This meandering and pristine river is bordered by lush, dense rainforests, and its clear waters are home to the endangered **Southern River Otter**. We'll also have chances to find the rare **Rufous-tailed Hawk** (the counterpart to our Red-tailed Hawk) and the endemic **Slender-billed Parakeet**. On the way back to Puerto Montt we'll stop at the mudflats of Caulin Bay. The bay holds an important part of the world population of **Hudsonian Godwit**, which winters here and in other extensive bays of Patagonia along with **Red Knot** and a variety of other shorebirds.

In the afternoon we'll take a boat to explore two groups of islets that are home to a surprisingly diverse ensemble of seabirds and marine mammals. We'll start with the closest to shore, Puñihuil Islets, where we'll find **Magellanic** and **Humboldt penguins**, **Flightless Steamer-Duck**,



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**Kelp Goose**, and **Red-legged Cormorant**, among other seabird species, and **Southern Marine Otter**. We'll then head south to Metalqui Islets, where we'll watch a **South American Sea Lion** colony and small groups of **South American Fur Seal**. A careful inspection of the beaches might produce sightings of **Southern Elephant Seal**.

On our way back we'll first sail into offshore waters to look for the largest animal that has ever lived on our planet: the magnificent **Blue Whale**. We'll also have great chances of seeing pelagic seabirds such as **Black-browed Albatross**, **Southern Giant Petrel**, and **Pink-footed, Sooty, and Little shearwaters**. From here we'll board the ferry back to Puerto Montt and drive to the beautiful town of Puerto Varas by Lake Llanquihue, where we'll spend the night.

Night: Hotel Panamericana Ancud or similar, Chiloé Island

### Day 5 BLD

Primarily a travel day, we'll take a ferry crossing across Caulin Bay, returning to the mainland. We'll then drive to the airport to take a two-hour flight down to Punta Arenas, Chile's southernmost city, located at the very tip of the South American Continent in the Northern shore of the Straits of Magellan.

Night: Hotel Cabo de Hornos, Punta Arenas

### Day 6 BLD

This morning, we'll take a two-hour ferry ride across the Straits of Magellan. We'll be entertained by an interesting array of tubenoses such as **Southern Fulmar**, the delightful **Cape** and **White-chinned petrels**, **Wilson's Storm-Petrel**, and **Magellanic Diving-Petrel**. We'll see other seabirds, including **Chilean Skua**, **Kelp** and **Dolphin gulls**, and **South American Tern**. Possible marine mammals will include playful pods of **Peale's Dolphin**. Once we land in Tierra del Fuego, we'll check the coast, where we'll hope to see **Crested Duck**, **Chiloé Wigeon**, **Baird's** and **White-rumped sandpipers**, **Magellanic Oystercatcher**, and **Dark-bellied Cinclodes**, among several other goodies.

During the afternoon we'll visit some alkaline lagoons east of the village. Our target here will be the local and odd-looking **Magellanic Plover**. This enigmatic wader looks more similar to a little dove rather than to any shorebird, and is often seen "scratching" the mud with its bright pink legs! Other birds of the area will include **Two-banded Plover**, **Wilson's Phalarope**, **Short-billed Miner**, and **Austral Negrito**.

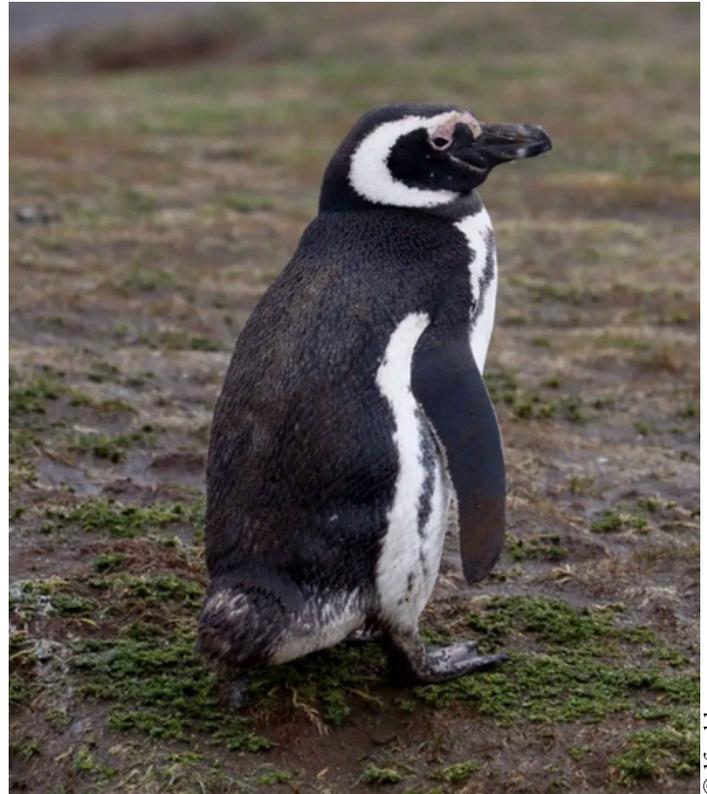
Night: Yendegaia House, Tierra del Fuego Island

### Day 7 BLD

We'll continue east to explore the large embayment of Useless Bay (Bahía Inútil), where it's likely we'll find a wealth of seabirds and other aquatic birds. On route we'll be checking for potential raptors including **Variable Hawk**, **Aplomado** and **Peregrine falcons**. **Lesser (Magellanic) Horned Owl** nests in some of the nearby ravines. The main target of our visit is the newly established **King Penguin**



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breeding colony. The species congregates year-round on this site and has successfully started to breed. A short ferry ride will take us back to the mainland and, if we're lucky, we'll have the striking **Commerson's Dolphin** following the wake. **Chilean Flamingo, Upland Goose, Coscoroba Swan, Silver Teal, Black-headed Duck, and Rosy-billed Pochard** are all found here. Wading birds will be common at the roadside ponds while we explore and enjoy the beauty of the open country.

Night: Hotel Costaustralis or similar, Puerto Natales

### Day 8 BLD

Today we'll embark across windswept Patagonia in search of steppe specialties, including **Ruddy-headed Goose, Least Seedsnipe, Tawny-throated Dotterel, Short-billed Miner, Band-tailed Earthcreeper, and Chocolate-vented Tyrant**. We'll make our way towards Torres del Paine National Park, where we'll end our trip exploring this legendary destination.

Night: Hotel Pehoé or similar, Torres del Paine National Park

### Days 9 – 10 BLD

The next couple of days will be focused on searching for **pumas** in the area. We'll inspect the hunting grounds located in the eastern flank of the park and throughout a private ranch where we have special access. The area is well known for holding one of the largest concentrations of pumas in the wild. We'll have the support of a 4x4 vehicle to move inside the ranch, but there is also the possibility of some easy to moderate walks. Topography is usually not too demanding, but there might be differences in altitude of around 160-1,000 feet, although the group will walk at a slow and gentle pace. The maximum elevation during this trip will be 1,000 feet above sea level. Pumas are normally quite active at night, early in the mornings, and late in the evenings. We'll focus on searching around these times, when they are usually patrolling their territory, hunting guanacos and other prey, interacting with their young, or commuting from their hunting grounds to their dens. We'll have two sessions each day, a morning session and an evening session, each approximately four hours.

We'll visit Lake Grey to enjoy the dramatic sight of its southern shore dominated by stunning blue icebergs, and the surrounding sub-Antarctic forests will provide us with chances to see **Thorn-tailed Rayadito, White-throated Treerunner, Austral Parakeet, Austral Blackbird, and the striking Magellanic Woodpecker**.

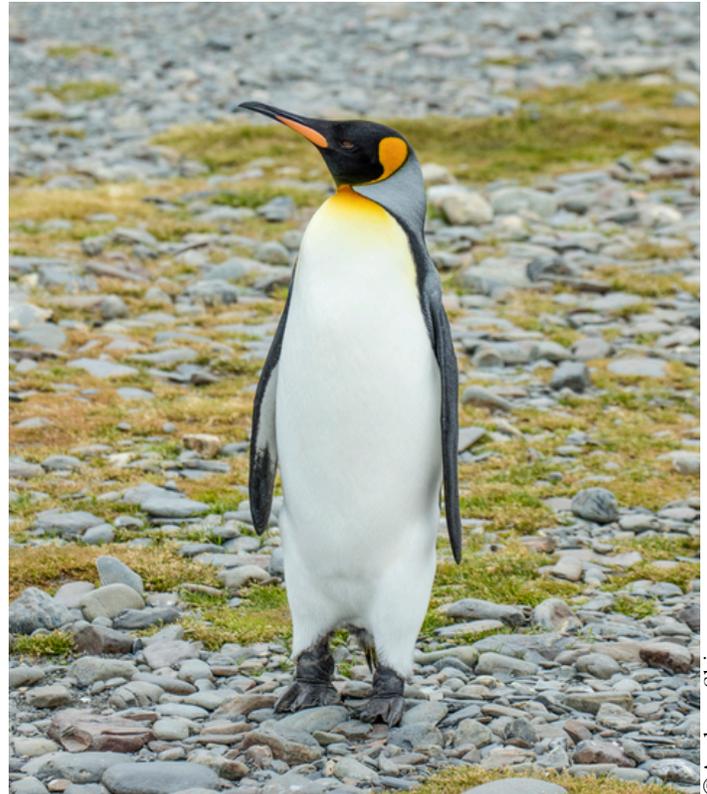
Nights: Hotel Pehoé, Torres del Paine National Park

### Day 11 BL

Drive to Punta Arenas airport for flights to Santiago and home.



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## General Information

Tour Cost: \$9,998.  
Members: \$9,498.

The above cost is based upon a minimum number of six paying participants traveling together. If there are fewer participants, there will be a small group supplement. Per person Tour Cost is based on two people sharing a room.

Single Room Supplement: \$910.

All rates are calculated at the time of publication and are subject to change due to conditions out of our control (i.e. hotel rates). All passengers will be notified if changes in pricing occur.

### Tour Includes:

Accommodations are based on double occupancy, one or two beds. Meals are included as outlined in the itinerary section (B=Breakfast/L=Lunch/D=Dinner). Additional charges for meals may apply if needs are out of the standard offerings. Entrance fees to national parks and sightseeing as specified in the itinerary. Boat fees. Local guides and ground transportation.

### Not Included:

Taxes; costs of obtaining passports and visas; international and domestic airfare; baggage fees; personal expenses such as room service, beverages, laundry, gratuities for the local guide and housekeeping; personal communications; airport taxes; tax increases or new taxes charged for services that were not taxed at the time the booking was made; excess mileage carried out at the request of the passenger; sightseeing or meals not specified in the itinerary; personal insurance coverage (strongly recommended); and transfers to and from your home airport.



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**Sarah Heminway** is responsible for the oversight and programming at our two facilities in northeastern Connecticut, the Lois Orswell Grassland Bird Conservation Center at Pomfret and Trail Wood: The Edwin Way Teale Memorial Sanctuary in Hampton. She has served in this position since 2003.



From 1994 to 2001, she was our first resident naturalist in Pomfret, developing programming for the Bafflin Sanctuary prior to the Center at Pomfret's inception. Sarah earned her B.S. in Environmental Studies from Trinity College, spent several years conducting graduate research at the University of Connecticut and was an environmental consultant for 15 years, specializing in soil and water issues. A member of numerous environmental organizations, she previously served on the board of directors for the Wyndham Land Trust.

## *General Terms & Conditions*

### ***Reservations***

Early reservations with deposit are essential to guarantee your booking. A **\$2,000 deposit**, per person, applicable to final payment, is required to reserve space on this trip. Reservations made within 120 days of departure require full payment along with the formal Registration Forms. Final payment for programs is due 120 days prior to departure. Payments can be made by personal check, money order, certified check, or a cashier's check.

### ***Rates and Fares***

Prices are accurate as available at the time of publication. Prices do not include airfare unless otherwise stated. The Connecticut Audubon Society (CAS) reserves the right to alter quoted prices to reflect changes in airline fares, land service, or currency exchange rates. In the event that the number of participants is below the minimum required for the quoted price, a small group surcharge may be added.

### ***Cancellation and Insurance***

At the time the EcoTravel Office receives written notice that you must cancel your trip, the following cancellation fees will apply: Prior to 120 days from departure, your payments will be refunded minus **\$500 per person**. At 120 days and less, no refund is granted. NOTE: In addition to cancellation fees, airline tickets and deposits required to guarantee hotel rooms may be nonrefundable. The purchase of a general travel insurance plan covering baggage, accident/life, and trip cancellation is highly recommended. Give us a call and we can put you in touch with those providers. CAS reserve the right, if registration is insufficient or other reasons out of our control, to cancel, postpone, or offer the trip with a small group supplement. In the event that CAS cancels or postpones, those with reservations will be notified as soon as possible and a credit of payments will be held on file. The Connecticut Audubon Society is not responsible for the refund or credit of additional expenses incurred in preparation for a trip. Any "delay" or "postponing" of departure by tour participants is considered a cancellation and cancellation parameters will be apply relative to the 120-day window. There are no exceptions.

### ***Responsibility***

Payment of deposit represents and acceptance of the following terms and conditions by the purchaser: The Connecticut Audubon Society, its affiliates, and all cooperating airlines and agencies act only in the capacity of agents in all matters of transportation and tour operations, and their liability is limited to the terms of the airline tickets and land accommodation contracts. They are not responsible for any delays, inconveniences, accidents, expense, or mishap of any kind whatsoever resulting entirely or in part from the negligence of others or from causes beyond their control. They can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, riot, war, pandemic, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses must be borne by the passengers, as the tour rate provides for arrangements only as describe in the tour brochure. The right is reserved to change tour leaders, substitute hotels, of similar category, and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by unforeseen circumstances. Baggage is at the owner's risk entirely. No refund can be made for unused hotel rooms, meals, and sightseeing tours unless arrangements are made at time of booking. The right is reserved to decline any person as a tour member for any reason which affects the operation of the tour or the rights, welfare, or enjoyment of the other tour members. Any refund of the recoverable land tour services in the limit of The Connecticut Audubon Society and its affiliates' liability.

### ***To make a Reservation:***

**Send the above stated deposit to hold your reservation.** Nonmembers, please add \$45 (single) or \$58 (family) for your annual membership and to take advantage of the member discount.

Send your name(s), address, phone number, email address, name of the trip, your deposit, and membership fee (if applicable) to:

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**Essex, CT 06426**

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