

Argentina

ANDES & INCA TRAIL

LIMOSA HOLIDAYS | TOUR INFO PACK



Giant Hummingbirds sweep in to feed on yellow-flowered tobacco plants in the High Andes © tour participant Peter Tapsell

2017 **Sunday 1st – Sunday 15th October (15 days)** **Small group tour with Brian Small & local guides**

Our 2016 tour to the Argentinian Andes was a sell-out and we can't wait to travel again in 2017! If the region's amazing birdlife is not enough, the open puna and pastel-coloured strata that typify the huge landscapes add to a terrific tour. It's a trip that will carry you from the wetlands of Buenos Aires, northwest to Salta in the foothills of the Andes - where our birding adventure really begins! The Yungas cloudforest, dry Chaco and magnificent 'wild west' landscapes of the high mountains here are home to a rich variety of birds, including many specialities. Andean Condors survey the painted uplands of the altiplano, drifting over wild country that's the haunt of Andean and Giant Coots, three species of flamingo, Puna Plover, Sandy Gallito, Elegant Crested Tinamou and Giant Hummingbird. Local boulder-strewn streams are inhabited by striking Torrent Ducks and Rufous-throated Dipper.

- Brilliant birding amidst majestic landscapes - from sea level up to 4000m
- Abundance of specialities - including Andean Condors floating above high mountains
- 3 species of flamingo, Andean, Giant and Red-gartered Coots (possibility of Horned Coot, too)
- Tawny-throated Dotterel, Puna Plover, Andean Lapwing, Giant Hummingbird
- Macaws, miners, canasteros, tanagers - plus yellow, mountain, brush and sierra finches
- Small group tour expertly led by Limosa's Brian Small and an Argentinian bird tour guide

What's Included?

- Limosa Tour Leader
- Expert Argentinian ornithologist guide
- Flights - London Heathrow to Buenos Aires
- Domestic flights Buenos Aires-Salta, and Salta-Buenos Aires
- 12 nights accommodation in Argentina, staying at good hotels and wildlife lodges
- All main meals included - with water provided during the day
- All local travel, entry fees, tour based tips and taxes

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Outline Itinerary

- Days 1-2:** Fly London-Buenos Aires, where we arrive on morning of day two. Birding lakes near Costanera Sur. Night Buenos Aires
- Day 3:** We take a 2-hour flight northwest from Buenos Aires to Salta in the Argentinian Andes and continue to Selva Montana Eco Lodge (2 nts)
- Day 4:** Huaiaco Reserve and wetlands
- Day 5:** We leave Salta and drive through some amazing landscapes today, passing over the Cuesta del Obispo (3300m), towards Cachi (2 nts)
- Day 6:** Exploring the valleys near Cachi and Los Cardones National Park
- Day 7:** We head back over the Cuesta del Obispo and investigate the Chaco. Night Selva Montana
- Day 8:** We follow a scenic route north via the Yungas forests of the Santa Laura Mountains and Yala. Humahuaca (3 nts)
- Days 9-10:** The Altiplano, including the Inca Trail at Humahuaca, Los Pozuelos and the Abra Pampa lakes
- Day 11:** We head south, revisiting Yala on our way to Libertador General St Martin (2 nts)
- Day 12:** Calilegua National Park
- Day 13:** Fly Salta to Buenos Aires. Night Buenos Aires
- Day 14:** Depart Buenos Aires for London
- Day 15:** Morning arrival London Heathrow

Tour Overview

This terrific tour to the Andes of northwest Argentina (a sell out in 2016), visits an area that's just beginning to open up to western birdwatchers. It's an exhilarating place, with magnificent landscapes - imagine Morocco, but three times bigger! Join us for an adventure that ranges from the bird-rich cloudforests of Calilegua National Park and the cactus desert of Los Cardones, where Andean Condors roam, to high *altiplano* lakes - including Los Pozuelos, with its three species of flamingo, Giant Coot and Puna Plover. This really is a tour not to be missed!

Northwest Argentina is like nowhere else. The mighty Andes dominate the landscape, with snowy peaks up to 6400m (21,000ft) towering over a 'painted' landscape comprising bands of coloured rocks and soils, dotted with small towns and villages, where the inhabitants are still proud of their indigenous Inca roots. While down in the valleys, wild canyons and wide plains carpeted by tall *Cardones* cacti give the impression you are in the North American southwest.

Our tour commences in the capital Buenos Aires, where lunch followed by a gentle amble along the promenade offers a great introduction to birding in Argentina. We walk the fringe of the lakes near Costanera Sur, on the banks of the vast River Plate, gaining experience of some of the country's more frequently encountered birds: Brown-chested Martin, Rufous Hornero and Hooded Siskin and Green-barred Woodpecker as well as some we may not see elsewhere on the trip. Ringed Teal and Southern Screamer sit in the reeds, while the brilliant but tiny and elusive Many-coloured Rush Tyrant is harder to see. Chequered Woodpecker and Black-and-rufous Warbling Finch can be found in the scrub and Yellow-winged and Unicoloured Blackbirds frequent the lakes.

Next morning, we catch a two-hour domestic flight to Salta, provincial capital of mountainous northwestern Argentina, and head up to a lovely lodge in the foothills north of town. Situated at an elevation of 1400m (4600ft), here we have a chance to acclimatise. The hotel and local wooded gardens plus nearby Huaico Reserve lie within the superb *Yungas* cloudforest that cloaks the eastern slope of the Andes from Peru south to Argentina - including here on the San Lorenzo mountain ridge.

Trails offer chances to find some stunning birds, like Cream-backed Woodpecker, the tiny Ocellated Piculet, White-bellied Hummingbird, the fine Blue-and-yellow Tanager and Dusky-legged Guan. Finding a mixed feeding flock in these unique woodlands can be exciting and might well reward us with the handsome cobalt-backed Fawn-breasted Tanager, active Brown-capped Redstarts, Stripe-crowned and Azara's Spinetails, Buff-browed Foliage-gleaner,

Mountain Wren, the fabulous Fulvous-headed Brush Finch and Two-banded Warbler plus a fine array of 'tyrants'.

Leaving Salta, we climb up out of the green and lush landscape of the *Yungas* forest, along the Rio Escoipe into the dessicated mid-elevation Andes on our way to Cachi. The *puna* landscape at Cuesta del Obispo is home to Guanacos and the mighty Andean Condor, 'ghostly' Andean Swifts flashing white under-parts and white in the wing, and Tawny-throated Dotterel. Nestling beneath the snow-capped peaks of the immense Nevado de Cachi, which soar to 6380m (20,930ft), Cachi sits above a well-vegetated valley floor in stark contrast to the arid, cactus-strewn rocky mountain slopes. Flocks of raucous Burrowing Parrots wing about, whilst other 'must-see' species with tantalising names include the diminutive Ringed Warbling Finch, the rosy-chested White-tipped Plantcutter, White-fronted Woodpecker and Sandy Gallito. Amongst the *Cardones* cacti we will search for the localized Elegant Crested Tinamou and the endemic (and secretive) White-throated Cachalote.

Making our way back to Salta, we venture south into the edge of the dry Chaco landscape. Here we search the scrub for Black-legged Seriema and handsome Many-coloured Chaco Finch and Black-crested Finch. Taking the scenic road, we reach Jujuy, where the small valley and reserve at Yala is home to a host of exciting species. Torrent Duck and Rufous-throated Dippers were both seen well on our 2016 tour and we could see Black Phoebe, White-collared Swift or even the rare Black-and-chestnut Eagle above the *Yungas* forest.

North of Yala, where the mountains are notable for their colourful and dramatically eroded strata, we enter wild country with sweeping vistas on our way to Humahuaca and Abra Pampa. The stunted vegetation here is home to many sierra finches - including the spectacular Black-hooded - and we should find Giant Hummingbirds swooping in to feed on yellow flowering tobacco plants beside the road.

The landscape really opens up at altitudes of around 3500m (11,500ft) and the high elevation wetlands and lakes hold many superb species.

Andean Gulls wheel above Giant and Andean Coots, and spinning Wilson's Phalaropes and Andean Lapwings are among many specialities in store. However, the true spectacle we are aiming for is the wonderful lake at Los Pozuelos, where vulnerable Andean, James's and Chilean Flamingos feed and nest, creating a pink shimmer across the high plains. As Puna Plovers forage alongside migrant Nearctic shorebirds and tiny Andean Negritos, the likes of Common and Puna Miners, Grey-breasted Seedsnipe, Puna Ibis and Andean Geese are among many special birds to look forward to during our days in "Argentinian Siberia".

We conclude our tour in exciting style, dropping down for a visit to the cloudforest in Calilegua National Park. Rising to 1700m (5,600ft), its protected 70,000 hectares of dense woodlands cling to the high mountains and are rich in biodiversity. Calilegua's lower slopes echo to the loud calls of Golden-collared Macaws and Plush-crested Jays, and the endangered Tucuman Parrot will hopefully attract our attention to its presence in the tops of taller trees. Climbing higher, we search for such gems as Blue-capped Puffleg, Planalto Hermit, Blue-crowned Trogon and Golden-rumped Euphonia.

There is so much to look for at Calilegua and it makes a grand finale to a super tour. We spend a full day here, checking for local 'specials' such as Plumbeous Tyrant, the tiny Ochre-faced Tody-flycatcher, Ochre-cheeked Spinetail, buzzing Slender-tailed Woodstars displaying from bare twigs and Slaty Elaenia with its grating call. In 2016, we even got views of a yellow-bellied Spotted Nightingale-thrush – amazing! Scanning the skies above, elegant Swallow-tailed Kites may be joined by our last Andean Condors and we have a chance of White-rumped and Short-tailed Hawks, or even the fabulous King Vulture with its gaudy head.

Guide Brian Small has good experience birding in Central and South America. He first visited northwest Argentina in October 2014, returning to lead Limosa's inaugural and breathtaking October 2016 tour with expert local guide Mario Mosquiera. Together they make a great team. There are not enough superlatives to do this tour justice!

Daily Itinerary

Days 1 - 2

FLY LONDON-BUENOS AIRES

Our birdwatching tour to northwest Argentina begins with an overnight flight from London Heathrow to Buenos Aires, arriving there on the morning of day two.

Having established our base at a hotel close to the capital's famous River Plate, we start our birding with a walk (and lunch) along the edge of the lakes near the excellent wetland reserve of Costanera Sur. Dotted the reed-fringed lakes we should find a great selection of South American waterbirds, whilst Chilean and Brown-chested Martins along with Chimanco and Southern Caracaras hawk overhead. Alongside such delights as Whistling Heron and Ringed Teal, our visit today will provide a fine introduction to a range of bird families and species we should encounter again elsewhere - from 'everyday' Chalk-browed Mockingbirds and Rufous Horneros to the goggle-eyed Spectacled Tyrant and startling Green-barred Woodpecker. Along the water-front, weird-looking Guira Cuckoos stalk the pavements and we'll check the fringing reeds for the distinctive Spot-flanked Gallinule and Red-crested Cardinal, plus Yellow-winged Blackbird and the diminutive, desirable yet secretive Many-coloured Rush Tyrant.

After a splendid first afternoon of birding in the Argentine capital, we return to our hotel, take a fine evening meal at a local restaurant - then it's off to bed early in preparation for the exciting days ahead! *Night Buenos Aires*

Days 3 - 4

FLY FROM BUENOS AIRES TO SALTA; SELVA MONTANA, HUAICO RESERVE & WETLANDS

This morning we catch a short domestic flight (2hrs) from Buenos Aires, northwest to the Argentinian Andes at Salta. After landing, we transfer directly to the friendly Selva Montana Ecolodge in the village of San Lorenzo (about 20 minutes drive to the north of Salta), on the slopes of sub-Andean mountain ridges. We will spend two nights at the lodge.

En route from the airport we could well pick up our first startling White Monjita, with oddly Redstart-like Blue-and-yellow Tanagers singing from the tree tops. By checking the grass verge we may be lucky – as in 2016 – to see a tinamou in the shape of a Darwin's Nothura!

The gardens around our lodge at Selva Montana provide excellent habitat for some introductory Andean birding, holding an abundance of resident species such as Sayaca Tanager, Golden-billed Saltator, Brown-capped Redstart, Tropical Parula and noisy White-bellied Hummingbird, augmented by a number of just-arrived summer migrants that might include Piratic Flycatcher, Small-billed Elaenia and Smoke-coloured Pewee.

We will pay a couple of visits to the Huaico Reserve, which protects the specialised *Yungas* cloudforest cloaking the slopes of San Lorenzo. We'll enjoy our time walking along well-maintained grassy trails in search of forest birds here - and it can be very exciting at times as the thick, tangled understorey can host mixed species flocks. Among a range of targets, we'll be watching for Dusky-legged Guan, Barred Forest Falcon, Yungas Dove, the tiny Ocellated Piculet, and Dot-fronted and Cream-backed Woodpeckers, while noisy parties of Mitred Parakeets wheel above the trees. We may add Scaly-headed Parrot, Slender-tailed Woodstar and the rather confiding Grey-necked Wood Rail too, from the list of more than 200 species recorded in this superb private reserve.

Further possibilities include chestnut Stripe-crowned and Azara's Spinetails, active Straneck's and Sclater's Tyrannulets, Mountain Wren, Fawn-breasted Tanager (which actually looks much smarter than it sounds!), Rufous-capped Antshrike, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Andean Slaty Thrush, Mountain Elaenia and Two-banded Warbler. Common Bush Tanagers travel in noisy groups that regularly attract other species such as Fulvous-headed Brush Finch, Golden-rumped Euphonia, Rusty-browed Warbling Finch and Golden-winged Cacique. Rufous-thighed Hawk and Roadside Hawks frequently soar above the trees.

One afternoon we will drive eastwards to the Sianca Valley and visit a private protected wetland. An amazing abundance of South American wildfowl concentrates at this lagoon, with the rare Comb Duck, Rosy-billed Pochard, Black-headed Duck, White-cheeked Pintail, Silver and Cinnamon Teals, plus Brazilian and Lake Ducks among species we hope to find. This superb lake also has many White-faced Ibis, White-tufted, Great and Pied-billed Grebes, and Grey-necked Wood Rail, along with various coots and herons. The rush beds give shelter to Plumbeous Rails and secretive, 'moped-revving' Wren-like Rushbirds; piles of Apple Snail shells are created by the gregarious Snail Kites, and the surrounding thickets provide chances of seeing the attractive Red Pileated Finch, Ultramarine Grosbeak and White-browed Blackbird.

If weather conditions are good this evening, we will pay a visit to the forested Huaico Reserve (close to our hotel) to try for the localised Yungas (or Hoy's) Screech Owl, Scissor-tailed Nightjar or even Little Nightjar. *Two nights Selva Montana Ecolodge*

Day 5 SOUTHWEST TO CACHI

Setting off early this morning, we travel southwest to spend our next two nights at Cachi.

The drive to Cachi is an incredible experience as the landscape changes from the *Yungas* forests near Salta, through the deep, wooded valley of the Rio Escoibo, up and onto open montane grasslands – our first taste of the *puna*. After a brief walk in the Valle Encantado, we pass through the open landscape of the Cuesta del Obispo and descend into Los Cardones National Park (named after its fantastic and impressively tall *Cardones* cacti 'forest' that deck the slopes), before reaching Cachi on the old RN40 'Inca Trail'.

We will make regular stops along the valley, looking for local specialities such as Tucuman Mountain Finch, Rusty Flowerpiercer and Rufous-bellied Saltator (which is probably not really a saltator at all, but more a large mountain tanager). In Valle Encantado, we have chances to see some special birds amidst a very special landscape: huge-billed Andean Flickers pick

insects from the ground; Rock Earthcreeper, Creamy-breasted Canastero and the rarer Steinbach's Canastero flit about rocky areas; and Bar-winged Cinclodes feed beside the streams. On close-cropped grassy areas, Moreno's Ground Doves hide amongst the tussocks while an assortment of wheatear-like ground tyrants, including Cinereous and Puna, are always much enjoyed. The large Black-billed Shrike-tyrant adds to the mix and vegetated gullies conceal Brown-capped Tit-spinetails, White-winged Black-tyrants, the striking Black Siskin and Rufous-sided Warbling Finch.

Passing over the lofty Cuesta del Obispo at an altitude of 3500m (11,500ft), Andean Condor can be seen - soaring over the ridges or gliding just below us along the deep valleys - whilst herds of elegant Guanacos scamper across the *puna* grassland. We should encounter Variable Hawk and perhaps Cinereous Harrier, and we will make our first try for the superb and upright Tawny-throated Dotterel - a handsome species that stands tall and seems to epitomise the wild landscape and its colours - and well worth the effort to find it, you will agree! Hellmayr's Pipit feed on the tracks and we have a chance of the streaky Correndera Pipit, too.

Dropping west and down towards Cachi, we travel through Los Cardones National Park, which encompasses spectacular cacti-clad slopes and towering peaks rising to more than 5,000m (16,500ft). We may well stop for a brief look today, keeping our eyes open for Elegant Crested Tinamou and both Tufted and Yellow-billed Tit Tyrants. We should arrive at our comfortable modern hotel at Cachi in the late afternoon. Overlooking the valley and with gardens that can be alive with Saffron Finches and Band-tailed Seedaters, if time allows a gentle stroll can be eventful. *Night Cachi*

Day 6 CACHI & LOS CARDONES NP

To the north and west of Cachi are very high mountains, where at this time of year the spring snowmelt feeds the Rio Calchaqui, creating a green stripe through the dry landscape. An early start this morning will not only give us a good chance of seeing the sun strike the high western peaks, but also allow us time to explore the

valley in a relaxed way. Stopping as we drive - if for no other reason than to admire the magnificent morning views - could well reward us with Red-tailed Comet and the peculiar White-tipped Plantcutter. Mourning Sierra Finch is quite common here, too. Pausing near the river we should also see endearing White-faced Woodpeckers perched on the tall cacti and perhaps cinnamon-hued Cliff Flycatchers on the wires. Many other species inhabit this beautiful valley and we will hope to find Burrowing Parrot, Andean Swift and Chiguanco Thrush, as well as the smart little Ringed Warbling Finch. Wide-ranging American Kestrels hunt from prominent posts and wires, and both Patagonian and Brown-backed Mockingbirds might be found – equally smart looking birds, too.

Just to the east of the valley, the dry *Cardones* forest is home to several key species and we'll spend time exploring and listening out for the splendidly named and chunky endemic tapaculo, Sandy Gallito. We could well find our first Giant Hummingbirds, here visiting a flowering cactus, and we'll look out for White-throated Cachalote, another key endemic. Elegant Crested Tinamous can sometimes be spotted in the roadside scrub. In the late afternoon, the sun passes behind the western mountains, making those in the east positively glow as we head back to our lodge for dinner and our second night there. *Night Cachi*

Day 7

LOS CARDONES NP, THE CHACO & RETURN TO SALTA

We will take the whole day to make the return transfer (170km or so) back to Salta - but boy is it worth it, for our journey will not only take in some of the most amazing landscapes of the trip but should hopefully produce some fabulous and sought-after birds, too!

Driving initially through the Parque Nacional Los Cardones, we can try again for the secretive Sandy Gallito or Elegant Crested Tinamou, both of which root around the low scrub by the road. Finches to watch for in the same area include the very smart Common Diuca Finch and Grey-hooded Sierra Finch. Heading over the Cuesta del Obispo, we have further opportunities to look for the appealing Tucuman Mountain Finch, White-browed and D'Orbigny's Chat-

tyrants, and Rufous-naped Ground Tyrant. Lunch in the valley may be disturbed by a flock of Grey-hooded Parakeets or Buff-necked Ibises.

Once back into the valley near Salta we turn south for a short distance into the Chaco, spending the rest of the afternoon searching this habitat of dry sandy bushes and trees for several local specialities. Two very smart finches can be seen and heard here: the Many-coloured Chaco Finch, which looks like a slimmed down Golden-billed Saltator, while the Black-crested Finch may be mono-chromatic, but is rather splendid. The lanky Black-legged Seriema also occurs, but we will be lucky to find one - and we may already have used all our luck up in finding another large tapaculo, the Crested Gallito!

Our accommodation tonight is once more the lovely Selva Montana Ecolodge, at San Lorenzo. We will try to get to there early for a slightly more restful late afternoon and early evening. *Night Selva Montana Ecolodge*

Day 8

NORTH: JUJUY, YALA & HUMAHUACA

Leaving Salta behind, we travel the scenic RN9 north to Jujuy today, passing through some lovely wooded landscapes as we climb up over the hills. At the Santa Laura Mountain pass we will check several good spots, hoping to find Red-legged Seriema and the elusive Giant Antshrike. Amidst idyllic countryside, deep-blue lakes - the Dique Campo Alegre and Las Maderas - have shallow margins attractive to wetland species such as Wattled Jacana, Black-necked Stilt, White-faced Ibis, Wood Stork, and Cooi and Whistling Herons. Baird's Sandpiper and other Nearctic shorebirds may be seen around the shores and the fringing woodlands attract avian delights such as Chaco Puffbird, Tawny-headed Swallow, Black-capped Warbling Finch, Masked Yellowthroat and the brilliant Vermilion Flycatcher.

Passing bustling Jujuy, we head up the forested Yala Valley, where we stop for lunch - though hopefully not before a quick check for Rufous-throated Dipper and Torrent Duck amongst the bolders of the fast-flowing river! This area has a rich biodiversity and the birdlife is very varied. Simply by strolling up the easy dirt track, we

could find new species such as the localised Red-faced Guan and overhead, swifts often include the huge White-collared and Rothschild's Swifts. Other birds typical of this narrow section of *Yungas* forest include Crested Becard, Yellow-browed Tyrant, Slaty and Highland Elaenias, Streak-throated Bush Tyrant, Cinnamon Flycatcher, Smoke-coloured Pewee and Fawn-breasted Tanager. Our 2016 tour saw Solitary and even Black-and-chestnut Eagles above the trees, and amongst the Black and Turkey Vultures, a Greater Yellow-headed Vulture, too.

Tearing ourselves away (although we have another chance to bird here later on this tour, when we head back south), we head north to Humahuaca, our base for the next three nights.
Night Humahuaca

Days 9 - 10

QUEBRADA DE HUMAHUACA, LOS POZUELOS & ALTIPLANO LAKES

Rising early, we depart for an unforgettable journey into the *altiplano* wilderness. From Abra Pampa, we head west towards Los Pozuelos, birding as we go. There's plenty to look out for: Puna Ibis, no fewer than six 'Andeans' – Flamingo, Goose, Negrito, Avocet, Gull and Lapwing - plus miners and many Ash-breasted Sierra Finches. Dry stream beds hold Ornate Tinamou as well as Scale-throated and Rock Earthcreepers and we'll take our picnic breakfast by a stream that may well produce Band-tailed Sierra Finch, Mountain Parakeet and the bright canary-yellow Puna Yellow Finch. We will keep an eye out for Vicuña - best looking of the four South American *camelids* – that gather in small herds, while rocky slopes are home to the unusual Mountain Vizcacha, which looks like a cross between a rabbit and a wallaby! At an altitude of about 4000m (13,000ft) - the highest we go on our tour - the air is thin so we will take things easy (though we should be acclimatised a little by now).

We will aim to reach Laguna Pozuelos, a vast lagoon of shallow, brackish water located high on a mountain-ringed plain, by mid morning and spend some time exploring this magnificent Natural Monument. It's here we hope to find some of the highly specialised Andean avifauna

- Chilean, James's and Andean Flamingos, Puna Teal, Puna Ibis and Mountain Caracara. Two sought-after high elevation waders are Andean Avocet and Puna Plover, occurring here alongside freshly arrived migratory North America shorebirds such as Baird's Sandpiper and the needle-billed Wilson's Phalarope. It's a fine spectacle and one not to be missed! Lesser Rheas strut about the surrounding fields and we could well see another Cinereous Harrier or even Aplomado Falcon.

After our long day out in the mountains, we'll enjoy a more restful schedule next day amidst the painted hills of the Quebrada de Humahuaca. Situated on the 'Inca Trail' that comes down from the Bolivian border, this World Heritage Site - where the colourful banded strata of the local rocks is mirrored in the Inca culture - is fascinating. Andean Condors soar above the towering cliffs and the yellow-flowering tobacco plants are attractive to Giant Hummingbirds. Black-hooded Sierra Finches sing from the rock faces and we will hope to see the small but spectacular Andean Hillstar that nests along the valley.

Revisiting Abra Pampa, we spend time in this upland landscape peppered with *altiplano* lakes and wetlands that are home to more Andean Avocets, Giant and Andean Coots, flamingos, wildfowl and maybe Puna or American Golden Plover. *Two further nights Humahuaca*

Day 11

YALA, JUJUY & LIBERTADOR GENERAL ST. MARTIN

Making an early start from Humahuaca today will allow us time to revisit Yala. This great little patch of *Yungas* forest certainly warrants a return and we will be able to enjoy 'seconds' of species already seen. If we are lucky, we might find the very local Red-faced Guan or, looking down on to the racing river, perhaps enjoy 'scope views of Rufous-throated Dipper. These species might top a list that could also include the likes of Torrent Duck, Large-tailed Dove, Slender-tailed Woodstar, Smoky-brown and Dot-fronted Woodpeckers, Andean Tyrant and Buff-banded and Sclater's Tyrannulets. In trees over the river, we will watch for Black-backed Grosbeak and Golden-winged Cacique; the

appealing Rufous-capped Antshrike sometimes comes in close and lovely Fawn-breasted Tanagers add a splash of colour to the morning.

Nestling on the southern edge of the famous Calilegua National Park, and at an altitude of just 400m (1300ft), we reach Libertador General St. Martin for lunch. Having checked in at our 'oasis' hotel, in the late afternoon we will head to the park entrance to try for Golden-collared Macaw, Plush-crested Jay and some of the lower slope specialities such as Ochre-faced Tody-flycatcher, Ochre-cheeked Spinetail and perhaps a blue-crowned Amazonian Motmot.

We'll spend two nights here, staying at a nice hotel located in town, where there is a small but welcome swimming pool should you wish to relax... *Night Libertador General St. Martin*

Day 12

CALILEGUA NATIONAL PARK

Calilegua encompasses 70,000 hectares of rugged country with deep valleys and vertical slopes carpeted by dense *Yungas* forest, and is one of the most biodiverse regions we visit on our tour. We will spend all day in the reserve, concentrating on the higher slopes in search of key species we will not have seen elsewhere.

Driving and walking slowly along the main track through the forest, we'll hope to spot Dark-capped Flycatcher and Slaty Elaenia, along with Sclater's, Buff-banded and Rough-legged Tyrannulets. Black-banded and Great Rufous Woodcreepers may swoop in and, if we are really lucky, an elusive White-throated Quail Dove may be foraging at the forest edge or a Spotted Nightingale-thrush might appear for us - just as it did in 2016!

Our efforts will also focus on finding the confiding but difficult to spot Black-capped Antwren, White-throated Antpitta and Giant Antshrike, as they call from the trailside thickets. Easier-to-see Dot-fronted Woodpeckers, and Pale-legged and Golden-crowned Warblers may appear on the lower slopes, while in the skies overhead we might encounter Swallow-tailed Kites and have a good chance of the fine King Vulture. Hummingbirds to watch for include Speckled, Planalto Hermit

and Blue-capped Puffleg. Among the more common species here, we may see Smoky-brown Woodpecker, Purple-throated Euphonia, and Guira and Orange-headed Tanagers. *Night Libertador General St. Martin*

Day 13

RETURN TO SALTA, FLY BUENOS AIRES

This morning we begin our homeward journey, with a drive to Salta airport and a return flight south-east to Buenos Aires. If our flight schedule allows we may make a small detour into a patch of Chaco habitat for a last chance of Black-legged Seriema or even Brushland Tinamou!

Arriving in Buenos Aires late afternoon, after a fine restaurant dinner we rest and prepare for the journey home tomorrow. *Night Buenos Aires*

Days 14 - 15

FLY BUENOS AIRES-LONDON

Following a leisurely breakfast at our hotel this morning and a transfer through the busy streets of the Argentine capital, we catch our afternoon flight from Buenos Aires to London. Arrival in London next day (Day 15), where our amazing 'Argentinian Andes' tour comes to an end.

Trip Information

Group Limit 10 participants & 2 guides

Birds 330-360 species

What to Expect Early starts to our birding days in Argentina will be tempered with leisurely lunches, afternoon siestas (where possible) and occasional relaxed afternoons or early returns in the evening. We will need to leave before dawn on some days to get to locations as the sun rises above the mountains and birds are at their most active.

Around Salta and at Calilegua, we will spend our time at elevations below 2000m (6500ft). We climb much higher at both Cachi and Abra Pampa, where we spend some time birding at altitudes of 3000-4000m (10,000-13,000ft); this will of course be taken into account whilst out birding.

It will be cold early mornings in the mountains with a chance of frost on the ground, but temperatures will be pleasantly warm around Salta and very warm at Calilegua and Buenos Aires.

Accommodation 12 nights accommodation in Argentina, staying at good hotels and lodges - often amidst amazing scenery. At **Salta**, Selva Montana Ecolodge is set in woodland and is particularly welcoming; rooms are spacious and the food is very good, too. Our hotel at **Cachi** sits above the valley with great views and clean and comfortable rooms. **Humahuaca** is more rural, but our hotel here is comfortable, clean and warm. At **Libertador General St. Martin**, rooms are air-conditioned, spacious and comfortable – there is also a lovely swimming pool so bring your cossie if fancy a swim at midday.

All rooms have private facilities and wi-fi is usually available – if not always in your rooms, certainly in the lobby.

Meals All main meals are included in the tour price, commencing with lunch in Buenos Aires on Day 2 and concluding with breakfast there on the morning of Day 14. Food is generally fair to good in Argentina, with good-sized portions; though this is a nation of meat-eaters, we can cater for vegetarians, too!

Walking & Altitude Northwest Argentina is a mountainous region so expect some trails to be a little steep (although never really steep) in parts - but these sections are kept to a minimum and always taken slowly, at normal birding pace, with frequent stops to bird. The walking effort is mostly easy, but will be moderate at times due to the nature of the terrain and especially altitude.

After starting our birding at sea level in the capital Buenos Aires, we fly to Salta for our first taste of Andean birding at altitudes of between 1500 and 2000m (5000-6500ft), allowing us to acclimatise for the first few days. From here we drive up to the *paramo* zone at around 3400m (11,000ft), before dropping back down to ca. 2000m (6500ft). The highest elevations are kept to near the end of the trip, near Abra Pampa and Los Pozuelos at around 3900m (12800ft).

Good, sturdy walking shoes or lightweight boots with stout corrugated soles for grip are essential. **Maximum elevation:** 4000m (13,000ft).

Weather At this time of year, the weather is typically dry and sunny in the mountains. Although it will be cold first thing (warm clothing including gloves, scarf and a warm hat will be required, especially at higher elevations), it will feel warm once the sun has risen. In the *Yungas* cloudforest near Salta, it will be warmer and more humid, whilst at Calilegua and on the coast at Buenos Aires it will likely be very warm and humid. Temperatures in Buenos Aires during October range from 14-26C (57-79F), with a daily average of 7 hrs sunshine. Some rainfall is possible. At Salta, expect October temperatures in the range of 11-24C (52-75F), with up to 10 hours of sunshine and rather less chance of rain. In many areas north of Salta, rainfall is almost non-existent.

Flights We will fly with British Airways if possible, nonstop from London to Buenos Aires (or if schedules change or are unavailable, we will use another major carrier, with a change of planes en route). Flights within Argentina, from Buenos Aires to Salta and Salta to Buenos Aires are with an Argentinian domestic airline.

Ground Transport By minibus equipped with air-conditioning and a local driver. Most roads are good, but in the Andes near Los Pozuelos please note the tracks are rough and 'corrugated' in places so the ride can be bumpy and a little uncomfortable at times. On one or two days the distances are c.300km, but often less than this.

Insects There is no malaria risk in the areas visited on our tour. We may experience some biting insects at Calilegua, but mainly in other areas we visit there are none. Chiggers do not occur in the areas we visit.

Photos There are excellent photographic opportunities in the open habitats, with splendid landscapes and good light. In the cloudforests, birds can be more secretive and light levels are low making photography more challenging.

Tour Cost

2017 (15 days): £4595 (inc flights from London)

Land only cost: £3795

Deposit: £600

Single Supp: £475

Cost includes

Services of our expert guides; flights London-Buenos Aires; domestic flights Buenos Aires-Salta/Salta to Buenos Aires; 12 nights hotel accommodation in Argentina; all main meals (with water provided); local transport; all entry fees, tour based tips (lodges, driver and local guide/s) and airport taxes; map and Limosa checklist of birds.

Cost excludes

Insurance, drinks, airport meals/snacks & other items of a personal nature.

About Your Guides

Brian Small A teacher for 12 years, Brian now works full time in the Limosa office - when he's not away guiding our tours that is! He has travelled widely around the globe in pursuit of birds and is the inspiration behind a growing number of *Limosa* tours, including those to Argentina, Brazil, India (Tigers), Switzerland, Italy and Kuwait. He regularly leads our guided *BirdWalks* in Norfolk and Suffolk, too. Brian is an accomplished bird artist and current projects include illustrative work on major new guides to birds in Brazil, and various parts of Africa. He enjoys identification challenges such as gulls, and when at home largely concentrates on his local patch on the Suffolk coast, where he lives with his wife Janet and their teenage son Ben. Brimming with infectious enthusiasm, Brian has been guiding tours for Limosa since 2002. He has excellent experience of Neotropical birding, with tours to Colombia, Costa Rica, Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador and Galapagos already under his Limosa belt. Following his visits to Argentina in 2014 and 2016, he is very much looking forward to returning there again in 2017.

Mario Mosquera is our local guide for this tour, an outstanding Argentinian ornithologist

and bird tour leader who lives near the Selva Montana Lodge. He has extensive knowledge of South America birds, having travelled widely across the 'Bird Continent' and also lived in Brazil for a number of years. He speaks fluent English, Spanish and Portuguese and has excellent hearing!

Financial Security

Limosa Holidays is a fully bonded Tour Operator and a member of the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO). We hold an ATOL (Air Tour Operators Licence) granted by the CAA, providing for your protection in the event of Limosa Holidays' insolvency. Our licence number is ATOL 2950.

For tours not including the cost of a flight from the UK or for holidays booked by you as 'Land Only', all payments made to us are fully bonded through the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT). Our ABTOT membership number is 5230. For details please see our brochure or website: <http://www.limosaholidays.co.uk/financial-protection>

Limosa Loyalty Discount

We are proud of the number of loyal customers who travel regularly with us. As our way of saying 'thank you', we offer a **Frequent Travel Discount**. Under the scheme, everyone who takes four trips with us is entitled to claim a 5% discount on their 5th trip^{*2}. Remember to request your discount at time of booking!

^{*2} **Please note:** This offer applies to the basic tour cost only and excludes certain commission-based trips, extras such as additional flights, private extensions and cancellations. Discounts cannot be given in lieu of tour deposits or off the cost of single room supplements.

How To Book

Check availability on our website or with our office. We are happy to hold Provisional Reservations for up to 7 days. After this, we do require a Booking Form and deposit to confirm

your place on tour. Any unconfirmed space will be released.

Book Online, by Phone or by Post

You can book and pay the deposit simply and securely **Online** via our website, using the '**Book This Tour**' button on the relevant tour page or the **Booking** tab at the top of the page.

Telephone bookings must be confirmed in writing by completion of a Booking Form (there's one tucked inside every brochure or as a PDF download from our website), which can be mailed to us in the time honoured way.

Be sure to read our **Booking Conditions** and **General Information** (found at the back of our brochure, on our website or available from our office on request) prior to booking.

When to Book

Early booking is advised since flights and accommodation are much more easily secured well in advance. To encourage early booking, we are pleased to offer an **Early Bird Discount** - see our current brochure or website for details.

Our tours are limited to small group sizes. So they can fill up quickly - sometimes even before our new brochure comes out! Single rooms in particular can often be in short supply and among the first to go, so do try to plan well ahead if you definitely require one of these.

Last-minute Bookings: We inevitably receive a few unexpected cancellations over the course of a season so it is always worth enquiring about vacancies on any tour - even for those departing in just a few weeks!

Payments

The amount of **booking deposit** per person is shown alongside every tour. We accept deposit payments by **debit card, cheque** (payable to Limosa Holidays and drawn on a UK bank in GB Pounds Sterling) and **BACS** (please ask for our bank details). We also accept Visa and MasterCard **credit cards**, with no transaction charge on payment of tour deposits.

Full payment of the **balance** is due not later than 12 weeks prior to departure (20 weeks in the case of certain tours such as cruises or those involving rail travel). We will send you an invoice before the balance is due.

We accept payment for balances (and interim payments) by **cheque, BACS or UK debit card**. We also accept balances (and interim payments) by **credit card or overseas debit card** but with a charge of 2.5% of the transaction amount to help offset card company charges. [Note we do not retain your card details, which are destroyed once used. This means we may need to phone you again for details for subsequent payments.]

Payment by **overseas customers** must be in GB Pounds Sterling and may be made by transfer to our bank (please ask for our bank details), or by overseas debit or credit card with a 2.5% transaction charge. Please note we do not accept cheques on US Banks in US Dollars, or cheques in Euros or Eurocheques.

Late Booking Payments: In order for us to guarantee your airline seats, hotels etc., full payment is required at time of booking for all late bookings (*i.e. bookings made within 12 weeks of departure*).

Other Things You Need To Know

Passports & Visas

Your **passport** must be valid for the proposed duration of your stay.

Although no additional period of validity beyond this is required, when travelling anywhere overseas we **always recommend** that your passport has a minimum of 6 months left to run after your intended date of return home in case of unforeseen delay.

• **VISA NOT REQUIRED** by British nationals for entry into Argentina. On presentation of a valid British passport you will normally be granted a 90-day stay in the country.

Health & Vaccinations

Compulsory vaccinations: None.

Recommended vaccinations: tetanus and hepatitis A. Consult your doctor for current advice regarding diphtheria, TB, hepatitis B and typhoid, which may be recommended in some circumstances.

Malaria: Currently there is low to no malaria risk indicated for Argentina, but if you are concerned you should contact your local health centre for up-to-date advice. For a map, visit <http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations/south-america--antarctica/argentina/argentina-malaria-map.aspx>

Altitude: On this tour we will range from sea level (Buenos Aires) through mid (400m) to high elevation altitudes (1400-4000m). We spend a limited amount of time at the highest levels, where you might possibly feel some of the symptoms of high altitude. Most people only suffer headaches or shortness of breath, but travellers who know that they are particularly sensitive to high altitude should consult their doctor for advice before booking this tour.

The above information, together with that contained within our Travel Information sheets (sent to everyone who books), outlines health requirements for this tour. **Please note that these details are given for guidance only - and are only for certain diseases - and you must consult your doctor in good time prior to travel as to what immunisations (if any) are needed for your chosen holiday.**

For full and up-to-date health information we **urge everyone to consult The National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) website www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk prior to booking any overseas holiday.** NaTHNaC is funded by the UK Government's Health Protection Agency and provides health information for both health professionals and travellers, with information compiled by its own clinical and scientific team. You can search for individual country requirements, which are updated regularly.

Your Safety & Travel Advice

An unavoidable aspect of travelling abroad nowadays is the threat it may pose to your safety and security. The UK's Foreign and

Commonwealth Office (FCO) encourages British nationals to be better prepared for their overseas trips with a view to avoiding common travelling traumas, risks and dangers. In order for you to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination it is **strongly recommended** that you refer to the relevant FCO Travel Advice - www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice - both prior to booking and regularly before you travel.

It is standard Limosa policy for our office to send a copy of the relevant FCO Travel Advice about the tour to all participants along with their Final Letter (ca. 2-3 weeks prior to the trip).

'**Travel Aware**' - staying safe and healthy abroad - is a travel safety campaign run by the FCO, and another useful resource. Go to: www.gov.uk/travelaware

Travel Insurance

Good travel insurance is **essential** before setting off on any overseas trip. In common with all responsible tour operators, **it is a condition of booking** that all clients are fully and adequately insured before travelling overseas with us.

Your travel insurance should cover against cancellation, curtailment, missed departure, delay, personal accident, death, loss of baggage and valuables (see note below), personal liability and legal expenses.

Most importantly, your insurance must cover you fully in respect of medical care and repatriation should you become too ill to continue with the tour, including the cost of emergency evacuation by helicopter or air ambulance should this be necessary. Note that passenger liability insurance covering the transportation that we hire, particularly in Third World countries, may be inadequate; it is therefore important that your insurance cover includes sufficient provision for your dependents in the event of an accident.

We recommend that you obtain travel insurance as soon as possible after booking your holiday to ensure you are protected right from the word go in the event of unexpected

cancellation prior to departure due to accident or illness. You must inform your insurers of any pre-existing medical conditions (including those of persons not necessarily travelling but upon whom your holiday may depend) that may require treatment during a period of overseas travel or might cause you to cancel the trip.

Once you have arranged your insurance, please be sure to send us the following essential details: name and contact details of your insurance provider, your policy number, expiry date and your insurers 24hr Emergency Assistance number.

Important things to note about Insurance
Travel Insurance does **not** normally provide sufficient cover for valuable optical equipment, which is often best protected under your own household insurance policy. If in doubt ask your insurers for advice prior to travel.

Most travel insurance policies limit the amount of cover, typically up to a maximum tour cost of £5000 per person. If the tour you are booking exceeds this amount, additional cover can usually be provided upon payment of additional premium. **We recommend all travellers** check their individual policy limit to ensure the full cost of their holiday is covered.

Arranging Your Insurance: due to UK Government legislation, under Financial Services Authority (FSA) regulations, we are not allowed to offer or recommend travel related insurance to customers. Premiums can vary widely according to your age, needs, health, choice of destination and other factors, while many people nowadays have Annual Travel Insurance cover. For these reasons, we leave you free to shop around and pick your own policy, one best suited to your own individual needs.

General Information

www.limosaholidays.co.uk

Our website gives easy access to detailed tour itineraries (Tour Info Packs), trip reports, trip photos and the latest Limosa News.

Special Diets & Other Requests

We pass on all such requests to airlines, hotels and other suppliers, and do our best to ensure (but of course cannot guarantee) that your needs will be met. Please be sure to tell us about these (in as much detail as possible) at the time of booking, to allow good time to make the necessary arrangements.

Smoking

Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. For the enjoyment and comfort of all, we ask that smokers refrain from smoking in proximity to the group and respect our NO SMOKING policy in the vehicle, at meal times and when watching wildlife.

Any Questions?

If you have any questions at any time, you'll find our office staff friendly, efficient, approachable - and just a phone call away, eager to assist you in every way. Our office is open 09.00-17.00 hrs Mon-Fri, and can also be reached by fax and email. In the event we are unable to take your call, please leave a message on our answerphone (24hrs) and our office will contact you as soon as we can.

*Thank you for your interest in our tours.
We do hope that you will be able to join us
- and we look forward to hearing from you
again!*

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