

# Atacama

## Birds of the Silent Land



Chilean Flamingo

The city of San Pedro de Atacama is located in the north of Chile, between the desert and the foothills of the Andes. It is populated by the Atacama ethnic group. This race of shepherds and peasants achieved considerable cultural development before the arrival of the Incas in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. We will set up our camp in this oasis, which is the meeting point of various environments, which will enable us to get to know birds from the desert and the Andes mountain range.

The privileged location of the town will allow us to visit various environments that are very different from each other, and we will even get close to the border with Bolivia and Argentina in our search for local birds. Our trip will take us to locations over 4.000m above sea level, with majestic landscapes and where magnificent birds have adapted surprisingly well to such adverse living conditions.

Our trip will lead us to a diversity of environments like the biggest salt flat in Chile, rivers and lakes located at altitudes of over 4.000m and wetlands close to them, where we will find a wide range of wildlife.

### PROGRAM

#### Day 1. Welcome to Chile

Arrival and reception of passengers at Santiago International Airport and transfer to the hotel. After check-in, the passengers will have a few hours of spare time to settle in and take a rest from the flight. If some people were interested in spending their spare time bird watching, we could take an interesting trip into the Andes around Santiago. We will meet in the evening in order to get acquainted, have dinner and talk about our forthcoming trip. Overnight stay in Santiago.

#### Day 2. Calama – San Pedro de Atacama

We will take an early flight to Calama, from where we will continue by road to San Pedro de Atacama, our centre of operations for the next few days. After arriving at our hotel and a short rest, we will look at local birds in the environs of the city, hoping to see the West-Peruvian Dove, Chiguanco Thrush, American Kestrel and others. Overnight stay in San Pedro de Atacama.

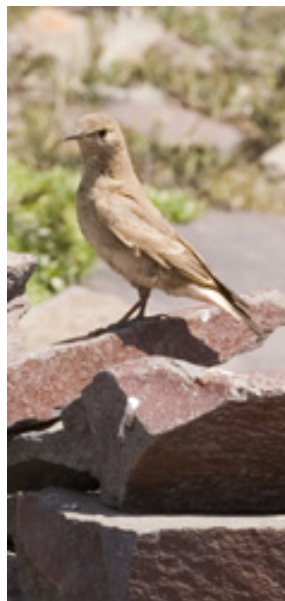
#### Day 3. Atacama Salt flat – Miscanti-Miñiques Lakes

This will be a long and interesting day. Very early in the morning we will visit the Atacama salt flat. We will be able to see the three flamingo species living there, the Chilean Flamingo, the Andean Flamingo and the James's Flamingo, as well as the Andean Avocet and the Puna Plover. Later we will continue to the Miscanti and Miñiques Lakes in search of the Horned Coot, the Andean Gull and other high altitude birds like the Hooded Siskin, Greenish Yellow-Finch, Ash-breasted Sierra-Finch and others. Overnight stay in San Pedro de Atacama.

#### Day 4. Wetlands of the Altiplano (High-plateau)

Today we will focus on Altiplanic wetland birds. We will travel up into the mountains, reaching 4.500m, on our way there, we will stop more than once, hoping to spot the Andean Goose, Chilean Flamingo, Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe, Golden-spotted Ground-Dove, Creamy-rumped Miner, Ochre-naped Ground-Tyrant and Red-backed Sierra-Finch.

If we are lucky, we might even find the Puna Snipe. Overnight stay in San Pedro de Atacama.



#### Day 5. Cacti and wet grasslands

Today we will go north through little gulches and wetlands in search of birds like the Cordilleran Canastero, Scale-throated Earthcreeper, Mountain Caracara, Andean Negrito and, with a little luck, the Mountain Parakeet. At the end of the day we will visit a sector where Echinopsis Cacti grow, giving shape to beautifully surreal hillsides. Overnight stay in San Pedro de Atacama.

#### Day 6. Return to Santiago

Early in the morning we will visit the Quebrada de Jere (Jere Gulch), an oasis in the middle of the desert, where we hope to see our last birds on this trip. Around midday we will return to Calama to take the flight back to Santiago. Overnight stay in Santiago.

#### Day 7. End of the programme

After a good night's rest and a nice breakfast, the trip will end with check out and transfer to the airport, if requested.