



## CHEESEMANS' ECOLOGY SAFARIS

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### Easter Island, Chile, and Argentina

#### *Island to Andes*

February 11 to March 1, 2023



Guanaco

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## SAFARI OVERVIEW

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Join us on an exciting South American journey to Easter Island, through central Chile, and across Argentina's rustic wine country. Stroll amongst the monolithic *moai* statues of Easter Island, carved from basalt lava by Polynesian settlers centuries ago. Visit abandoned settlements, explore ceremonial centers, and take a boat ride for a different perspective of the island, where you might see petroglyphs painted high on the cliffs above. Travel through Chile and Argentina to appreciate the variety of bird and mammal life that has adapted to arid and high-elevation areas. Ride the nutrient-rich waters of the Humboldt Current on our pelagic boats to search for seabirds and mammals. Visit the desolate alien landscape of the Atacama Desert, the lush and volcanic Lauca National Park, and the bird-rich Azaca, Chaca, and Lluta valleys. Traverse the Andes to continue your search for a different suite of birds in Argentina's famous wine country, while sampling delectable local wines along the way. Come along for an unforgettable journey of exploration into the history, wildlife, and sweeping landscapes of South America.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Learn about Easter Island's *moai* statues and the *tangata manu* competition where rulership of Easter Island was defined through a ritual race for a bird egg.
- Marvel at the nimble flight of the giant hummingbird, the largest of the hummingbird family.
- Search for blue and humpback whales, Risso's dolphins, fur seals, marine otters, and a variety of large and small seabirds on the rich waters along the Chilean coast.
- Wind down after an exciting day of bird watching with wine tasting at local vineyards.

**LEADER:** Claudio Vidal, assisted by local guides.

**DAYS:** 19, including estimated travel time.

**GROUP SIZE:** 8.

**COST:** \$8,950 per person, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See the *Costs* section on page 7.

| Date      | Description  | Accommodation                    | Meals   |
|-----------|--|----------------------------------|---------|
| Feb 11    | Travel to Santiago, Chile.   |                                  |         |
| Feb 12    | Arrive in Santiago.  | Santiago Airport Holiday Inn     | D       |
| Feb 13–15 | Fly to Easter Island and explore its famous cultural sites. Sail to the surrounding islets.  | Hotel Altiplanico, Easter Island | B, L, D |
| Feb 16    | Free morning to visit local crafts market and anthropological museum. Fly to Santiago.       | Santiago Airport Holiday Inn     | B, L, D |
| Feb 17    | Fly to Arica and bird the rocky coastal areas.   | Hotel Diego de Almagro, Arica    | B, L, D |
| Feb 18    | Three- to four-hour boat trip off the coast of Arica. Explore Azapa and Chaca oasis valleys. |                                  | B, L, D |
| Feb 19–20 | Visit Lluta Valley and then a day in the Putre area.   | Hotel Q-Antati, Putre            | B, L, D |
| Feb 21    | Lauca National Park and drive to Arica.  | Hotel Diego de Almagro, Arica    | B, L, D |
| Feb 22    | Fly to Santiago and explore La Campana National Park.  | Hotel Oceanic, Viña del Mar      | B, L, D |
| Feb 23    | Boat trip off the coast of Valparaíso and then bird Cachagua.                                |                                  | B, L, D |
| Feb 24    | Bird Rio Maipo, visit Laguna El Peral Nature Reserve and wine taste at a local vineyard.     |                                  | B, L, D |
| Feb 25    | Drive over the Andes to Uspallata, Argentina birding along the way.                          | Hotel Pueblo del Rio, Uspallata  | B, L, D |
| Feb 26    | Bird Uspallata area and wine taste at a local vineyard. Drive to Mendoza.                    | Hotel Huentala, Mendoza          | B, L, D |
| Feb 27    | Bird in the Monte Desert ecoregion toward San Luis and wine taste at a local vineyard.       |                                  | B, L, D |
| Feb 28    | Fly home from Mendoza.   |                                  | B       |
| Mar 1     | Arrive home.   |                                  |         |

## LEADER

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### **Claudio Vidal**

Claudio is a native Chilean, a leading ornithologist, and co-author of more than 20 books on wildlife. An avid bird watcher from the age of 12, he now leads tours throughout the region, sharing his expertise about seabirds and marine mammals of the Humboldt Current, Patagonia, and Antarctica. Additionally, his passion for botany has led him to document wildflowers of the desert and Mediterranean regions of the world. He is easygoing, passionate about his work, and eager to share his knowledge with you.

## DETAILED ITINERARY

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### **Feb 11 ~ Travel to Santiago, Chile**

#### **Feb 12 ~ Arrive in Santiago**

Your hotel is conveniently located right outside the airport, so once you get your luggage and go through customs, walk across the street to check in. Meet Claudio for dinner and a rundown of the next day's schedule. If you would like to arrive earlier, we can arrange extra nights.

#### **Feb 13–15 ~ Fly to and explore Easter Island**

Fly 2,360mi across the Pacific Ocean to Easter Island, where our local guide will meet you to begin exploring this famous island. The island is compact, taking less than an hour to drive from one end to the other. You'll visit cultural sites and, weather permitting, enjoy an afternoon boat trip to the *motus* (islets).

Historic sites are abundant around the island, each featuring unique stories and photo opportunities. Cultural stops may include some of the following sites:

#### **Ahu Akahanga**

This *ahu* (platform) is the burial site of the first king of Easter Island. In most *ahu*, the *moai* lie face down, but here you can find them both face-up and face-down.

#### **Ahu Akivi**

One of the few *ahu* built in the interior of the island rather than on the coast, Ahu Akivi's seven *moai* look out towards the ocean, directly facing the sun during the spring and autumn equinox. Oral tradition says the *moai* at Ahu Akivi represent the young explorers sent to investigate the island before it was colonized.

#### **Ahu Anakena**

Folklore or science? According to oral tradition, the first settlement was located here because the beach provided the best shelter from prevailing swells and a sandy slope to launch and land canoes. However, radiocarbon dating has shown that other sites preceded Anakena by many years, even centuries.

### **Ahu Tahai**

Located within walking distance of your lodge, this site contains three *ahu* (from north to south): Ko Te Riku (*moai* with restored eyes), Tahai, and Vai Ure.

### **Ahu Tongariki**

The largest restored *ahu* on Easter Island with fifteen *moai*, including the heaviest ever erected on the island.

### **Ahu Vinapu**

The ceremonial center of Vinapu includes one of the larger *ahu* on the island, which has extraordinary stonemasonry consisting of large and carefully fitted slabs of basalt, reminiscent of those of the Incas in Peru.

### **Orongo village and petroglyphs**

Situated high on a cliff overlooking the *motu* on the southwest end of Easter Island, Orongo is a stone village, ceremonial center, and traditional site of the *tangata manu*, a dangerous annual competition between the clans of Easter Island. Last held in 1867, the *tangata manu* competition began when the islanders expected sooty terns to return to nest. Each clan leader chose a member to race and be the first to get and return a sooty tern egg. Contestants scrambled down the steep rock face, braved sharks while swimming across to Motu Nui, then waited on the islet, often for days or weeks, until a sooty tern laid an egg. Once the first egg was found, the contestant would take the egg and race back – all while keeping the egg intact in a reed basket attached to his forehead. The winning clan leader gained prestige and power as the birdman, shaved his head, and lived in ceremonial seclusion for a year, while his clan gained sole rights to collect the eggs and birds of Motu Nui for the season. Look along the cliff for petroglyphs revealing the famous birdman motif.

### **Rano Raraku and Puna Pau**

Rano Raraku is an extinct volcano that contains Puna Pau, the quarry from which all *moai* were carved. Half-finished or half-buried statues lie all around the site, each with its own unique design or face.

### **Feb 16 ~ Free morning before flying to Santiago**

Enjoy a free morning to peruse the local craft or main street markets for souvenirs, visit the Sebastian Englert anthropological museum, or walk along the coast. Then fly back to Santiago for an overnight before starting your adventure on the mainland.

### **Feb 17 ~ Fly to Arica and bird coastal areas**

Fly from Santiago to Arica, Chile's northernmost city. While exploring the winter grounds of many migratory coastal species, listen for the effervescent piping calls of the whimbrel or see the elegant tern plunging into the ocean for fish.

### **Feb 18 ~ Boat trip and visit Azapa and Chaca Valleys**

Board a boat for a half-day excursion off the coast of Arica to find an extensive variety of seabirds, such as the Peruvian pelican and booby, Belcher's gull, and Inca tern. If you are lucky, you may catch a glimpse of the elaborate mating display of a red-legged cormorant.

Explore the Azapa and Chaca Valleys in the outskirts of Arica. Here you may find unique South American hummingbirds such as the Chilean woodstar and oasis hummingbird, feeding on the abundance of

flowering plants. These bird-rich valleys are also home to croaking ground-dove, tamarugo and cinereous conebill, vermillion flycatcher, Peruvian meadowlark, hooded siskin, and slender-billed finch.

### **Feb 19–20 ~ Lluta Valley and then full day in Putre area**

Visit the mouth of the Lluta River, one of the most important coastal wetlands in the region, to view migratory shorebirds and other species. The river mouth's conditions are always changing, so expect surprises, such as birds from the highlands visiting the coast, or unusual herons or waterfowl visiting from adjacent regions of Peru.

Watch the scenery and wildlife change as you slowly drive up roughly 11,000ft in elevation, from the Andes foothills to the town of Putre. You'll pass through the arid lands of the Atacama Desert, one of the driest and oldest deserts in the world, with very few native fauna. Above 8,000ft, arid scrub vegetation starts to appear and with it, some signs of the abundant birdlife to come: Peruvian martin, Andean tinamou, Andean hillstar, mountain parakeet, black-winged ground-dove, straight-billed and white-throated earthcreepers, Chiguanco thrush, and many others. Cacti and other succulents become more prominent as the road twists through a region of curiously shaped rocks. Frequent stops along the ascent allow you to investigate each habitat and search for the high-altitude birds of that region, while keeping an eye on the surrounding hills for the rare northern Andean deer called *huemel* and grazing wild herds of guanaco.

### **Feb 21 ~ Lauca National Park and drive to Arica**

Immerse yourself in the breathtaking beauty of Chile's historic volcanic national park. Lauca National Park contains 140,000 hectares of Puna grasslands, situated on the Bolivian border at about 10,500 to 20,650ft. A World's Biosphere Reserve, this park was established to protect one of the highest lakes on the planet – the Chungará – and encompasses many habitat types, from saltpans and freshwater lagoons to Andean bogs and wind-swept Andean plains. Among this peaceful backdrop of snow-capped volcanos, you'll find birds adapted to the high Andes, including silvery grebe, crested and Andean ruddy ducks, Puna teal, ibis, and plover, plus three flamingo species.



Lauca National Park  
© Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

As you continue your birding adventure throughout the park, you will be rewarded with spectacular mountain scenery. Some mammals have also adapted to live in this harsh terrain, so you may come across grazing herds of alpaca or guanaco, or spot a mountain vizcacha scurrying across the *bofedal*, the high-altitude peat bog of the Andes. Search the wetter grasslands and bogs for the rare diademed sandpiper-plover, and marvel at the specialized species of birds that make the *bofedal* home.

### **Feb 22 ~ Fly to Santiago and explore La Campana National Park**

Fly back to Santiago and head to La Campana National Park, home to one of the last palm forests of Chilean wine palm. Wildlife flourishes in this preserved landscape, where you might find the lesser grison or culpeo fox hunting, an iridescent jewel lizard sunny itself on a rock, or a sleepy rufous-legged owl in the trees above.

### **Feb 23 ~ Boat trip off Valparaíso and bird Cachagua**

The ocean waters off the coastline of Valparaíso are rich in nutrient upwellings from the Humboldt Current, making them ideal feeding grounds for seabirds. Hear the cacophony of seabirds and view these

magnificent aerial hunters from your boat, as you look for albatross, petrels, shearwaters, skuas, and terns that feed in these waters.

Once back on land, you'll drive along the coast to investigate a muddy estuary and various rocky headlands. Look for brown-hooded gulls stealing crabs from the red-gartered coot and sea lions hauled out to sun themselves on the rocks.

### **Feb 24 ~ Bird Rio Maipo, Laguna El Peral Nature Reserve, and wine tasting**

Today, head north to the coast in San Antonio to explore the Rio Maipo estuary, including the river mouth, productive coastal lagoons, and marshes nearby. Search for stripe-backed bittern, black-headed duck, and many-colored rush tyrant at the tiny El Peral Nature Reserve. This afternoon, relax and savor some Chilean wines at a local vineyard.

### **Feb 25 ~ Drive over high Andes to Uspallata, Argentina**

Drive along the International Road, Paso Libertadores, past the famous ski area of Portillo, over the Andes and into Argentina. Witness first-hand the division between cultures and biodiversity created by these mountains. Look for the icon of the Andes, the Andean condor, soaring overhead as they ride thermal currents to the highest peaks. Other species you may find include mountain caracara, white-sided hillstar, rufous-banded and creamy-rumped miners, many species of ground-tyrants, greater yellow-finch, and band-tailed sierra-finch.

### **Feb 26 ~ Bird Uspallata area and wine tasting**

The valley of Uspallata will offer a proper birding welcome to this fascinating Gaucho region of Argentina, famous for its wines. The orchards and poplar groves host a number of species absent on the Chilean side, which include the striking red-tailed comet, fork-tailed flycatcher, great kiskadee, white-winged black-tyrant, chaco earthcreeper, Patagonian and white-tipped mockingbirds, and the delightful rufous-sided warbling-finch. In the afternoon, stop to sample wine from an Argentinian vineyard.

### **Feb 27 ~ Bird toward San Luis and wine tasting**

The Monte Desert ecoregion is a vast scrub community in Argentina and is home to exciting encounters for bird enthusiasts. You will explore the lowland plains located east of Mendoza into the adjacent province of San Luis to discover crested and sandy gallitos, endemic Steinbach's canastero and white-throated cacholote, tufted tit-spinetail, and the lovely cinnamon warbling-finch, among several others. Reminisce with your fellow travelers over a glass of wine in a pastoral vineyard before birding your way back to Mendoza.

### **Feb 28 ~ Fly home**

Transfer to the Mendoza Airport for your flights home.

### **Mar 1 ~ Arrive home**



Austral Pygmy-owl  
© Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

## **COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)**

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### **Cost**

| <b>Type</b>                 | <b>Cost per Person</b> |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Trip Cost, double occupancy | \$8,950                |
| Single Supplement           | \$1,750                |

Costs are per person, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See *Included* and *Not Included* sections for more details.

If you are a single traveler, we will find a roommate for you, but if we cannot find you a roommate, we may charge you a single supplement. Single rooms cost extra and are subject to availability.

### **Payment Schedule**

| <b>Payment</b> | <b>Due Date</b>               | <b>Amount per Person</b> |
|----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Deposit        | Due now to reserve your space | \$500                    |
| Second         | March 15, 2022                | \$2,000                  |
| Final          | September 15, 2022            | Remaining Balance        |

Payments are due based on the schedule above. All reservations require a deposit to confirm reservation of your space.

### **Cancellations**

Until the Final Payment due date, deposits are refundable except for a cancellation fee of \$150 per person, which can be applied toward another tour if reserved within six months of the cancelled trip's departure date. Cancellations are non-transferrable. No refunds are given after the Final Payment due date.

### **Included**

- All leaders, transport, park entry fees, and permits for all activities unless described as optional.
- Accommodations for the nights of February 12 through February 27.
- Meals from dinner on February 12 through breakfast on February 28.
- Transfers to Mendoza Airport on February 28; on February 12 and February 13, your hotel is across the street from the Santiago Airport, so you may walk to the hotel or airport.
- Three boat trips.
- Three wine tastings.
- Bottled water.
- Trip Materials – information about flights, packing, entry and departure requirements, airport transfers, gratuities, etc.

### **Not Included**

- All airfare, airport and departure taxes, and excess baggage fees. Airfare is approximately \$1,100 to \$1,800 from the US to Santiago, Chile, and back to the US from Mendoza, Argentina, depending on origin, plus approximately \$1,970 for four internal flights.
- Passport and visa fees.
- We can arrange extra hotel nights for an extra cost.

- Gratuities – tipping is always discretionary. However, we will add a gratuity of \$400 per participant (\$25 per participant per day for February 13 to February 28 with our local guides) to your final payment.
- Emergency medical and evacuation insurance and trip cancellation insurance. For more information see [www.cheesemans.com/travel-insurance](http://www.cheesemans.com/travel-insurance).
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone calls, medical costs or hospitalization, room service, alcoholic and other beverages, items not on the regular menu, etc. If you have special dietary needs, please indicate them on your Reservation Form.

## SIGN UP

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Please contact us first to check availability, reserve your space, and obtain a Reservation Form. To confirm your reservation, we require a deposit and signed form from each participant.

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

Email: [info@cheesemans.com](mailto:info@cheesemans.com)

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Phone: (800) 527-5330 or (408) 741-5330

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## OTHER DETAILS

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### Climate

On this trip, the climate can vary with each change of scenery. On Easter Island, it will be warm and slightly humid, with a cooling ocean breeze. Temperatures average in the low 80s°F but could reach into the 90s°F with little chance of rain. In Chile and Argentina, you can expect conditions in the mountains to change from cold and windy one moment to warm and sunny the next, contrasting with the continual warmth in the lowlands and along the coast. In the hottest regions of northern Chile, it may reach 86°F, but it is late summer there, so dressing in layers is best.

### Fitness Level

This trip involves a one-day ascent from Arica to Putre, with an elevation gain of roughly 11,000ft. If you have heart or lung disease, or any other reason to suspect that high altitude may pose a problem for you, please speak with your doctor before booking this trip. Throughout the trip, you'll walk at a slow pace, but the effects of altitude may make some of the walks seem more strenuous than the distance suggests, especially in Lauca National Park. Please contact us if you have any health concerns that may make this trip challenging.

### Accommodations

Lodging choices in the town of Putre, Chile are limited, but we've chosen the best accommodations available during your stay here. If you are concerned about the standard of accommodations being below your expectations, please ask us before booking.

**Seasickness**

Don't let a fear of seasickness scare you away! We have three boat trips on this tour, so it's a good idea to bring medication if you get seasick or are unsure. Read our suggestions for coping with seasickness at [www.cheesemans.com/seasickness](http://www.cheesemans.com/seasickness) and contact us if you have any concerns.

**Flights**

Airfare is not included in trip costs. Detailed logistical information and the contact information for our recommended flight-ticketing agent are included in the Trip Materials we will send you. Please let us know if you are arriving earlier or staying later as we are happy to assist you with any extra overnights that you might want to arrange.

Flights you (or a travel agent) book: Arrive in Santiago, Chile (SCL) in time for dinner on February 12. Depart from Mendoza, Argentina (MDZ) anytime on February 28.

Flights we book for you: Four internal flights; we'll add the flight cost to your final trip balance.

**Terms and Conditions**

Read our current Terms and Conditions at <https://cheesemans.com/terms-and-conditions>.

**Conservation**

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris is passionate about conserving the precious regions that we travel to and supports many conservation efforts. By visiting these areas, we contribute to sustainable conservation of these valuable wildlife habitats. We urge you to support conservation organizations that protect and restore natural habitats and write letters to tourism and government agencies to promote work in preserving wildlife.

We aim to make all our trips carbon neutral by splitting the cost of carbon offsetting with our participants. For your convenience, the optional donation amount for your half of the carbon offset will be indicated on your invoice. We source high quality offsets through CarbonTree Conservation Fund, a non-profit we helped found, supporting pioneering forest conservation in the Rio Bravo Reserve in Belize, a Nature Conservancy project ([www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/latin-america/belize/rio-bravo-conservation-area/](http://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/latin-america/belize/rio-bravo-conservation-area/)).