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Uruguay

## Sierra de Minas Birding Experience

The Sierras de Minas region is one of Uruguay's premier birding destinations and among the most scenic natural areas within easy reach of Montevideo. Located just a short drive from the capital, it offers a striking contrast to the surrounding lowlands, with rolling hills, rocky outcrops, valleys, streams, native woodlands, marshes, and open grasslands creating some of the country's most beautiful landscapes. This remarkable mosaic of habitats supports a rich diversity of birdlife, making the region especially rewarding for birdwatchers.



Salto del Penitente, Department of Lavalleja.

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## Itinerary

**Maximum duration:** 10 hours

**Pick-up** is arranged from any location in Montevideo or Punta del Este. After departing, we will travel to the scenic hill country of Lavalleja Department, one of the most attractive landscapes in southern Uruguay. Throughout the day, driving times between birding sites do not exceed 40 minutes, allowing ample time for observation and photography.

Our main destinations are **Villa Serrana** and **Salto del Penitente**, two of most scenic birding locations in eastern Uruguay. Depending on recent bird records, seasonal conditions, and guests' target species, additional stops may be incorporated to maximize birding opportunities.

Villa Serrana combines rolling hills, native woodland patches, streams, shrublands, and open grasslands, creating a diverse mosaic of habitats. These environments support a rich bird community, including specialties such as **Dusky-legged Guan**, **Many-colored Rush Tyrant**, **Yellow-browed Tyrant**, **Chestnut-backed Tanager**, **Diademed Tanager**, **Blue-and-yellow Tanager** and **Glaucous-blue Grosbeak**. The area is particularly rewarding for woodland and edge species and offers excellent opportunities for photography.

Around midday, we enjoy a **picnic lunch** at a scenic site in Villa Serrana, seated at tables overlooking a valley lake surrounded by the hills. Clean and well-maintained restroom facilities are available, and the area often provides excellent birdwatching opportunities even during lunch.

In the afternoon, we continue to Salto del Penitente. Here, the Penitente Stream forms a picturesque waterfall surrounded by rocky slopes, native woodland, and panoramic viewpoints overlooking the surrounding sierras. Birding is conducted along easy trails and observation points, where the combination of forest and open habitats adds further diversity to the day's species list.

This itinerary combines some of Uruguay's most spectacular scenery with excellent birding opportunities, offering a rewarding mix of grassland, wetland, shrubland, and woodland species in a relaxed and highly enjoyable setting.



Yellow-browed Tyrant by Bill Pohley.

## Logistics & Comfort

- **Minimal travel time between sites** — Birding locations are situated within a relatively small area, with driving times between stops typically ranging from 40 minutes to 1 hour, maximizing time spent in the field.
- **Low to moderate physical demand** — Terrain is mostly flat to gently rolling, with short walks on easy trails, gravel roads, grass, and firm ground. Several observations are also made from comfortable stationary viewpoints.
- **Restroom Facilities** — Clean and well-maintained restroom facilities are available at the picnic area in Villa Serrana, as well as at additional stops throughout the day when needed.
- **Picnic Lunch** — Around midday, we enjoy a picnic lunch at a scenic site in Villa Serrana, seated at tables overlooking a lake nestled among the hills. The area provides a peaceful setting with excellent opportunities for birdwatching even during lunch.