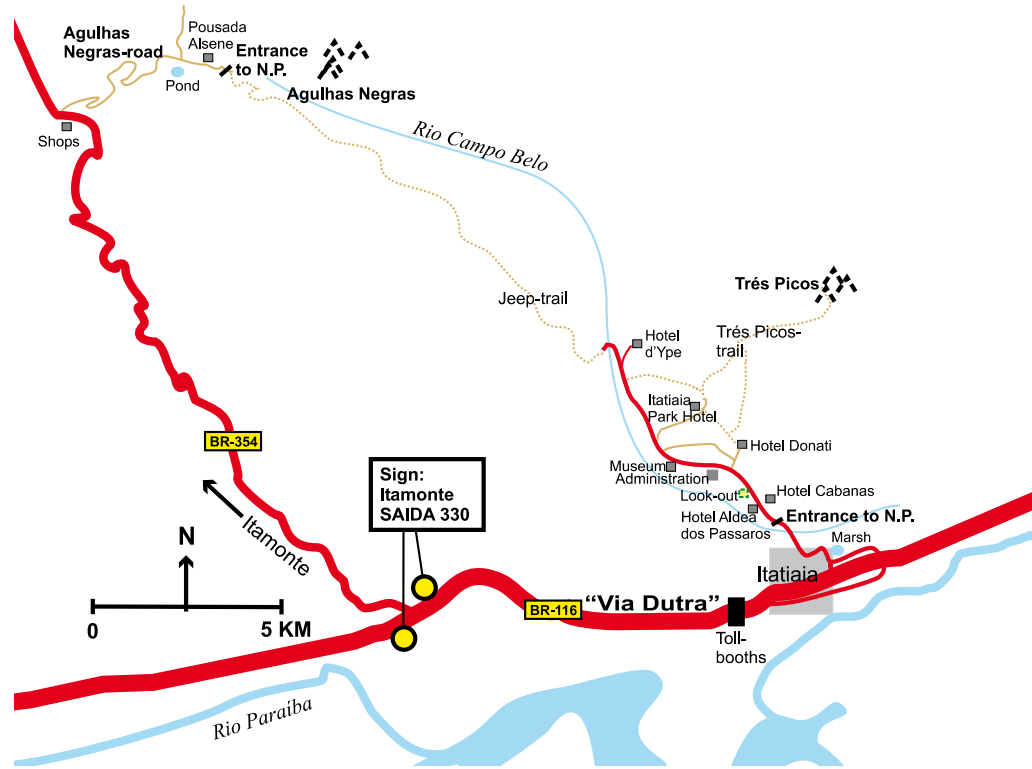


Itatiaia National Park



Itatiaia National Park is one of the most famous birdwatching sites in Southeast Brazil. It has become a “must” for foreign birdwatchers and is usually included in both independent travellers’ and groups’ itineraries. A rich avifauna (some 357 species recorded to date), comfortable accommodation in the middle of a first class birding area and a couple of excellent trails all make this an enjoyable site for a few days birding.

In Itatiaia National Park you have a pretty good chance of observing a wide selection of endemic and restricted-range birds; try to reserve at least three days to cover the park’s main birding areas. The total of endemics seen in the park is 51 but some of the specialities of the park are scarce and elusive.

Itatiaia National Park is a fairly large park, 300 km² in area, and the altitude varies from 700 m to almost 2,800 m. The forests are mainly pristine rainforest, but there are also mature secondary forests. The bird diversity is higher in the lower part of the forest, but most of the specialities are found in the middle level. A remarkable area in

the park is the high altitude forest where trees are quite low and covered in a multitude of epiphytes. In the treeless highland plateau, *campo rupestris*, the vegetation consists of low bushes, grass and bromeliads. Only a few birds live there, but, for example, the endemic Itatiaia Spinetail *Oreophylax moreirae* is quite common.

How to get there: Leave the Rio de Janeiro – São Paulo highway (Via Dutra) following the signs to Itatiaia (Saída 317) and Itatiaia National Park. If coming from São Paulo leave the highway immediately after the pay toll in Itatiaia. The way through the city and up to the park is well signposted. From the city it is 7 km to the entrance gate and from the entrance gate it is 7 km to Hotel Simon and 9 km to Hotel do Ypê, which are both situated in the main birding area. There are many daily buses from Rio de Janeiro to Itatiaia and, from Itatiaia, local city buses go to the park.

The Park is open for daytime visitors from 8 am to 5 pm. In February 2009 the entrance fee was 3 R\$/person and 5R\$/car. The prices of hotel rooms are variable, from 80 to 100 R\$ including breakfast and lunch. Hotel Aldeia dos Passaros and Hotel Cabanas are the cheapest ones, and are also the nearest to the entrance gate. Hotel Donati is situated a little bit higher in the middle of good forest, and a good trail towards the Três Picos trail and Hotel Itatiaia Park starts from there. Hotel Simon was recently acquired by new owners, and is now called the Hotel Itatiaia Park.

Hotel Itatiaia Park and Hotel do Ypê are both conveniently situated in the middle of a good birding area. The Visitor Centre has a big collection of stuffed birds and other animals collected from the park and is a good place to start familiarizing yourself with the local birds. There are no *supermercados* inside the park, so it is advisable to bring some food and drink from the outside so you have something to keep you going on the trails between meals.

Birdwatching in the National Park is divided mainly into two main areas:

1. the area around the hotels, including the trail network (altitude 700 – 1,750 m)
2. the Agulhas Negras road area at a higher altitude (1,550 – 2,400 m), see page 49.

The hotel area

The main birding area is around the hotels. The longest and maybe the best trail, the Três Picos trail, starts from the Itatiaia Park Hotel (ex-Hotel Simon). It goes for some 5 km to the peak, Três Picos (1,750 m), through fine forest. Along the trail



Planalto Tyrannulet *Phyllomyias fasciatus*

Entrance gate of Itatiaia National Park

