

# Country Guide for

# CHILE



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## 1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

**Location:** West coast of South America.

Servicio Nacional de Turismo (SERNATUR) (Tourist Office)  
Avenida Providencia 1550, PO Box 14082, Santiago, Chile  
**Tel:** (2) 731 8300 or 731 8384. Fax: (2) 251 8469 or 236 4054.  
**E-mail:** info@sernatur.cl  
**Web site:** <http://www.sernatur.cl> or [www.visitichile.org](http://www.visitichile.org)

Embassy and Consulate of the Republic of Chile  
12 Devonshire Street, London W1N 2DS  
**Tel:** (020) 7580 6392 (embassy and tourist office) or 7580 1023 (visa section). Fax: (020) 7436 5204. Opening hours: 0900-1730 Monday to Thursday, 0900-1400 Friday (embassy); 0930-1300 Monday to Thursday (consulate; by appointment only).  
**Web site:** <http://www.echileuk.demon.co.uk>

British Embassy  
Casilla 72D, Avenida el Bosque Norte 0125, Las Condes, Santiago, Chile  
**Tel:** (2) 370 4100. Fax: (2) 370 4170 (consular) or 370 4180 (commercial). E-mail: embsan@britemb.cl  
**Web site:** <http://www.britemb.cl>  
**Consulate in:** Punta Arenas.

Embassy of the Republic of Chile  
1732 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036  
**Tel:** (202) 785 1746. Fax: (202) 887 5579. E-mail: echile@radix.net

Chilean Consulate

## 2 GENERAL

Suite 601, 3rd Floor, 866 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017  
**Tel:** (212) 355 0612. Fax: (212) 888 5288.  
**Consulates in:** Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Philadelphia and San Francisco.

Embassy of the United States of America  
Avenida Andrés Bello 2800, Las Condes, Santiago, Chile  
**Tel:** (2) 232 2600. Fax: (2) 330 3710.  
**Web site:** <http://www.usembassy.cl>

Embassy of the Republic of Chile  
50 O'Connor Street, Suite 1413, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6L2  
**Tel:** (613) 235 4402 or 235 9940. Fax: (613) 235 1176.  
**E-mail:** echileca@embachile-canada.com

Chilean Consulate General  
Suite 710, 1010 Sherbrooke Street West, Montréal, Québec H3A 2R7  
**Tel:** (514) 499 0405. Fax: (514) 499 8914. E-mail: cgmontca@total.net  
**Other consulates in:** Edmonton, Toronto, Vancouver and Winnipeg.

Canadian Embassy

Nueva Tajamar 481, North Tower, Piso 12, Santiago, Chile  
**Tel:** (2) 362 9660-3. Fax: (2) 362 9393. E-mail: stago@dfait-maeci.gc.ca  
**Web site:** <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/santiago>

**Country dialling code:** 56.

General

**Area:** 756,626 sq km (292,135 sq miles).

**Population:** 14,419,000 (1996).

**Population Density:** 19.0 per sq km.

**Capital:** Santiago (de Chile). Population: 5,076,808 (1995).

**Geography:** Chile is situated in South America, bounded to the north by Peru, to the east by Bolivia and Argentina, to the west by the Pacific and to the south by the Antarctic. The country exercises sovereignty over a number of islands off the coast, including the Juan Fernández Islands and Easter Island. Chile is one of the most remarkably shaped countries in the world; a ribbon of land, 4200km (2610 miles) long and nowhere more than 180km (115 miles) wide. The Andes and a coastal highland range take up one-third or half of the width in parts, and run parallel with each other from north to south. The coastal range forms high, sloped cliffs into the sea from the northern to the central area. Between the ranges runs a fertile valley, except in the north where transverse ranges join the two major ones, and in the far south where the sea has broken through the coastal range to form an assortment of archipelagos and channels. The country contains wide variations of soil and vast differences of climate. This is reflected in the distribution of the population, and in the wide range of occupations from area to area. The northern part of the country consists mainly of the Atacama Desert, the driest in the world. It is also the main mining area. The central zone is predominantly agricultural. The south is forested and contains some agriculture; further south, the forests on the Atlantic side give way to rolling grassland on which sheep and cattle are raised.

**Government:** Republic. Gained independence from Spain in 1818. Head of State and Government: President Ricardo Lagos Escobar since 2000.

**Language:** The official language is Spanish, but English is widely spoken.

**Religion:** Predominantly Christian, of which 79% are Roman Catholic.

**Time:** Mainland and Juan Fernández Islands: GMT - 4 (GMT - 3 from second Sunday in October to second Saturday in March).

**Easter Island:** GMT - 6 (GMT - 5 from second Sunday in October to second Saturday in March).

**Electricity:** 220 volts AC, 50Hz. Three-pin plugs and screw-type bulbs are used.

**Communications:**

**Telephone:** Full IDD available. Country code: 56. Outgoing international code: 00. Compañía de Teléfonos de Chile provides most services though there are a few independent companies. Cheap rate is applicable 1800-0500 Monday to Friday and all day Saturday, Sunday and public holidays.

**Mobile telephone:** There are 3 network types in existence: GSM 1900, AMPS 800 and AMPS/TDMA. Network operators include Entel PCS (web site: <http://www.entelpcs.cl>).

**Fax:** Telex Chile, Transradio Chilena and ITT Comunicaciones provide services in main towns.

**Internet/E-mail:** ISPs include Intel Chile (web site: <http://www.intelchile.net>). There are some cybercafés in the main towns.

**Telegram:** Telex Chile, Transradio Chilena and ITT Comunicaciones Mundiales provide services in main towns.

**Post:** Daily airmail services to Europe take approximately three to four days. Post office hours in Santiago: 0900-1800 Monday to Friday; 0900-1230 Saturday.

**Press:** Spanish dailies include El Mercurio, La Nación, Las Ultimas Noticias, La Época and La Tercera de la Hora. Foreign newspapers are available.

**BBC World Service and Voice of America frequencies:** From time to time these change.

**BBC:**

MHz17.8415.199.9155.970

**Voice of America:**

MHz13.749.4556.1651.530

### 3 PASSPORT

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
<b>British</b>	Yes	1	Yes
<b>Australian</b>	Yes	1/2	Yes
<b>Canadian</b>	Yes	1/2	Yes
<b>USA</b>	Yes	1/2	Yes
<b>OtherEU</b>	Yes	1	Yes
<b>Japanese</b>	Yes	1	Yes

**PASSPORTS:** Valid passport required by all except:

(a) nationals of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay and Uruguay, provided not entering under commercial contract or as students or as immigrants, can enter with a special identity card (Cédula de Identidad) for short-term visits (except foreign residents of these countries who do need a passport);

(b) Chinese residents of Taiwan (China) and nationals of Taiwan, Mexico and Peru who have an official travel document issued by the Organisation of American States. Documents have to remain valid for 6 months after departure.

**Note:** Passports issued to children must contain a photo and state the nationality.

**VISAS:** As regulations are subject to change at short notice it is advisable to check with the Chilean Consulate for the latest information. At present, a visa is not required by the following:

- (a) 1. nationals of countries mentioned in the chart above for a stay of up to 90 days (except nationals of Greece, who can stay up to 60 days);
- (b) nationals of Antigua & Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Fiji, Grenada, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Jamaica, Liechtenstein, Macau, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Poland, St Kitts & Nevis, St Lucia, San Marino, Slovenia, South Africa, Surinam, Switzerland, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkey, Uruguay, Vatican City, Venezuela and Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) for a stay of up to 90 days;
- (c) nationals of Peru for a stay of up to 60 days;
- (d) nationals of Belize, Costa Rica, Honduras, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore for a stay of up to 30 days;
- (e) transit passengers continuing their journey on the same or first connecting aircraft provided holding required travel documents for onward destination and not leaving the airport transit lounge.

**Note:** 2. Nationals of the USA, Canada and Australia entering Chile for touristic purposes will be charged a processing fee payable on arrival and in cash only. For nationals of the USA the fee is US\$45, for nationals of Canada, the fee is US\$55, for nationals of Mexico, the fee is US\$15 and for nationals of Australia the fee is US\$30.

**Types of visa and cost:** Tourist, Visitor (visa required for nationals of countries with no diplomatic relations with Chile), Residence (visa required if intending to carry out paid employment or study in Chile). Cost varies according to nationality of applicant. Enquire at Consulate or Consular section of the Embassy for further information.

**Validity:** Tourist and Visitor (up to 90 days depending on nationality); Residence (enquire at Embassy).

**Application to:** Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy); see address section.

**Application requirements:** (a) Valid passport. (b) Evidence of sufficient funds to cover stay. (c) Return or onward ticket. (d) Fee.

**Working days required:** 24 hours-7 days depending on whether application has to be referred to the relevant authorities.

**Temporary residence:** Not readily granted. Enquire at the Consulate or Consular Section of the Embassy (see address section).

## 4 MONEY

**Currency:** Chilean Peso (peso) = 100 centavos. Notes are in denominations of peso20,000, 10,000, 5000, 2000, 1000 and 500. Coins are in denominations of peso100, 50, 10, 5 and 1.

**Currency exchange:** Foreign exchange transactions can be conducted through commercial banks, cambios, or authorised shops, restaurants, hotels and clubs. Visitors should not be tempted by the premiums of 10-15% over the official rate offered by black marketeers. Cambios are open 0900-1900 daily.

**Credit cards:** Diners Club, Visa, American Express and MasterCard are accepted. Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

**Travellers cheques:** Must be changed before 1200 except in cambios (which in any case tend to offer better rates than banks). There may be some difficulty exchanging travellers cheques outside major towns. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in US Dollars.

**Currency restrictions:** There are no restrictions on the import and export of either local or foreign currency.

**Banking hours:** 0900-1400 Monday to Friday.

## 5 DUTY FREE

The following goods may be imported into Chile without incurring customs duty: 400 cigarettes and 500g of tobacco and 50 large cigars or 50 small cigars; 2.5 litres of alcohol (only for visitors over 18 years of age); a reasonable quantity of perfume.

**Prohibited items:** Meat products, flowers, fruit and vegetables unless permission is sought with the Department of Agriculture in country of origin prior to travelling.

## 6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 1 2001 New Year's Day. Apr 13 Good Friday. May 1 Labour Day. May 21 Navy Day. Jun 14 Corpus Christi. Jun 29 St Peter and St Paul. Aug 15 Assumption. Sep 6 Day of National Unity. Sep 18 Independence Day. Sep 19 Army Day. Oct 12 Columbus Day. Nov 1 All Saints' Day. Dec 8 Immaculate Conception. Dec 25 Christmas Day. Jan 1 2002 New Year's Day. Mar 29 Good Friday. May 1 Labour Day. May 21 Navy Day. May 30 Corpus Christi. Jun 29 St Peter and St Paul. Aug 15 Assumption. Sep 6 Day of National Unity. Sep 18 Independence Day. Sep 19 Army Day. Oct 12 Columbus Day. Nov 1 All Saints' Day. Dec 8 Immaculate Conception. Dec 25 Christmas Day.

## 7 HEALTH

	<i>Special Precautions</i>	<i>Certificate Required</i>
<b>Yellow Fever</b>	No	No
<b>Cholera</b>	No	No
<b>Typhoid and Polio</b>	Yes	-
<b>Malaria</b>	No	-
<b>Food and Drink</b>	1	-

**1:** All water should be regarded as being potentially contaminated. Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilised. Milk is

pasteurised and is safe to drink without boiling, except in very remote areas of the countryside. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish, preferably served hot. Pork, salad and mayonnaise may carry increased risk. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled. Rabies is present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. For more information, consult the Health appendix. Immunisation against tetanus and hepatitis A is advised. Epidemic outbreaks of meningococcal meningitis occur. Chagas' disease has been reported in rural areas but other insect-borne diseases are largely absent.

**Health care:** Health insurance is essential.

Travel - International

**AIR:** Chile has two national airlines, both privately owned: LAN-Chile (LA) and LADECO (UC) and two smaller carriers National and Avant.

**Approximate flight times:** From Santiago to London is 16 hours 30 minutes.

**International airports:** Santiago (SCL) (Comodoro Arturo Merino Benitez). The airport is 21km (13 miles) from Santiago (travel time - 30 minutes). Bus services to the city centre operate 24 hours a day. Return is from the underground stations Los Héroes, Estación Central and Las Rejas or Moneda/corner of San Martín. Taxis to the city are also available. Airport facilities include bar, bureaux de change, restaurants, car rental, post office and tourist office.

**Departure tax:** US\$18 for distances over 500km.

**SEA:** The principal port is Empremar in Valparaíso. Important shipping lines are Compañía Chilena de Navegación Interoceánica (CCNI), Compañía Argentina de Navegación Dodero (CADND) (from Buenos Aires); Compañía Sud Americana de Vapores (CSAV) (from New York and European ports); Delta Line Cruises (from the USA via the Panama Canal) and Royal Netherlands Company (from Rotterdam and Le Havre).

**RAIL:** Some rail connections with neighbouring countries use buses for part of the journey. From La Paz, Bolivia, there are trains running twice a week to Arica (on the northern border with Peru). Antofagasta can now only be reached by bus. Connections from Argentina are made by train as far as San Carlos de Bariloche and then on by bus to Puerto Montt.

**ROAD:** The Pan American Highway enters Chile through Arica. TEPSA buses come to Chile from as far north as Ecuador. There are also services from Brazil to Santiago.

Travel - Internal

**AIR:** There are frequent services to main towns. The southern part of the country relies heavily on air links. Reservations are essential. Internal passenger air services are operated by the main Chilean airlines LAN and LADECO, as well as by a number of air taxi companies. Services connecting the main towns are frequent during weekdays, and are fairly regular. There are 1-month 'Visit Chile' tickets available from LAN covering the north and the south of the country. Air passes sold in conjunction with LAN transatlantic flights cost US\$250 for the first three coupons and US\$60 per additional coupon (up to a maximum of 6). When travelling long haul with another airline the costs are US\$350 and US\$80 per additional coupon. Passes must be obtained abroad and it is advisable to make reservations well in advance. Once purchased, reservations can be changed at no additional cost; but for re-routing, a charge of US\$30 is made for each change. Use of air passes must start within 14 days of arrival in Chile. There are regular flights by

LAN from Santiago to Easter Island, which stop at the island en route to Tahiti. The flights are twice-weekly from November to February, once-weekly at other times; it is essential to book in advance throughout the year. The flight takes five hours. Discounted flights to Easter Island can only be purchased in conjunction with LAN long-haul flights. An air-taxi runs a daily service during the summer months to the Juan Fernández Islands from Valparaíso and Santiago.

**Departure tax:** US\$18 (or peso equivalent). For distances under 500km, the departure tax is US\$8 (or peso equivalent).

**SEA:** Coastal passenger shipping lines are unreliable and infrequent. Boat services run from Valparaíso to Easter Island and Robinson Crusoe Island (part of the Juan Fernández Islands) once a month. Contact local travel agents on arrival for details.

**RAIL:** The state railway runs between Santiago and Puerto Montt in the south. Services are limited by the geography of the country, but there are two daily trains with sleeping and restaurant cars, and some air-conditioned accommodation. Principal trains also carry vehicles. Children under 1.20m in height travel free. For details contact the Chilean Tourist Office (SERNATUR); see address section.

**ROAD:** Chile has about 80,000km (49,460 miles) of good roads. The Pan American Highway crosses the country from north to south (a total of 3455km or 2147 miles) from the Peruvian border to Puerto Montt. It is advisable in remoter areas to carry spare petrol and an additional spare tyre. Tyres should be hard-wearing. Traffic drives on the right. Bus: Intercity buses are cheap and reliable. There is a luxury north-south service running most of the length of the country. Most long-distance coaches have toilets and serve food and drink. Sometimes a lower fare can be negotiated. For details, contact the Chilean Tourist Office. Taxi: Most have meters, but for long journeys fares should be agreed beforehand. A surcharge of 50% applies on Sundays after 2100. Taxis in Santiago are black and yellow. Tipping is not expected. Car hire: Self-drive cars are available at the airport and in major city centres. They are rented on a daily basis plus a mileage charge and 20% tax. A large guarantee deposit is often required. The Automóvil Club de Chile, Avenida Vitacura 1753, Santiago can supply road maps (tel: (2) 212 5702). Documentation: An International or Inter-American Driving Permit is necessary.

**URBAN:** Santiago has two metro lines, bus, minibus and shared 'Taxibus' services. A third metro line is under construction. Flat fares are charged on the metro, although there are plans to introduce distance-related fares. 10-journey tickets (carnets) are available. Taxis are plentiful, the number approaching one per 100 inhabitants, an extremely high figure. They can be flagged down in the streets. The different tariffs are displayed in the taxis. Taxi drivers do not expect tips. The buses and minibuses have flat fares. There is a higher rate for shared taxis. There are bus and taxi services in most other towns.

**JOURNEY TIMES:** The following chart gives approximate journey times from Santiago (in hours and minutes) to other major cities/towns in Chile.

	Air	Road	Rail
Arica	2.40	28.00	84.00
Concepción	1.30	9.00	7.00
Portillo	2.30	--	--
Puerto Montt	1.45	11.00	17.00
Punta Arenas	3.25	12.00	--
Viña del Mar	2.00	--	--
Easter Island	5.00	--	--

## 8 ACCOMMODATION

**HOTELS:** Chile offers excellent accommodation. Several new luxury hotels have recently opened in Santiago and throughout the country. In all regions of Chile, whatever hotels lack in facilities is made up for by a comfortable homely atmosphere; Chile's famous hospitality is very apparent in provinces where it is common to see the owner or manager sit down to dinner with guests. Advance bookings are essential in resort areas during the high season.

The cost of accommodation in Santiago is rather higher than in the provinces. Rates in Valparaíso, Viña del Mar and other holiday resorts may be increased during the summer holiday from January to March. Members of foreign motoring organisations can obtain discounts at hotels by joining the Automóvil Club de Chile (see address in Travel - Internal section). The address of the Chilean national hotel association is HOTELGA, Nueva Tajamar 481, Of. 806, North Tower, **Santiago** (tel: (2) 203 6625; fax: (2) 203 6626; e-mail: hotelga@cebri.cl).

**Grading:** Hotels in Chile are graded from 5 to 2 stars. There are 11 5-star hotels, 58 4-star hotels, 94 3-star hotels and 32 2-star hotels in the country. A description of the facilities included in the Chilean hotel system is as follows:

**5-star:** Luxurious rooms with air-conditioning, private bathroom and 24-hour room service; garden; restaurant; bar; swimming pool; laundry services; shops; conference rooms; recreational and medical facilities.

**4-star:** Rooms with air-conditioning and private bathroom; restaurant; bar; laundry services; tourist information; conference rooms; medical and recreational facilities.

**3-star:** Rooms with private bathrooms; laundry services; first aid and continental breakfast.

**2-star:** 30% of rooms with private bathroom.

**Government tax:** VAT of 18% is levied on all hotel bills, except those paid in foreign currencies by foreign visitors for which an export bill is required.

**CAMPING/CARAVANNING:** Camping facilities exist throughout Chile. A list of campsites may be obtained from Chilean embassies. Official sites are expensive.

**YOUTH HOSTELS:** Membership of the Asociación Chilena de Albergues Turísticos Juveniles is required; many hostels are extremely crowded.

## 9 RESORTS & EXCURSIONS

In Santiago there are four tourist information centres, including one at the airport. This caters particularly for foreigners just arriving in the country. There are also regional tourist offices throughout the country. Visitors to Chile are faced with a wide variety of excursions from which to choose; for the purposes of this guide, the country has been divided into three geographical areas, ranging from north to south.

Northern Region

**Arica:** Arica, near the northern border with Peru, is an excellent tourist centre. It has good beaches and the famous San Marcos Cathedral. Conditions in the area are ideal for deep-sea fishing. Travelling south through the Atacama Desert, excursions can be made to the hot springs of Mamina and to the oasis of the Pica Valley. The port of Antofagasta is the stopping point for air services and for most shipping lines. From here, a visit can be made to Chuquicamata, the world's largest open cast copper mine, and also to the archaeological oasis town of San Pedro de Atacama and to the geysers at El Tatio.

Further south is Coquimbo, situated in one of the best harbours on the coast. Nearby is the beautiful bathing resort of Los Vilos. Nine miles north of Coquimbo is La Serena, the provincial capital. This charming and well laid-out town is graced with fine buildings and streets, and good reproductions of the attractive Spanish colonial style of architecture. The town is at the mouth of the Elqui River and excursions can be made from here to the rich fruit-growing region of the Elqui Valley, which is also full of reminiscences of the Chilean Nobel Prize Winner Gabriela Mistral. Tours can also be arranged to the Tololo Observatory, the largest in the southern hemisphere.

### Central Region and the Islands

This is the most temperate and pastoral region of the country, where the snow-capped peaks of the Andes provide a backdrop for rolling green fields, vineyards and orange groves. Valparaíso, the principal port, has many attractions. Only 8km (5 miles) to the north is Viña del Mar, Chile's principal and most fashionable seaside resort with casinos, clubs and modern hotels. The Valparaíso Sporting Club offers a race course, polo grounds and playing fields.

From Valparaíso there are excellent road and rail services to Santiago, where a visitor will find all the conveniences of a modern capital city, including good hotels to suit all tastes. The Virgin Mary guards the city from the peak of the 860-metre (2822 feet) Cerro San Cristóbal (Saint Christopher's Hill), in the northeast of the city, where a zoo, gardens, restaurants and fine views of the city can be found; the Club Hípico and the Prince of Wales Country Club provide sporting facilities. From Santiago it is also possible to visit ski resorts such as Portillo, Farellones and the newest and most fashionable, Valle Nevado. Immediately south of Santiago, in the heartland of Chile, one can visit many vineyards where much excellent Chilean wine is produced. Travelling south through the heartland of Chile one reaches Talca with its fine parks and museums.

650km (403 miles) west of Valparaíso are the Juan Fernández Islands, which can be reached either by plane or boat from the Chilean mainland. Alexander Selkirk was shipwrecked here in the early eighteenth century, and Defoe based his novel Robinson Crusoe on Selkirk's adventures.

**Easter Island:** Easter Island is another Pacific Chilean possession, situated 3800km (2361 miles) west of the mainland. It is most famous for the Moai, gigantic stone figures up to 9m (30ft) tall which are found all over the island. Other sites include the crater of the volcano Rano Kao, the rock carvings at Orongo and the museum in the main town of Hanga Roa. The best method of travel to the island is by air. Tour guides and guest-house keepers tend to meet every plane, so although it is possible to book good hotel accommodation from Santiago or Valparaíso, it is not essential. Many of the hotels specialise in catering for groups and will arrange tours if asked. Tours can also be arranged with a tour guide. Jeeps, trucks, motorbikes and horses can all be hired.

### Southern Region

A visit to the impressive waterfalls at Laguna de Laja is recommended. Temuco marks the beginning of the Lake District, where Lake Villarica and the Trancura and Cincira rivers combine to create beautiful scenery, and an angler's paradise. Lake Todos is also well worth a visit. At the southernmost end of the railway line and the Pan American Highway, there is the picturesque town of Puerto Montt and, nearby, the colourful small fishing port of Angelmo. Inveterate travellers will wish to go on to visit Chiloé Island and possibly also the southernmost part of the

country, the fjords, glaciers and harsh landscape of Chilean Patagonia. The whole area of Magellanes and Tierra del Fuego is worth exploring during the summer season.

## 10 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

**Trekking:** Trekking: One of Chile's most popular regions for trekking is the Lake District, which lies some 900km (560 miles) south of Santiago, and where several of the country's national parks can be visited. The Lago Verde Trail in the Parcque Nacional Huerquehue leads through beech forests, past waterfalls and offers good views of the Volcán Villarica. The fairly remote Parcque Nacional Queulat (characterised by glaciers, fjords and volcanic peaks) is a popular destination for adventure travel package tours. Guided hikes, ecology tours and boat trips are available at Parcque Nacional Conguillio. The Parcque Nacional Torres del Paine, which lies 400km (250 miles) northwest of Punta Arenas, offers abundant wildlife and spectacular scenery consisting of huge glaciers, fjords, waterfalls and blue lakes dotted with icebergs; the park has a well-developed network of trails complemented by trekking huts. In many cases, visitors intending to trek through Chile individually must register with local rangers or at the nearest CONAF (Corporación Nacional Forestal) office. At the Parcque Nacional Torres del Paine, solo treks are not allowed.

**Glacier cruises:** Glacier cruises: Departing from Puerto Montt, these cruises follow a spectacular route through Chile's Inside Passage, the Beagle Channel and around Cape Horn, passing through glacial valleys (notably at Laguna San Rafael), fjords and past huge icebergs. Passengers can disembark at various points en route, notably at Puerto Natales and on the Argentinian portion of Tierra del Fuego.

**Antarctic trips:** Antarctic trips: Chile's southernmost city, Punta Arenas (located 2170km/1350 miles south of Santiago), is one of the most widely used departure points for trips to Antarctica.

**Wildlife:** Wildlife: Naturalists wishing to follow in the footsteps of Charles Darwin (who wrote extensively about Chile's fauna and flora) may head to the Juan Fernández Islands (located in the Pacific, some 965km/600 miles west of Santiago). The islands contain numerous indigenous plants and animals, most notably the Juan Fernández fur seal and the Juan Fernández hummingbird. The Parcque Nacional Lauca (155km/95 miles from Arica) is filled with flamingoes, rheas (an ostrich-like bird) and llamas. Guanacos (or llama guanicoe) roam freely in the Parcque Nacional Torres del Paine (see above), which is also a good place to observe giant condors. Magellanic penguins can be seen at Chiloé Island (485km/300 miles from Santiago), a region of evergreen forests and fjords much admired by Darwin. The abundant coastal wildlife of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego includes large colonies of sea elephants, sea lions and penguins.

**Skiing:** Skiing: Portillo (150km/95 miles northeast of Santiago) is a world-famous ski resort offering both downhill and cross-country skiing and ice skating (on the spectacular Laguna del Inca). Other ski slopes in the area can be found at Farellones-El Colorado, La Parva and Valle Nevado. The best time to ski is August (with the season running from June to September).

**Fishing:** Fishing: This is particularly good in the Lake District and in Patagonia, South America's southernmost region. The lakes near Puerto Montt, a port city whose economy is mainly based on fishing, offer excellent trout fishing.

**Climbing:** Climbing: The Lake District's Volcán Villarrica and Volcán Osorno are the most popular destinations. Various companies offer guided ascents, but ice gear is required. Guides are compulsory.

**Whitewater rafting:** Whitewater rafting: The Maipo, Claro, Trancura and Bio-Bio rivers are the main destinations and specialist operators can organise week-long trips. The scenery around the Bio-Bio includes hot springs and waterfalls, but the construction of several dams along the river will change conditions.

**Equestrian sports:** Equestrian sports: As an alternative to walking, guided horseback trips are widely available in Chile's national parks. The International Horsemanship Championship are held in Viña del Mar in January. The two main horseraces of the year are the Derby (Viña del Mar, January) and El Ensayo (Santiago, October).

**Watersports:** Watersports: Chile's coastline is indented by many bays and fjords where various types of watersports, including swimming, diving, water-skiing and boating can be enjoyed.

## 11 SOCIAL PROFILE

**Food & Drink:** Santiago has many international restaurants; waiter service is normal. The evening will often include floor shows and dancing. Examples of typical national dishes are empanada (combination of meat, chicken or fish, with onions, eggs, raisins and olives inside a flour pastry), humitas (seasoned corn paste, wrapped in corn husks and boiled), cazuela de ave (soup with rice, vegetables, chicken and herbs), bife a lo pobre (steak with french fries, onions and eggs) and parrillada (selection of meat grilled over hot coals). Seafood is good. Best known are the huge lobsters from Juan Fernández Islands. Abalone, sea urchins, clams, prawns and giant choros (mussels) are also common. Drink: Chile is famous for its wine. Pisco is a powerful liqueur distilled from grapes after wine pressing. Grapes are also used to make the sweet brown chicha as well as aguardiente, similar to brandy. Beer is drunk throughout the country.

**Nightlife:** While many restaurants and hotels offer entertainment there are also a number of independent discotheques and nightclubs. Casinos: The Municipal Casino in Viña del Mar offers large gambling salons, full cabaret and boite with Chile's best dance bands. A casino operates in Gran Hotel in Puerto Varas between September and March. Arica also has a casino operating throughout the year with baccarat, roulette, black jack, a restaurant and late-night cabaret.

**Shopping:** Special purchases include textiles such as colourful handwoven ponchos, vicuna rugs and copper work. Chilean stones such as lapis lazuli, jade, amethyst, agate and onyx are all good buys. Shopping hours: 1000-2000 Monday to Friday; 1000-1400 Saturday. Large shopping malls are open 1000-2100 Monday to Sunday.

**Special Events:** The following is a selection of events celebrated in Chile during 2001. For detailed information contact SERNATUR (see address section):  
Jan 2001 Folklore Festival, Angol; Festival of Classical Music, Valdivia; Jornadas Musicales de Villarrica, Villarrica; Festival del Huaso, Olmúe; International Folklore Festival, San Bernardo.  
Jan/Feb Semanas Musicales de Frutillar; Trilla (wheat harvest celebrations). Feb Festival Costubrista, Castro; Festival de Jazz, Tongoy; Festival de la Cancion de Vigña del Mar. Mar Los Andes International Fair. Apr 22 Cuasimodo (traditional religious festival). Jul 16 Fiesta de la Tirana.

**Note:** Dates for special events in Chile change frequently.

**Social Conventions:** Handshaking is the customary form of greeting. Most Chileans use a double surname and only the first part should be used in addressing them. Normal courtesies

should be observed when visiting local people. It is very common to entertain at home and it is acceptable for invitees to give small presents as a token of thanks. Informal, conservative clothes are acceptable in most places but women should not wear shorts outside resort areas. Tipping: Restaurants and bars add 10% to bill. However, waiters will expect a 10% cash tip in addition.

## 12 BUSINESS PROFILE

**Economy:** With well-developed industrial and service sectors, Chile has one of Latin America's strongest economies. However, it still depends on export of primary commodities - metals and ores, fruit, fish and wood - for a large proportion of its export earnings. Chile has a large surplus of fruit and vegetables available for export to North America and Europe but is not entirely self-sufficient in agricultural produce. The industrial base has grown substantially over the last 30 years and now includes steel manufacturing, oil production, ship building, and the production of cement and consumer goods. The mainstay of the export economy for the time being is metals and ores: Chile is the world's leading exporter of copper and also produces zinc, iron ore, molybdenum, manganese, iodine and lithium. Imported oil and natural gas provide most of Chile's energy requirements, but coal and hydro-electricity also make an important contribution. The service sector has developed rapidly in recent years, especially financial services, following the introduction in the mid-1990s of a unique comprehensive pension scheme by the government. Chile's healthy economic performance has continued throughout the 1990s with steady growth and low inflation. The USA is the largest trading partner, followed by Japan, Brazil, Germany and the UK. Chile is a member of the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI), the southern free trade zone, Mercosur, and the Rio Group. This latter organisation, established in 1987, comprises a dozen Latin American countries with common interests in promoting free trade, suppressing corruption and drug trafficking, and other matters. The country was also admitted in 1994 to the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation Forum and is likely to be the first South American country to join the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA, presently comprising the USA, Canada, Mexico).

**Business:** Business people should wear formal clothes in dark colours for official functions, dinners, smart restaurants and hotels. Dress is usually stipulated on invitations. There is a tendency to formality with many Old World courtesies. Best months for business visits are April to December. Business hours: 0900-1830 Monday to Friday.

**Commercial Information:** The following organisation can offer advice: Cámara de Comercio de Santiago de Chile AG, Monjita 392, Santiago (tel: (2) 360 7109; fax: (2) 366 0962; e-mail: cpn@camaracomercio.cl; web site: <http://www.ccs.cl>).

**Conferences/Conventions:** Information on conferences and conventions can be obtained from the Organización de Profesionales de Congresos y Eventos (OPCE), Betacura 2909, Providencia, Santiago (tel: (2) 334 5216; fax: (2) 334 5807; e-mail: opce@intelchile.net; web site: <http://www.travelchile.com/opce>).

## 13 CLIMATE

Ranges from hot and arid in the north to very cold in the far south. The central areas have a mild Mediterranean climate with a wet season (May to August). Beyond Puerto Montt in the south is one of the wettest and stormiest areas in the world.

**Required clothing:** Lightweight cottons and linens in northern and central areas. Rainwear is advised during rainy seasons. Mediumweights and waterproofing are needed in the south.

## 14 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

**History:** The Araucanian Indians were the original inhabitants of Chile. The Spanish conquered the country in the 16th century and ruled until the country's independence in 1818 following a war led by Bernard O'Higgins and Jose de San Martín. As a result of the War of the Pacific (1879-1883), Chile gained Tarapacá, Tacna and Arica from Bolivia, and took control of the Atacama. Border disputes between Chile and Bolivia have been a recurrent element in Chile's history ever since. In 1891 civil war broke out and a parliamentary principle of government was established. Elections in 1970 brought Unidad Popular, led by the Marxist Dr Salvador Allende, to power. A military coup followed during which Allende was killed. General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte was declared Supreme Chief of State and President, and remained in power despite considerable opposition from many sectors of society. The ruling military junta assumed wide-ranging powers, its main aim being to eliminate the Communist Party and other leftist opposition. During the 'state of siege', political opponents were imprisoned (and many of them 'disappeared'), censorship was systematic and all non-government political activity banned. These powers were gradually relaxed during the 1980s until the Government felt that the Marxist menace was no longer a threat to the country and arranged a gradual return to representative government. Patricio Aylwin, leader of the Concertación de los Partidos de la Democracia (CPD), a 17-party coalition in which the Christian Democrats (PCD, usually classified as centre-left, in contrast with European practice) were the largest component, stood against the General and won in the presidential elections of December 1989. Although Pinochet's days as dictator were over, he retained a substantial influence over Chile, especially the armed forces. The powers of the civilian government were severely circumscribed in certain areas, notably defence policy and investigations of the numerous human rights abuses conducted by the Chilean military and secret police. In 1998, Pinochet officially retired, although he retained lifetime membership of the Chilean senate and consequent immunity from prosecution. However, the following year, he encountered unexpected problems during a visit to the UK when a tenacious Spanish investigating magistrate, Judge Garzon, issued an extradition warrant against the General (on the basis of the alleged murder of a number of Spanish nationals). After lengthy deliberation, the British concluded in January 2000 that Pinochet was medically unfit to stand trial and allowed him to leave. The Chilean Government had made strong public protestations against the British treatment of one of their senior citizens. Their private position was rather more ambivalent, and following the General's return to Chile the removal of his senatorial immunity (clearing the way for a potential prosecution) was widely canvassed, in spite of the extensive support he enjoyed. In May 2000, this immunity was in fact removed, and the General's future now looks uncertain. Particular care in handling the Pinochet case was required given that its denouement coincided with presidential elections. The previous poll in December 1993 had brought another comfortable victory for the Concertación candidate, Eduardo Frei who had succeeded Aylwin. In January 2000, a member of the socialist bloc in Concertación, Ricardo Lagos, fought a close but ultimately victorious campaign against Joaquin Lavín, standing for the right-wing Unión Demócrata Independiente. Concertación has now won each of the three post-dictatorship elections. Abroad, relations between Chile and its neighbours, including Argentina, have been improving, principally as a result of the development of the southern cone trading bloc, Mercosur. Further north, Chile is the first South American country to have entered into formal discussion with the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA, covering the USA, Canada and Mexico). Negotiations have been in progress in earnest since 1996 but the US Congress has imposed a number of obstacles which require protracted work to overcome them.

**Government:** Executive power is held by the President as head of the Government, elected for a 6-year term. The bicameral Congress is responsible for legislation and comprises a 47-member Senate and a 120-member Chamber of Deputies, both elected by universal suffrage.

## 15 OVERVIEW

**Country Overview:** Chile is situated in South America, bounded by Peru, Bolivia Argentina, the Antarctic and the Pacific Ocean. Home of the Andes mountain range, it is a thin ribbon of land, 4200km (2610 miles) long and nowhere more than 180km (115 miles) wide. Arica, near the northern border with Peru, is an excellent tourist centre. It has good beaches and the famous San Marcos Cathedral.

Chile's central region and the islands feature the snow-capped peaks of the Andes, rolling green fields, vineyards and orange groves. The modern capital city, Santiago, has a good range of hotels to suit all tastes and pockets.

Easter Island, west of the mainland, is famous for the Moai, gigantic stone figures found all over the island.

National dishes include empanada (meat, chicken or fish, with onions, eggs, raisins and olives inside a flour pastry) and humitas (seasoned corn paste, wrapped in corn husks and boiled).

Chile is, of course, famous for its wine and pisco is a powerful liqueur also distilled from grapes.

While many restaurants and hotels offer entertainment there are also a number of independent discotheques, nightclubs and late night cabaret spots.