



Stuttford Van Lines Country Guide for

Chile



Country Guides: Courtesy of Overseas Moving Network International (OMNI)

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1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

Location: West coast of South America.

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).

Servicio Nacional de Turismo (SERNATUR) (Tourist Office)

Avenida Providencia 1550, PO Box 7500548, Santiago, Chile Tel: (2) 731 8419. Website: www.sernatur.cl

Embassy and Consulate of the Republic of Chile in the UK

12 Devonshire Street, London W1G 7DS, UK Tel: (020) 7580 6392 (embassy) or 1023 (consular section). Website: www.echileuk.demon.co.uk Working hours: Mon-Thurs 0900-1730, Fri: 0900-1430; Open to public: Mon-Fri 0900-1330.

Embassy of the Republic of Chile in the USA

1732 Massachussets Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036, USA Tel: (202) 785 1746. Website: www.chile-usa.org

Chilean Consulate General in the USA

Suite 601, 6th Floor, 866 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA Tel: (212) 980 3366. Website: www.chileny.com

Commercial Information

Cámara de Comercio de Santiago de Chile AG Monjita 392, Santiago Tel: (2) 360 7000. Website: www.ccs.cl Cámara Nacional de Comercio de Chile Merced 230, Santiago Tel: (2) 365 4391 or 4114 (in English). Website: www.cnc.cl

2 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.

3 GENERAL INFORMATION

Area: 756,096 sq km (291,930 sq miles).

Population: 15.82 million (2004 estimate).

Population Density: 20.9 per sq km.

Capital: Santiago (de Chile). Population: 6,000,000.

GEOGRAPHY: Chile is situated in South America, bordered 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 1810. Head of State and Government: President Michelle Bachelet since January 2006. Recent history: President Ricardo Lagos Escobar was elected for a six year term and took office in March 2000. He stepped down in early 2006. His successor, socialist Michelle Bachelet, beat conservative billionaire and former Senator Sebastian Pinera in the January 2006 Presidential election. She is the first woman President. On 16 August 2005, a bill embodying 58 constitutional reforms was approved by Congress, and endorsed by President Lagos. The reforms came into effect on 11 March 2006. The key features of the reforms include: the reduction of the presidential terms from six to four years; the end of designated senators and 'senators for life' (previously awarded to former Presidents) - the remaining 38 senators will be elected by popular vote; responsibility removed from the armed forces as 'institutional guarantors'; the change in functions of the National Security Council (Cosena); and the restoration of power to the President to remove the commanders-in-chief of the armed forces and the forces of order. The reform is a milestone for Chile's continuing transition to democracy as it eliminates the so-called 'authoritarian enclaves' (military Government appointees who had occupied seats in the Senate and who have



traditionally been a block to reforms proposed by the governing left-wing coalition). Although President Escobar did not succeed in gaining the support of all the political forces in order to change the binominal electoral system (another Pinochet legacy which gives disproportionate representation to the right), he, at least, succeeded in opening up the debate. Michelle Bachelet has already committed to reforming the electoral system during her Presidential term.

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

Religion: Predominantly Christian, of which 72 per cent are Roman Catholic.

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

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.

Passport/Visa

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
British	Yes	No/1	Yes
Australian	Yes	1/2	Yes
Canadian	Yes	1/2	Yes
USA	Yes	1/2	Yes
OtherEU	Yes	1	Yes
Japanese	Yes	No/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 six months after departure.

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

VISAS: A visa is not required by the following: (a) 1. nationals of countries mentioned in the chart above for a touristic stay of up to 90 days (except nationals of Greece, who can stay up to 60 days, and nationals of Latvia, who do need a visa); (b) nationals of Andorra, Antigua & Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Iceland, Israel, Jamaica, Korea (Rep), Liechtenstein, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, St Kitts & Nevis, St Lucia, San Marino, Serbia & Montenegro, South Africa, Surinam, Switzerland, Tonga, Turkey and Venezuela for stays of up to 90 days; (c) nationals of Indonesia and Peru for stays of up to 60 days; (d) nationals of Belize, Costa Rica, Malaysia and Singapore for touristic stays 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 Australia, Canada, Mexico and the USA 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\$100; for nationals of Canada, the fee is US\$55; for nationals of Australia, the fee is US\$34; and for nationals of Mexico, the fee is US\$15.

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 Passport/Visa Information.

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

Working days required: Up to 15 depending on nationality and 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 Passport/Visa Information).

Passport/Visa Information: Embassy and Consulate of the Republic of Chile in the UK 12 Devonshire Street, London W1G 7DS, UK Tel: (020) 7580 6392 (embassy) or 1023 (consular section). Website: www.echileuk.demon.co.uk Working hours: Mon-Thurs 0900-1730, Fri: 0900-1430; Open to public: Mon-Fri 0900-1330. Embassy of the Republic of Chile in the USA 1732 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036, USA Tel: (202) 785 1746. Website: www.chile-usa.org Chilean Consulate General in the USA Suite 601, 6th Floor, 866 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA Tel: (212) 980 3366. Website: www.chileny.com

4 MONEY

Currency: Chilean Peso (CLP; symbol CH\$) = 100 centavos. Notes are in denominations of CH\$20,000, 10,000, 5000, 2000, 1000 and 500. Coins are in denominations of CH\$500, 100, 50, 10, 5 and 1.

Currency exchange: Foreign exchange transactions can be conducted through commercial banks, casas de cambio, or authorised shops, restaurants, hotels and clubs. Visitors should not be tempted by the premiums of 10 to 15 per cent over the official rate offered by black marketeers. Casas de cambio are open daily 0900-1900.

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



Traveller's cheques: Must be changed before 1200 except in casas de cambio (which in any case tend to offer better rates than banks). There may be some difficulty exchanging traveller's cheques outside major towns. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, traveller's are advised to take traveller's cheques in US Dollars.

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

Exchange rate indicators

Date At time of publishing £1.00=CH\$935.74 \$1.00=CH\$530.25

Banking hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1400.

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; 2.5l of alcohol (only for visitors over **18 years of age**); **a reasonable quantity of perfume for personal use.** **Note:** Edible products of animal origin, flowers, fruits and vegetables are only permitted with a certificate (Fitosanitario) issued by the Department of Agriculture in the country of origin.

Prohibited items: Parrots.

6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Below are listed Public Holidays for the January 2006-June 2007 period. Jan 1 2006 New Year's Day. Apr 14 Good Friday. Apr 15 Holy Saturday. May 1 Labour Day. May 21 Navy Day. Jun 12* Corpus Christi. Jun 29* St Peter and St Paul. Aug 15 Assumption. Sep 11 Reconciliation Day. Sep 18 Independence Day. Sep 19 Army Day. Oct 12* Dia de la Raza (Columbus Day). Nov 1 All Saints' Day. Dec 8 Immaculate Conception. Dec 25 Christmas Day. Jan 1 2007 New Year's Day. Apr 6 Good Friday. Apr 7 Holy Saturday. May 1 Labour Day. May 21 Navy Day. Jun 7* Corpus Christi. Jun 26* St Peter and St Paul.

Note: *If Corpus Christi, St Peter and St Paul and Dia de la Raza (Columbus Day) fall on a day other than Saturday, Sunday or Monday, the holiday is usually held on the nearest Monday.

7 HEALTH

	Special Precautions	Certificate Required
Yellow Fever	1	No
Cholera	No	No
Typhoid and Polio	2	N/A
Malaria	No	N/A



1: Immunisation against Yellow Fever is required if going to Easter Island within six days of visiting infected countries.

2: Immunisation against typhoid and Polio are sometimes advised.

Food & drink: 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.

Other risks: 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. Rabies is present in animals. 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.

Health care: Health insurance is essential.

Travel - International

AIR: Chile has one privately owned national airline: LAN-Chile (LA) (website: www.lan.com), which deals with international flights. Its subsidiary, Lanexpress (LU) deals with domestic flights.

Approximate flight times: From Santiago to London is 16 hours 50 minutes.

Main airports: Santiago (SCL) (Arturo Merino Benitez) (website: www.aeropuertosiatiago.cl). The airport is 21km (11 miles) northwest of Santiago (travel time 30 minutes). To/from the airport: Bus services to the city centre operate from 0530 to 2400 every day. Underground services operate to Los Héroes, Central, Universidad de Santiago, Las Rejas and Pajaritos stations. Taxis to the city are also available. Official taxis are blue with official documentation. Facilities: Bar, bureaux de change, restaurants, car hire, post office and tourist office.

Air passes: The Mercosur Airpass: Valid within Argentina, Brazil, Chile (except Easter Island), Paraguay and Uruguay. Participating airlines include Pluna (PU), TAM Linhas Aéreas (JJ), TAM Mercosur (PZ) and VARIG (RG), with the subsidiary airlines of Nordeste (JH) and Rio Sul (SL). The pass can only be purchased by passengers who live outside South America and who have a return ticket. Only eight flight coupons are allowed with a maximum of four coupons for each country and is valid for seven to a maximum of 30 days. At least two countries must be visited (to a maximum of five) and the flight route cannot be changed. A maximum of two stopovers is allowed per country. The Visit South America Pass: Must be bought outside South America in country of residence and allows unlimited travel to 34 cities in the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile (except Easter Island), Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. To be eligible, passengers must fly with Lan airlines (LanChile, LanEcuador or LanPeru). A minimum of three flights must be booked, with no maximum; the maximum stay is 60 days, with no minimum, and prices depend on the amount of flight zones covered. There is no discount for children, although infants travelling without need of a seat may do so free of charge. For further details, contact one of the participating airlines.

Departure tax: US\$18.



SEA: Main ports: Empremar (website: www.portvalparaiso.cl) in Valparaíso to/from where many shipping lines operate such as Compañía Chilena de Navegación Interoceánica (CCNI) (website: www.ccn.cl) and Compañía Sud Americana de Vapores (CSAV) (from New York and European ports) (website: www.csav.cl).

RAIL: Some rail connections with neighbouring countries use buses for part of the journey. There are trains running between Arica and Tacna in Peru and La Paz in Bolivia.

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 Argentina and 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 domestic subsidiary of LAN-Chile, Lanexpress (LU) and Sky Airline (website: www.skyairline.cl), 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 one-month 'Visit Chile' tickets available from Lanexpress and LAN-Chile 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 six). A coupon is worth one sector of a flight. 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. There are regular flights by Lanexpress 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 5 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: CH\$4521 or 3444. For distances under 270km, the departure tax is CH\$1781.

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 (run by the State Railway Company, website: www.efe.cl) runs between Santiago and Temuco. Services are limited by the geography of the country, but there is one daily train each way at 2000, with sleeping and restaurant cars, and some air conditioned accommodation. Principal trains also carry vehicles. Children under 1.20m in height travel free. Train fares are from £10-53. For details, contact SERNATUR (see Top Things To Do).

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. You may consider a four wheel drive for driving in the countryside. Bus: Intercity buses are cheap and reliable. There is a luxury northsouth 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 SERNATUR (see Top Things To Do). Taxi: Most have meters, but for long journeys fares should be agreed beforehand. A surcharge of 50 per cent 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 hired on a daily basis, plus a mileage charge and 20 per cent tax. A large guarantee deposit is often required. The Automóvil Club de Chile, Andrés Bello 1863, Santiago can supply road maps (tel: (2) 431 1000; website: www.cmet.net/acchi). Documentation: An international, inter-American driving permit or a new European format driving licence bearing a photograph is necessary .

URBAN: Santiago has three metro lines, as well as bus, minibus and shared 'Taxibus' services. A fourth and fifth metro line is under construction. Fares on the metro depend on the time of day in which travel occurs. 10-journey tickets (carnets) are available. Taxis are plentiful, the number approaching 1 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 towns.

TRAVEL TIMES: The following chart gives approximate travel times from Santiago (in hours and minutes) to other major cities/towns in Chile. Air Road Rail Arica 3.30 28.00- Concepción 1.00 9.00 7.00 Punta Arenas 4.20 12.00 0.00 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 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). Grading: Hotels in Chile are graded from 5 (luxurious rooms) to 2 stars (basic commodities - only 30 per cent of rooms with private bathroom).

Government tax: VAT of 19 per cent 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 the Tourist Office. Official sites are expensive.

YOUTH HOSTELS: There are 13 hostels in Chile. Membership of the Asociación Chilena de Albergues Turísticos Juveniles (see Accommodation Information) is required; many hostels are extremely crowded and it is advised to book in advance where possible.

Accommodation Information: Chilean National Hotel Association (HOTELGA) Nueva Tamar 481, Oficina 806, North Tower, Las Condes, Santiago, Chile Tel: (2) 203 6625. E-mail: hotelga@cebri.cl Asociación Chilena de Albergues Turísticos Juveniles (Youth Hostels) Av. Hernando de Aguirre 201, of. 602, Providencia, Chile Tel: (2) 233 3220. Website: www.hostelling.cl

Introduction



There are four tourist information centres in Santiago, including one at the airport. This particularly caters 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, 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. The unique landscape of Altiplano, near Arica, where vast volcanoes, salt marshes and lakes exist together upon a 12,000 ft plateau, is home to the indigenous Aymara Indians. Llamas and alpacas can be seen here. The nearby UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, Lauca National Park, is worth visiting. 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 Chuquibambilla, 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. 9 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 visitors 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 860m (2822ft) 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.

PACIFIC ISLANDS: 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 18th century, and Defoe based his novel Robinson Crusoe on Selkirk's adventures. 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 los Santos 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 should not miss the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve of Torres del Paine National Park (located in Chilean Patagonia), which is simply one of the most beautiful, unspoiled and remote places on the planet. The whole area of Magallanes and Tierra del Fuego is worth exploring during the summer season.

9 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

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 Parque Nacional Huerquehue leads through beech forests, past waterfalls and offers good views of the Volcán Villarica. The fairly remote Parque 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 Parque Nacional Conguillio. The Parque 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 Parque Nacional Torres del Paine, solo treks are not allowed.

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 Parque Nacional Lauca (155km/95 miles from Arica) is filled with flamingos, rheas (an ostrich-like bird) and llamas. Guanacos (or llama guanicoe) roam freely in the Parque 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.

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.

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.



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.

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.

Equestrian sports: As an alternative to walking, guided horseback trips are widely available in Chile's national parks. The International Horsemanship Championship is 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).

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).

Glacier cruises: Departing from Puerto Montt, glacier 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: 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.

Entertainment

Food & Drink: Santiago has many international restaurants; waiter service is usual. The evening will often include floor shows and dancing. National specialities: Empanada is a combination of meat, chicken or fish, with onions, eggs, raisins and olives inside a flour pastry. Humitas is a seasoned corn paste, wrapped in corn husks and boiled. Cazuela de ave is a soup with rice, vegetables, chicken and herbs. Bife a lo pobre is a steak with french fries, onions and eggs. Parrillada is selection of meat grilled over hot coals, often including delicacies such as intestines, udders and blood sausages. 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. National drinks: 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. Tipping: Restaurants and bars add 10 per cent to the bill. However, waiters will expect a 10 per cent cash tip in addition.

Nightlife: While many restaurants and hotels offer entertainment, there are also a number of independent discos and nightclubs. Casinos: The Municipal Casino in Viña del Mar offers large gambling salons, full cabaret and boîte 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: Mon-Fri 1000-2000, Sat 1000-1400. Large shopping malls are open daily 1000-2100.



Business

GDP: US\$73.8 billion (2004). Main exports: Copper, fruit and fish products. Main imports: Petroleum and petroleum products, chemicals, electrical and telecommunications equipment. Main trade partners: Exports to: Asia, NAFTA (North America Free Trade Agreement), EU and Mercosur; Imports from: Mercosur, NAFTA, EU and Asia.

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 government's introduction in the mid-1990s of a unique comprehensive pension scheme. Chile's economic performance has been strong since 2000 with annual growth around 6 per cent and low inflation; unemployment hovers just below 10 per cent. 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 Cooperation Forum and may be the first South American country to join the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA, presently comprising the USA, Canada and Mexico). Chile has an extensive network of bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements (FTAS), including with the EU, the US, South Korea, Mexico and Canada and is in the process of negotiating FTAS with China and India.

Business Etiquette: Businesspeople 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: Mon-Fri 0900-1800.

Commercial Information: Cámara de Comercio de Santiago de Chile AG Monjita f 392, Santiago, Chile Tel: (2) 360 7000. Website: www.ccs.cl Cámara Nacional de Comercio de Chile Merced 230, Santiago, Chile Tel: (2) 365 4391 or 4114 (in English). Website: www.cnc.cl Santiago Convention Bureau (Information on Conferences/Conventions) Oficina 64, Avenida El Bosque Norte 0140, Las Condes, Santiago, Chile Tel: (2) 333 8085 or 333 7977. Website: www.scb.cl.

10 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.

11 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 committed suicide rather than surrender to his attackers. 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, the powers of the civilian government were severely circumscribed in certain areas - notably defence policy and investigations of previous human rights abuses. In 1998, Pinochet officially retired, although he retained lifetime membership of the Chilean Senate and consequent immunity from prosecution. Because of his high standing among parts of Chilean society (especially the military), successive governments have been wary of Pinochet despite his age, infirmity, and attempts by several foreign governments to prosecute him (notably the Spanish). The December 1993 election 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. However, the Chileans are deeply concerned by the possible knock-on effects of the political and economic crisis that overtook Argentina in 2001 and 2002. Presidential elections are due to be held in December 2005.

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 48-member Senate and a 120-member Chamber of Deputies, both elected by universal suffrage.

Travel Advice

Most visits to Chile are trouble-free but you should be aware of the global risk of indiscriminate international terrorist attacks, which could be against civilian targets, including places frequented by foreigners. Pickpocketing, other thefts and muggings are increasingly common. Minefields are



located in regions I, II and XII. Travellers are advised to contact the local authorities before travelling to the border areas of these regions. This advice is based on information provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK. It is correct at time of publishing. As the situation can change rapidly, visitors are advised to contact the following organisations for the **latest travel advice**: British Foreign and Commonwealth Office Tel: (0845) 850 2829. Website: www.fco.gov.uk US Department of State Website: <http://travel.state.gov/travel>

Top Things To See

Arica, near the northern border with Peru, is an excellent tourist centre. It has good beaches and the famous San Marcos Cathedral. The unique landscape of Altiplano, near Arica, where vast volcanoes, salt marshes and lakes exist together upon a 12,000ft plateau, is home to the indigenous Aymara Indians. Llamas and alpacas can be seen here. 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 opencast 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. The Central Region and the Islands are the most temperate and pastoral regions 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. From Valparaíso there are excellent road and rail services to Santiago, where visitors 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 860m (2822ft) 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. 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 18th century, and Defoe based his novel Robinson Crusoe on Selkirk's adventures. 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. In the 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 los Santos 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.



Tourist Information: Servicio Nacional de Turismo (SERNATUR) (Tourist Office) Avenida Providencia 1550, PO Box 7500548, Santiago, Chile Tel: (2) 731 8419. Website: www.sernatur.cl

Top Things To Do

Only 8km (5 miles) to the north of Valparaiso 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. 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. Here, naturalists wishing to follow in the footsteps of Charles Darwin (who wrote extensively about Chile's fauna and flora) will also discover Chile's incredible vegetation and animals. The Lago Verde Trail in the Parque Nacional Huerquehue leads through beech forests, past waterfalls and offers good views of the Volcán Villarica. The fairly remote Parque 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 Parque Nacional Conguillio. Inveterate travellers should not miss the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve of Torres del Paine National Park (located in Chilean Patagonia), which is simply one of the most beautiful, unspoiled and remote places on the planet. It 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. Guanacos (or llama guanicoe) roam freely in the park, which is also a good place to observe giant condors. 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 Parque Nacional Torres del Paine, solo treks are not allowed. The whole area of Magallanes and Tierra del Fuego is worth exploring during the summer season. Naturalists may also head to the Juan Fernández Islands (located in the Pacific, some 965km/600 miles west of Santiago) which contain numerous indigenous plants and animals, most notably the Juan Fernández fur seal and the Juan Fernández hummingbird. The UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, the Parque Nacional Lauca (155km/95 miles from Arica) is filled with flamingos, rheas (an ostrich-like bird) and llamas. Magellanic penguins can be seen at Chiloé Island (485km/300 miles from Santiago), a region of evergreen forests and fjords. The abundant coastal wildlife of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego includes large colonies of sea elephants, sea lions and penguins. The Lake District's Volcán Villarrica and Volcán Osorno are the most popular destinations for climbing. Various companies offer guided ascents, but ice gear is required. Guides are compulsory. Fishing 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. In Arica, near the northern border with Peru, conditions in the area are ideal for deep-sea fishing. The Maipo, Claro, Trancura and Bio-Bio rivers are the main destinations for whitewater rafting. 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. Chile's coastline is indented by many bays and fjords where various types of other watersports, including swimming, diving, water-skiing and boating can be enjoyed. 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). Departing from Puerto Montt, glacier 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. 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.



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OverviewII

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. 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. 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. Elections in 1970 brought Unidad Popular, led by the Marxist Dr Salvador Allende, to power. A military coup followed, during which Allende committed suicide rather than surrender to his attackers. 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. 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. In 1998, Pinochet officially retired and Chile has begun to come to terms with his legacy. His arrest and subsequent detention in London in October 1998 following an extradition request from Spain polarised Chilean society. It also broke a taboo, culminating in court decisions which stripped him of his immunity from prosecution although the former ruler has not been prosecuted yet. Because of its unusual geography, Chile has a hugely varied climate ranging from the world's driest desert in the north, through a Mediterranean climate in the centre, to a snow-prone Alpine climate in the south. Travellers will enjoy the country's abundant fauna and flora and spectacular scenery consisting of huge glaciers, fjords, waterfalls, blue lakes and numerous national parks where trekking is a very popular activity amongst tourists.

Communications

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

Mobile telephone: Roaming agreements exist. Quality of coverage can be variable.

Internet: There are some Internet cafes in the main towns.

Post: Daily airmail services to Europe take approximately three to four days. Post office hours in Santiago: Mon-Fri 0900-1800; Sat 0900-1300. The Central Post Office in Santiago is located at Agustinas 1137, Plaza de Armas.

MEDIA: Chile's national and local TV channels operate alongside extensive cable TV networks, which carry many US and international stations. The constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the media, and this is generally respected by the authorities. A 2001 Press Freedom Act suppressed many of the Pinochet-era restrictions on the media. Press: Spanish dailies include El



Mercurio, La Tercera, conservative evening newspaper La Segunda, business newspaper El Diari and La Nacion which is Government-owned. Foreign newspapers are available. The Santiago Times is published in English. TV: Although state-owned, National Television of Chile is not under direct Government control; TV Universidad Catolica de Chile (TVUC) and Universidad Catolica de Valparaiso are owned by Catholic universities; Chilevision is owned by Venezuela's Cisneros Group; Megavision is a private network; Red TV is a commercial channel. Radio: Radio stations include Radio Nacional de Chile; news-based national commercial network Radio Cooperativa; commercial networks, Pudahuel FM; Bio Bio La Radio and El Conquistador; FM and music-based FM network, Radio Horizonte.