

# Understand Chile

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Latin America's strongest economy seeks to level the playing field for rich and poor. Adventure tourism takes off.

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Though yet to tick off two centuries as a country, Chile's astounding past is only just starting to be understood.

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Economically sound and highly traditional, Chile's staid and stable culture has awakened to a new global norm.

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Winemaker Grant Phelps looks at how Chile started cultivating great wines, what to look for and the garage wine movement.

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Torres del Paine may be Chile's flagship attraction, but plenty of other private and national parks are well worth exploring.

# Chile Today

In Chile, the ground is shifting, yet for once it's not another earthquake. Former president Michelle Bachelet is back at the helm, and she has made addressing inequality the mission of her administration. At the same time, Chile's steady growth spurt is showing signs of fatigue. Given the falling price of the country's number-one export, copper, many wonder if the country will see through massive reforms. One thing is certain for this small engine that could: the status quo is no longer enough.

## Best on Film

**Gloria** (2013) A fresh and funny portrait of an unconventional 58-year-old woman.

**The Maid** (2009) A maid questions her lifelong loyalty.

**Violeta Went to Heaven** (2012) Biopic of rebel songstress Violeta Parra.

**Motorcycle Diaries** (2004) The road trip that made a revolutionary.

**No** (2013) Did an ad campaign really take down a dictator?

**180° South** (2010) Follows a traveler exploring untainted territory.

## Best in Print

**Deep Down Dark** (Hector Tobar) The gripping story of the 33 trapped miners.

**In Patagonia** (Bruce Chatwin) Iconic work on Patagonian ethos.

**Patagonia Express** (Luis Sepúlveda) Masterful and funny end-of-the-world tales.

**Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair** (Pablo Neruda) A passionate classic.

**Voyage of the Beagle** (Charles Darwin) Observes native fauna and volcanoes.

**Chilenismos: A Dictionary and Phrasebook for Chilean Spanish** (Daniel Joelson) Translates local lingo.

## Toward a Level Playing Field

The highest building on the continent, the 64-story Gran Torre Santiago, was completed in 2013, an irrefutable symbol of the country's newfound eminence. At around the same time, Chile became the first South American country to earn membership in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Yet there is room for improvement. Of all OECD members, Chile has the greatest levels of inequality.

One percent of the population holds half the country's wealth. The number of millionaires here doubled in the early 2000s, but those people living in poverty represent 14.4% of the population. Although poverty has declined by a third in the past decade, critics argue that much more can be done. The plan is to invest in public education and healthcare, two areas where the public has been clamoring for improvement.

Within a larger, controversial effort to revise the dictatorship-era constitution, Chile is also saying goodbye to binominal voting, a system that distorted votes by giving half of the representation in each district to the second-place coalition if it earned a third of the votes. Starting in 2017 the new system should help independent candidates get a foot in the door.

## On the Rebound

Urban, poor, liberal, conservative – all of Chile is reaching for an upgrade. While its citizens negotiate the terms with some frustration, it helps to remember that Chile has been through so much in recent years. In February, 2010, an 8.8 earthquake hit off the central coast with the power of 10,000 Hiroshima bombs. With the ensuing tsunami, the events were responsible for hundreds of deaths and US\$30 billion dollars in damage. Yet two months later, students returned to school, and the affected roads, ports and airports were back up. In large