

# welcome to Chile



## Meet A Land of Extremes

Preposterously thin and unreasonably long, Chile stretches from the belly of South America to its foot, reaching from the driest desert on earth to vast southern glacial fields. It's nature on a symphonic scale. Diverse landscapes unfurl over a 4300km stretch: parched dunes, fertile valleys, volcanoes, ancient forests, clear rivers, massive glaciers and fjords. For the traveler, there's wonder in every detail. Trace the sculpted contours of a glacier, watch a condor skate from crumbling cliffs or scramble up the Andes to scan a full 360 degrees without a human mark. And it's boggling to think how so much has

stayed intact for so long. The very human quest for development could imperil these treasures sooner than we think. For now, Chile guards parts of our planet that remain the most pristine, and they shouldn't be missed.

## La Buena Onda

In Chile, close borders foster intimacy. No matter where you go, it feels a little like a backyard. Bookended by the Andes and the Pacific, the country averages just 175km wide. No wonder you start greeting the same faces. Kick back in one place and it starts to feel like home. Perhaps it's because you have landed at the end of the continent, but one thing that stands out

*Chile is nature on a colossal scale, but travel here is surprisingly easy. Your trip can be as hardcore or as pampered as you like, but you'll always feel welcome.*

(left) Vicuña, Parque Nacional Lauca (p159)  
(below) Centro Cultural Palacio La Moneda (p48), Santiago



is hospitality. *Buena onda* (good vibes) means putting forth a welcoming attitude. While in many destinations on the globe the traveler might feel like a commodity, here you are still a guest. In the city, diners linger over table conversations and bottles of wine. Patagonians share round upon round of *maté* tea. These rituals – of relating and relaxing – are so integral to the fabric of local life, that they are hardly even noticed. But they do say one thing: stay and let your guard down.

## Slow Adventure

In Chile, adventure is what happens on the way to having an adventure. Pedal the chunky gravel of the Carretera Austral

and end up sharing ferries with SUVs and oxcarts, taking a wrong turn and finding heaven in an anonymous orchard. Plans may be made, but try being just as open to experience. Set out to find sweeping desert solitude, climb craggy Andean summits or wander the sacred forests of poet Pablo Neruda. Surf, paddle or sail your way up or down the seemingly endless coast. Explore the mysteries of Easter Island, stargaze, soak in natural hot springs or watch glaciers calve. Then if you can stay still long enough, Chile might regale you with a moment of clarity.