



Chile

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Best Places to Stay

- ➔ El Tesoro de Elqui (p457)
- ➔ Ecobox Andino (p479)
- ➔ Palafito Cucao Hostel (p506)
- ➔ Destino No Turistico (p513)
- ➔ Ilaia Hotel (p517)

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Peumayen (p435)
- ➔ Cocina Mapuche Mapu Lyagl (p489)
- ➔ Mercadito (p505)
- ➔ Mamma Gaucha (p511)
- ➔ Afrigonia (p521)

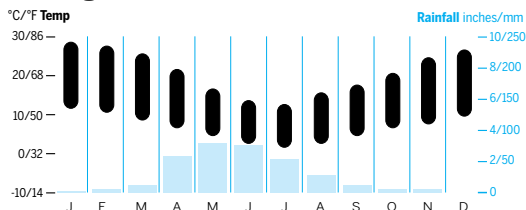
Why Go?

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. Diverse landscapes unfurl over a 4300km stretch: parched dunes, fertile valleys, volcanoes, ancient forests, massive glaciers and fjords. There's wonder in every detail and nature on a symphonic scale. For the traveler, it's boggling how so much has stayed intact for so long. Adventure travelers will find themselves wholly in their element.

In Chile, close borders foster backyard intimacy. Bookended by the Andes and the Pacific, the country averages just 175km in width. No wonder you start greeting the same faces. The easy, relaxing ritual, so integral to the fabric of everyday life in this far corner of the world, proves addictive. Pause long enough and Chile may feel like home.

When to Go

Santiago



Nov–Feb Patagonia is best (and most expensive) but beaches are often crowded.

Mar–May, Sep & Oct Grape harvests in wine regions; pleasant Santiago temperatures.

Jun–Aug Fine weather in the north; Chileans go on winter vacation in July.

Connections

Chile's northern border touches Peru and Bolivia, while its vast eastern boundary hugs Argentina, with numerous border crossings over the Andes. Note that many passes close in winter.

The gamut of international buses depart from the Terminal de Buses in Santiago. Popular Argentine crossings include Santiago to Mendoza and Buenos Aires, Calama to Jujuy and Salta, La Serena to San Juan, Temuco to San Martín de los Andes, and the bus-ferry combination between Puerto Varas and Bariloche. Other international crossings include Arica to Tacna, Peru (served by train and *colectivo* as well as by buses), and Iquique to Colchane, Bolivia.

Some entering Argentina must register and pay a reciprocity fee online (Australian/Canadian/Mexican US\$117/132/23) before entering; see www.migraciones.gov.ar/pdf_varios/reciprocidad/Online_payment_instructions.pdf.

ITINERARIES

One Week

Spend a day exploring the museums and cafes of Santiago, then escape to the picturesque port of Valparaíso. From central Chile, you'll have to decide whether to venture north – to San Pedro de Atacama and its mystical desertscapes, adventure sports and starry skies – or to the glaciers and trekking paradise of Torres del Paine and Patagonia in the south.

Two Weeks

In the second week, choose your own adventure: taste wine in the Colchagua Valley, hike the Andes or go skiing at a resort like Portillo, seek out a surf break in Pichilemu, venture to the end of the earth in Tierra del Fuego, or tour the *pisco* distilleries outside La Serena.

Essential Food & Drink

- ➔ **Pisco** The grape brandy is mixed with fresh lemon juice and sugar to make the famous *pisco sour* cocktail.
- ➔ **Seafood** Chile's long coastline means a bounty of fabulously fresh *pescados* (fish) and *mariscos* (shellfish) used in soups, stews and *ceviches* (marinated raw seafood).
- ➔ **Pasteles** Find these hearty baked casseroles, a traditional specialty made with *choclo* (corn), *carne* (meat), *jaiva* (crab) or *papas* (potatoes), in small towns and at family tables.
- ➔ **Wine** Chile's wine regions are rightfully world-famous. One varietal to try is Carmenere, a rich red that originated in Bordeaux but is now produced only here.

AT A GLANCE

- ➔ **Currency** Chilean peso (CH\$)
- ➔ **Language** Spanish
- ➔ **Money** ATMs widespread; credit cards widely accepted
- ➔ **Visas** Generally not required for stays of up to 90 days
- ➔ **Time** GMT minus three hours

Fast Facts

- ➔ **Area** 748,800 sq km
- ➔ **Population** 17.6 million
- ➔ **Capital** Santiago
- ➔ **Emergency** ☎ 133
- ➔ **Country code** ☎ 56

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	CH\$516
Canada	C\$1	CH\$535
Euro zone	€1	CH\$755
New Zealand	NZ\$1	CH\$467
UK	UK£1	CH\$1075
USA	US\$1	CH\$712

Set Your Budget

- ➔ **Hostel bed** CH\$8000–CH\$12,000
- ➔ **Evening meal** CH\$4000–CH\$10,000
- ➔ **Santiago–Valparaíso bus ticket** CH\$5000

Resources

- ➔ **Sernatur** (<http://chile.travel>)
- ➔ **Go Chile** (www.gochile.cl)