

# Chile from Atacama to Patagonia

## HIGHLIGHTS

Walking tours of some of Chile's most beautiful and historical cities including Valparaiso, Vina del Mar, and Puerto Natales \* Hiking throughout the regions dizzying array of geological features, from deserts and geysers to volcanoes and ancient forests \* Immersing ourselves in local culture and customs \* Experiencing the vast range of Chilean cuisine.

## TRIP OVERVIEW

Chile is a country of startling contrasts and extreme beauty. On this trip we will immerse ourselves in this country's rich and historic culture by visiting a variety of colorful cities, villages, and points of interest. We'll hike through a stunning array of geological formations, from lunar landscapes to ancient forests. We'll take an opportunity to visit terraced farmlands, handicraft markets, and local sea food markets. We'll also enjoy three days in the Torres del Paine National Park. Encompassing a vast variety of local flora, fauna, and stunning geological features, this park has earned a reputation as one of the most spectacular places on Earth. Throughout this trip we'll savor the variety of Chilean cuisine and the people who live here.

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## Day 1. Santiago

Welcome to Chile, a country of startling contrasts and extreme beauty with attractions ranging from the towering volcanic peaks of the Andes to the ancient forests of the Lake District.

We'll be arriving throughout the day at the Santiago Airport. From here you'll be transferred to Hotel Fundador, our home for the next two nights. We have an

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optional city tour of Santiago beginning at 2:00PM and ending with a visit to the summit of Cerro San Cristobal, providing us with a birds-eye view of Santiago, the Andean Mountains, and the Maipo-Valley, the best viewpoint of the city! Otherwise, our trip officially begins in the lobby at 6:00PM. After greetings and introductions, we'll get to know one another over a dinner of delicious Chilean cuisine and discuss our upcoming adventures. We'll make it an early night to be fresh for tomorrow's adventure. D

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## Day 2.Valparaiso



This morning we visit the World Heritage city of Valparaiso, Chile's oldest port and only about 1.5 hours away from Santiago.

The city's many hills are covered in multi-colored houses, creating a spectacular panorama which can be enjoyed from a number of vantage points atop the hills. Walking the streets of Valparaiso becomes a great adventure as we encounter the residents of several neighborhoods and soak up the quirky and bohemian atmosphere. We'll visit the former residence of poet and national treasure, Pablo Neruda, and have lunch in one of the port. We then continue along the coast for to the beautiful beaches of Vina del Mar, named the Garden City for its many parks and green spaces. After soaking in the modern and contrasting surrounds of Vina del Mar, we will return to Santiago in the afternoon. Walking: approx. 6 miles (4-5 hours). Hotel Fundador. B,L,D

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## Day 3.San Pedro de Atacama

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We take a morning flight to Calama in Northern Chile, where we will catch a 1.5 hour shuttle ride to San Pedro de Atacama, our base for the next three nights as we explore the region of the Atacama desert.

En route there are spectacular views of the Cordillera de la Sal (Salt Mountains). The rest of the morning is free to spend at your leisure, go shopping, and interact with the locals. In the afternoon we'll hike in the Cornizas and Valle de la Luna (Moon Valley). This bizarre lunar landscape is set ablaze with color at sunset, the strange rock formations framed by the Lincancabur Volcano. We'll stay until the sun goes down to enjoy the array of colors. Walking: approx. 3 miles (3 hours) reaching a maximum altitude of 2,500 meters. Hotel Don Tomas or similar ([www.dontomas.cl](http://www.dontomas.cl)). B,D

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## Day 4. Miscantis y Meniques Lagoons & Atacama Desert

Today we will be exploring the region near San Pedro de Atacama, with several opportunities to stop and take a walk.



Our first stop will be the village of Socaire. The village is noteworthy for its peculiar architecture using rough stonework and for the local reliance on age-old methods of planting terraced fields of crops. We then continue on to reach the majestic silence of the Miscanti and Miniques highland lagoons. The two

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volcanoes of the same names are visible in the background; the twin lagoons are a deep blue, each framed by a white salt crust which creates a memorable contrast to the yellow highland grass all around. At our next stop we visit Salar de Atacama, a salt lake of huge proportions covered by a thick layer of snow-white salt crystals as far as the eye can see. The salt pan is home to several flamingo species. These beautiful birds and other species can be observed in their natural habitat at the Salar de Atacama's Chaxa Lagoon, which is part of the Reserva Nacional de los Flamencos. After the excursion we will return to San Pedro. Walking: approx. 3 miles, in altitude and warm temperatures. Hotel Don Tomas or similar. B,L

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## Day 5. Tatio Geysers

In order to experience the El Tatio Geysers, we'll have to get up very early so we can arrive at the geyser field in time for sunrise!



The fountains that shoot up to 33 feet high occur when the morning sun melts the nightly ice caps that form over the hot springs. The sun's first rays reflect an array of colors as they mix with boiling jets coming from the geysers to create strong contrasts of steam and light. Around midday we'll head back to San Pedro for some free time to recover from the early start and altitude. The afternoon is free to explore and to visit Le Paige Museum. If the sky is clear,

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and the moon is not full, there will also be an opportunity to participate in an optional astronomy tour. Hotel Don Tomas or similar. B

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## Day 6. Puerto Varas Lake District

This is a long travelling day that will likely require an early start as we will have a 1.5 hour drive from San Pedro de Atacama to Calama for an early flight to Santiago, and then from Santiago to Puerto Montt in the Lake District region.

From here we have a 30 minute drive to Puerto Varas on the shores of Lago Llanquihue where the Volcan Calbuco and Osorno lay in the background. During the afternoon we will have an opportunity to explore local customs and participate in a cooking class! Then it's on to our hotel where we can relax for the evening and explore the local dining options in this charming lakeside town. Hotel El Greco or similar ([www.hotelesgreco.cl](http://www.hotelesgreco.cl)). B,D

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## Day 7. Volcan Osorno

Today we explore the Lake District. We drive along the shore of Lago Llanquihue and enjoy breathtaking views of the Osorno and Calbuco volcanoes.

We will ascend to 4430 feet altitude from where we can appreciate the colors of the sky and lake blending in together. There will be a short hike near the crater as well as the Solitario hike across the last lava flow in 1869. This will put us at the entrance of Saltos del Petrohue where cooling lava from the Osorno Volcano formed a series of rapids and waterfalls. Together they form an impressive sculpture of extruded volcanic rock shaped by thousands of years of river flow. We board a small typical wooden boat for a short cruise of Lago Todos los Santos (All Saints Lake). The lake is surrounded by high mountains

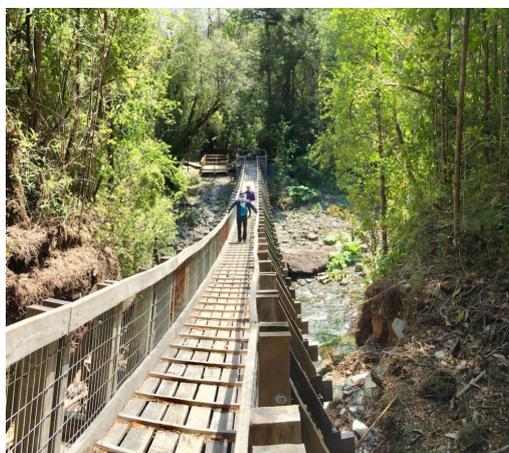
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and the lower slopes are thickly forested. As we pull away from the landing and the source of the river Petrohue, the view is quickly stolen away by the tremendous size and proximity of snow-capped Osorno Volcano behind us. Walking: approx. 3.5 miles, moderate. Hotel El Greco or similar. B,L

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## Day 8. Alerce Andino National Park



Today we will visit Alerce Andino National Park, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

This 97,000 acre park is home to the alerce (*fitzroya cupressoides*), which is often compared to the sequoia for its thick diameter and height. The alerces are Protected Chilean Natural Monuments that can grow up to 150 feet tall and 13 feet wide. We will enjoy an amazing hike among these venerable giants that can live more than 3,000 years, making them the second-oldest tree after the American bristlecone pine. This park has an amazing temperate forest, a unique environment which has no similarity to Chile's other National Parks. Walking: approx. 3 hours. Hotel El Greco or similar. B,L,D

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## Day 9. Puerto Natales. Austral Patagonia

After breakfast and packing up, we take a sightseeing tour of the city of Puerto Montt founded in 1853 by German colonists on the site of an indigenous Mapuche community.

Downtown we'll take time to walk about the main squares and historical monuments. Afterwards we'll visit Port Angelmo where there is a large handicraft market and a seafood market, brimming with salmon and trout. In the afternoon we'll head to the airport, about a half hours drive, to board a flight to Punta Arenas - the southernmost city of Chile. From here we'll drive about three hours to Puerto Natales where we will spend the night and start the Patagonia part of our adventure. Hotel If Patagonia or similar.

([www.hotelifpatagonia.com/es](http://www.hotelifpatagonia.com/es)). B,D

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## Day 10. Torres del Paine

This morning we drive into Torres del Paine National Park, one of the most spectacular national parks in the world.



It has a huge variety of plant and animal species which, together with its snow-capped mountain peaks, cascading rivers and waterfalls, glaciers and mirrored

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lakes, have earned it a reputation as one of the most spectacular places on earth. This is a busy day of traveling and walking, including unforgettable views of the Towers and the Torres Massif from the Cuernos viewpoint and Salto Grande waterfall. In addition to being introduced to the flora and fauna of the region, we will visit Laguna Azul for more breath taking views. Hotel Mirador del Payne or Cabañas del Paine ([www.hoteldelpaine.com](http://www.hoteldelpaine.com)). B,D

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## Day 11.Torres del Paine

Another day in Torres del Paine National Park, this time to explore the Western highlights including Lake Grey.

This deep lake, fed by the glacier of the same name, is filled with icebergs which have splashed down from the massive ice flow. From the hotel, we'll drive to a spot south of the lake then start a short hike by crossing a suspension bridge over the Pingo River. From here the path leads through a Lenga forest typical of the area, and continues onward to the tip of the narrow peninsula at the lake's southern end. This viewpoint offers a spectacular view of the lake with its icebergs, the tongue of Grey Glacier at the far northern end, and the snow-covered mountain peaks soaring above. On the way back we will stop at the Visitors' Center to see an exposition of the origin and history of the park. Hotel Mirador del Payne or Cabas del Paine. B,L,D

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## Day 12.Torres del Paine-Puerto Natales

For those who choose, there is the optional possibility of returning to Puerto Natales by zodiac (approximately \$175 per person).

This excursion involves boarding zodiacs to travel down Rio Serrano. The river ends at the Fjord Ultima Esperanza where we will transfer to a boat before approaching the spectacular Balmaceda Glacier, flowing out from the eastern

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side of Bernardo O'Higgins National Park. We aim to arrive at our accommodation in Puerto Natales around 5:30PM. For anyone not wanting to take the optional river route, the leader will accompany you on visits to other areas of Torres del Paine including a visit to Milodon Cave. In the evening we will meet up in Puerto Natales where we will gather for a delicious final meal together. Hotel Gusinde or similar ([www.martingusinde.com/en/](http://www.martingusinde.com/en/)). B,L,D

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## Day 13.Santiago

Today we travel south across the barren Pampa of Patagonia, an impressive 3 hour road trip as we journey to Punta Arenas Airport where we will fly back to Santiago and catch our flights back home. We will arrive back in Santiago airport at approximately 2:30PM.Please contact us for further services on your ongoing trip.

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