

Patagonian Panorama

12 days | Santiago to Buenos Aires



From Santiago to Buenos Aires, take in the natural wonders of Patagonia in under two weeks. Explore Chile and Argentina's capital cities, visit the mystical island of Chiloé, marvel at the world famous Perito Moreno Glacier and explore Torres del Paine National Park by boat.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Buenos Aires - explore Argentina's captivating capital, dubbed the Paris of South America
- Santiago - discover the highlights of Chile's capital city on a walking tour
- Chiloé - take a ferry ride across the Chacao Channel to the beautiful island of Chiloé and see the Humboldt & Magellanic penguins on the desolate beaches of Punihui
- Los Glaciers National Park - marvel at the spectacular Perito Moreno Glacier
- Punta Arenas – wander through Chile's southernmost city
- Torres del Paine – discover the spectacular giant vertical towers of the Paine massif and explore the national park by boat and on foot

- Travel by boat into Torres del Paine, cruising through the 'Last Hope' fjord on the Serrano River, visiting Balmaceda and Serrano Glaciers
- Puerto Varas - spend two nights in the Chilean Lake District with its snow-capped volcanoes and picturesque scenery

What's Included

- 11 breakfasts and 3 lunches
- Airport arrival and departure transfers on day 1 and day 12
- 9 nights 3 star and 2 nights 4 star hotels
- Escorted by an experienced tour leader with services of local English-speaking specialist guides
- Transportation in private vehicles, with a public bus from Punta Arenas to Puerto Natales
- 3 economy class flights: Santiago - Puerto Montt, Puerto Montt - Punta Arenas, El Calafate - Buenos Aires
- Guided tour of Santiago and Buenos Aires
- Full day boat excursion to Balmaceda and Serrano Glaciers in Torres del Paine National Park
- Full day excursion to Chiloé Island

What's Not Included

- International flights and visas

- Items of a personal nature and additional meals
- Tipping – an entirely personal gesture

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Santiago

Tuesday. Santiago is laid out in a broad valley below the snow-capped Andes, around 60 miles from the Pacific Coast. Those arriving on an international flight today will be met at the airport by the tour leader or a local representative. There will be time to relax before exploring the city and visiting a few of the many museums, markets and parks of this cosmopolitan capital.

For a scenic view across the city, climb to the top of Cerro Santa Lucía, located right in the centre of town. For even more panoramic vistas, a funicular takes you to the summit of San Cristobal, where you can join Chilean families wandering along the leafy paths. Afterwards, have a beer at one of the pavement cafes in Bellavista. This is an Italian quarter of narrow streets peppered with bars and shops selling local lapis lazuli (only Chile and Afghanistan produce the stones in commercial quantities).

The museum and house of Chilean poet laureate Pablo Neruda is close by, and its unusual interior with an eclectic collection of

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paintings and bric-a-brac is well worth a visit.

Overnight - Santiago

Day 2 : Optional excursion to Valparaiso

Today there is an optional visit to Chile's second city, Valparaiso (2 hours by bus). This lively seaport is built on a series of hills which form a backdrop to the wide bay, with views over the seaside resort of Vina del Mar. You can wander through the steep, winding streets and among the brightly-coloured colonial homes built for 19th century British and German merchants, or take a ride in one of the creaky wooden funiculars which link the cliff-top communities.

Time permitting, you may wish to visit one of the vineyards close to Santiago to sample some highly respected Chilean wine.

Overnight - Santiago (B)

Day 3 : The Chilean Lake District

Santiago – Puerto Varas. This morning we travel to the lakeside town of Puerto Varas in the Chilean Lake District. After a short 2-hour flight we arrive at the 'City of Roses' where we marvel at the two snow-capped volcanoes overlooking this picturesque town. We have the rest of the afternoon at leisure to wander along the lakeside promenade and appreciate the Chilean-German architecture and traditions that still run deep through the town or take a trip to Coastal Street to sample some amazing local delicacies. **Overnight - Puerto Varas (B, L)**

Day 4 : Chiloe



Today we have a full day excursion to the mysterious island of Chiloe. Although located just off the coast of mainland Chile it often feels like a world away. We travel

by road and ferry to Chacao where we will be met by our local guide. Once here we visit the plaza and the guide will explain the traditional architecture, which includes the famous wooden churches and stilted houses Chiloe is famous for. We'll continue on to the Bay of Caulin, known for its great birdlife and do a quick oyster tasting before continuing to Ancud for lunch. Travelling through the 'campo' we arrive on the rugged Pacific Coast, where birdlife including penguins congregate on desolate beaches. In the late afternoon we'll return towards Ancud to a family farmhouse for a traditional curanto, a local pitbake and uniquely Chilote experience. Return to Puerto Varas in the evening.

Overnight - Puerto Varas (B, L)

Day 5 : Puerto Natales

Puerto Varas - Puerto Natales. Today we transfer back to Puerto Montt for our flight south to Punta Arenas. On a clear day admire views of the southern icecap, its fjords, volcanoes and glaciers. Approaching the city you see the rust brown Patagonian steppes, pitted with small lagoons, stretching out towards the Straits of Magellan. On the other side of the water rise the mountains of the windswept island of Tierra del Fuego.

Punta Arenas was an important, British-influenced trading centre before the opening of the Panama Canal turned it into a backwater; the region's fortunes were only briefly revived during a short-lived gold rush. To add to its woes, the sheep-rearing business has never recovered from the catastrophic collapse of the price of meat and wool. No pure-blooded indigenous people are left alive here; having survived for centuries the rigours of the Antarctic climate they were annihilated by the diseases brought in by sailors and missionaries at the turn of the 20th century.

From here continue by bus to Puerto Natales, a small town with a frontier feel on the shores of Last Hope Sound, frequented by pelicans, black-necked swans and cormorants. **Overnight - Puerto Natales (B)**

Day 6 : Torres del Paine National Park



Puerto Natales - Torres del Paine National Park. Today we journey to the edge of Torres del Paine National Park, but rather than taking the road we embark on a full day's adventure by boat. An early morning start sees us hop aboard a ship and begin our journey cruising through the fjord of 'Last Hope', passing by the redundant meat packing factories and colonies of cormorants and sea lions.

Further up the fjord we will see the vast Balmaceda glacier, before the ship docks for the walk to the Serrano glacier and the ice-carved lake below it. After the walk we continue our journey up river, this time in zodiacs. This final leg of the journey takes around 3 hours, as we zip through untouched areas of staggering beauty, past further glaciers (Tyndall, Geike) to arrive at Rio Serrano, where our hotel on the edge of the national park, is situated, which has views of the towering granite peaks on the horizon.

Overnight - Rio Serrano (B, L)

Day 7 : Torres del Paine National Park



There are a number of different walking trails winding alongside the glacial lakes and rivers with close-up views of tortured rock towers and needles rising 3,000m into a tempestuous sky. Aside from hiking, there

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is a wide variety of excursions available - including horse riding and tours of the national park by road - your tour leader will discuss these locally and book your preferred tours.

Overnight - Rio Serrano (B)

Day 8 : El Calafate

Torres del Paine - El Calafate (Argentina). Today we drive to El Calafate in Argentina. Travelling by road through the park stopping en route at the waterfalls at Salto Grande and Laguna Amarga, before heading towards Argentina across the Patagonian steppe: a bleak and sparsely-populated landscape. Keep a look out for guanacos, rheas, and flamingos, as well as for the views over Lago Argentino, the largest lake in the country.

On the shores of the lake is El Calafate, where we are based for the coming days. This small frontier town has grown rapidly over the last twenty years and is a tourist hot spot for visiting the local scenery of stunning lakes and steep mountains as well as the stopping off point for visitors to the Perito Moreno glacier, one of the most dynamic in the world. You arrive in the afternoon and if you wish there should be time to visit the fascinating Glaciarium Museum, located in an interesting building with fantastic views just outside. Once you have spent time learning about all things glacial, there is also an ice bar on the premises for a relaxing drink.

Overnight - El Calafate (B)

Day 9 : Perito Moreno Glacier



This morning we drive out towards the huge wall of ice which is the Perito Moreno Glacier for an included excursion. We follow the lake shore before turning up a wooded valley, dense with beech and birch, and continue alongside shimmering lagoons, bordered with bright crimson and heather lichens.

The park authorities have been sensitive about keeping the site as natural as possible, and there are no shops or cafes within close proximity of the wooden viewing platforms, which are tastefully landscaped into the cliff. Just looking at the front-edge of the glacier which towers 60m above the water's surface and is an extraordinary 5km wide is awe-inspiring in itself: even more so when you hear the unforgettable sound of the glacier calving a vast wedge of ice the size of a tower block, which crashes down into the lake, divides and floats away as an iceberg. **Overnight - El Calafate (B)**

Days 10-11 : Buenos Aires



Perito Moreno Glacier - Buenos Aires. Today we fly to the Argentine capital, Buenos Aires (3 hours), an elegant and cosmopolitan city famed for the fascinating port district of La Boca with its cobbled streets and brightly painted houses. It was here that the tango was born, and Diego Maradona honed his footballing skills.

The centre of town is home to the historic heartland, government buildings and churches as well as chic shopping districts, which have a nostalgic, Parisian feel. The bohemian district of San Telmo is full of quaint old houses interspersed with antiques shops, tango bars and expensive restaurants. Slightly further out of town is the Recoleta district, even more evocative of belle époque French and Italianate architecture. During the winter months, wealthy female residents parade the streets in their fur coats and improbable, towering hairstyles, and take afternoon tea in the city's ornate cafes.

Explore the lanes and boulevards on a guided city tour, then make the most of some free time to shop, have a drink and a pastry in a tea-room or peruse the items on display in one

of the many markets. It's fun to promenade up and down the quay in the city's splendidly renovated port district, Puerto Madero, which has trendy loft apartments, a string of open air restaurants and a small marina. Optional evening visit to one of the many nightly Tango shows. **Overnight - Buenos Aires (B:2)**

Day 12 : Buenos Aires

Saturday. Our tour comes to an end today. Transfer to the airport for your onward flight or we can book post tour accommodation if you'd like to extend your stay. **Overnight - Buenos Aires (B)**

HOTELS

Highlighted below are some of the hotels which we frequently use on this tour, though we reserve the right to substitute these hotels to ones of a similar standard.

Please refer to your Tour Voucher for your confirmed arrival hotel and further arrival information.

Hotel Torremayor Providencia

Set in the heart of Santiago's Providencia district, this excellent hotel enjoys a convenient location close to a metro station, shopping centres and tourist attractions. Its spacious guestrooms are fully equipped with modern amenities, with the benefit of free WiFi and access to the breakfast buffet included. Guests can easily pass time in the hotel's modern lobby bar or purchase coffees and tasty snacks in Caffe Mayor, which is located just next door. On the 17th floor you'll also find an outdoor pool, where you can soak up panoramic views of the city.



Park Inn Puerto Varas

Set in a quiet yet central location, the Park Inn hotel offers a quaint place to stay in downtown Puerto Varas. Each of the guestrooms feature modern interiors, with modern amenities including air conditioning,

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a TV and wireless internet. Guests can dine in the on-site restaurant which serves local and international cuisine. In addition to its prime location, the property boasts spectacular views of Lake Llanquihue and the snow-capped Osorno Volcano.



Hotel Aquaterra

Well-located in the heart of Puerto Natales, Aquaterra is a small yet cosy hotel with a friendly team of staff. Each of the guestrooms are decorated with works of art and handicrafts sourced from this region of Chile. They're also equipped with a private bathroom and free WiFi, so you can stay connected with loved ones back home. A complimentary breakfast buffet is served daily and the onsite restaurant boasts an a la cart menu featuring steaks, pasta, fajitas and a selection of desserts. There's also a welcoming lounge area, where you can relax and enjoy a coffee with tasty homemade pastries.



Hotel del Paine

Offering a privileged view of the imposing Paine mountain range, this hotel boasts a scenic location on the banks of the Serrano River. Each of the charming guestrooms features a cosy interior, with rustic wood furnishings, heating and a private bathroom. Free WiFi is available in communal areas and guests can spend an afternoon relaxing in the bubbling hot tub. The on-site restaurant specialises in regional cuisine, particularly grilled meats and fish. The hotel also bakes all its own bread, which you can enjoy alongside fresh juice at the daily breakfast buffet.



Hotel Kapenke

Family-run Hotel Kapenke offers its guests a comfortable and friendly stay in El Calafate. Set just two blocks from Libertador Avenue, the town's main street, the hotel is well-located close to shops and restaurants. Its guestrooms are simple yet functional, featuring private bathrooms and a flatscreen TV, with some offering views out to the hotel garden. Open for lunch and dinner, the onsite La Carmela Restaurant has a wide-ranging menu to suit all appetites, with a selection of fine wines for you to enjoy alongside.



Hotel Kenton Palace

Boasting an excellent location in the traditional San Telmo District, Kenton Palace is just footsteps from Buenos Aires' Main Square. Guestrooms are well-equipped with modern amenities and feature warm-coloured bedspreads and parquet floors, giving them a cosy feel. Guests can enjoy a daily breakfast buffet and selection of international dishes including pizza specialties in the on-site restaurant. The hotel also features a wine cellar, a fitness centre and spa. Offering a sauna, pool and massage treatments, the spa is the perfect place to relax and unwind after a long day of travelling.



Our Partners

This tour is operated in conjunction with our trusted partner and you will join travellers from different operators, not solely On The Go. The group size may vary in size from 4 - 20 persons.

Tour Leader

On this tour, you'll be accompanied from start to finish by an experienced tour leader. From the moment you land in Latin America until the day the tour ends they will deal with all the practicalities, expertly adapting to the circumstances and individual needs of the group. Rather than different guides in different cities, your leader will get to know the group and keep you informed and entertained as you go.

Transport

3 flights (longest 3 hours), 4 road journeys (longest 6 hours), 1 full day journey by boat.

Accommodation

On this tour the standard of accommodation varies. We utilise comfortable and attractive hotels/guesthouses but in remote locations where options are limited, accommodation is purely functional. All properties are well maintained and will have a private bathroom with hot water.

Examples of the hotels include:

- Santiago: Hotel Torre Mayor Providencia
- Chiloe: Hotel de la Isla
- Puerto Natales: Hotel Aquaterra
- Torres del Paine: Hotel Paine
- El Calafate: Hotel Kapenke
- Buenos Aires: Hotel Kenton Palace

On very rare occasions these hotels can change, however please speak to one of our consultants who can provide full details for each departure if you have any doubts.

Optional Excursions

There is a range of optional excursions available which are booked locally through your tour leader once you are in Latin America. Not all excursions available will suit everybody, whilst others only operate within certain seasons, with minimum numbers or may not be included due to time constraints.

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A budget of around \$200 USD should cover participation in most of the following options, but prices can fluctuate depending on the size of the party and so cannot be provided accurately until travel commences.

The list below is only a guideline, so please enquire with your tour leader for any further areas of interest:

- Santiago: a day trip to the port town of Valparaiso
- Torres del Paine: boat trip on Lago Grey to the Grey Glacier
- Torres del Paine: hike to the base of the towers
- Buenos Aires: evening tango show with dinner

Travelling Alone

There is no extra cost for single travellers who are willing to share a room. You will be accommodated with a same-sex member of the group who is usually also travelling solo. For single travellers who wish to be sure of having their own room there are a limited number of single rooms available, which carry a surcharge.

Budget

A budget of around \$45 USD per day should cover the cost of meals, drinks and the odd souvenir for most of the tour. In Argentina this might be more like \$50-60 USD. Although economic instability in Argentina means that prices can change frequently.

Tipping

Tips are normally welcomed and expected. Local guides often rely on their tip as a significant proportion of their income. We recommend approximately \$3USD (or local equivalent) per person per day for each of guides and drivers, depending on the size of the group.

Most service industry workers will expect a tip of some kind and so it is useful to have spare change for hotel porters, taxi drivers and the like. It is common to leave 10 - 12% in restaurants.

If you would like to show your appreciation to your tour leader, who you may feel has

exceeded your expectations, a discretionary gratuity would be gratefully received. As a guideline we recommend an amount of between \$4 and \$6 per person, per day. You are obviously free to tip more or less as you see fit, depending on your perception of service quality.

Insurance

Travel insurance is essential.

Journey Grade

This is an active trip. Walks vary in length from 4-10 hrs and cover steep and sometimes slippery terrain. On the whole trails are clear and good underfoot. A good level of physical fitness is required to make the most of walks in Torres del Paine. Paths are linear, so you can turn back if you feel that you do not want to carry on. If you don't want to walk, alternative ways of enjoying the landscapes can be arranged.

Consult your tour leader if you need any advice about the specifics of the walks. Be prepared for some early mornings, and for extreme weather conditions in Patagonia.

Clothing And Special Equipment

A daypack is essential for carrying rainwear, snacks, books and a water bottle. Those who feel the cold should take thermal underwear. To ensure your comfort while walking in Patagonia, you should bring good waterproof walking boots (tried and tested so you don't get blisters) as well as a good water/windproof (not just shower-proof) jacket and trousers, a warm hat and a scarf.

The sun can be strong so take a hat with a visor, sunglasses and sunblock. Some walkers find hiking poles helpful, and binoculars are useful for bird- and wildlife spotting.

Please get in touch with the office before departure if you have any doubts. Good equipment is very important and hard to come by in South America.

Vaccinations

Preventative vaccinations are recommended against the following: typhoid; polio; tetanus;

hepatitis A. For specific requirements you must consult a Health care professional.

Cases of Zika virus have been reported in parts of Latin America. If you're pregnant, or planning to be, you should follow the advice of the National Travel Health Network and Centre.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Argentina Country Guide

Argentina - Buenos Aires Hotel Tax

The Buenos Aires Legislature in 2020 created the "Visit Buenos Aires" entity, an organization that will be in charge of promoting the city as a tourist destination around the world. This organisation will be financed through a tax on foreign visitors. This tax cannot be included in our tour price and you will need to pay this upon check out at each hotel so please budget accordingly.

This tax will be applied to foreign tourists older than 12 years old who visit the city of Buenos Aires from the 1st of March 2020.

The amount charged differs depending on the star rating of the hotel:

- 3-star hotels - USD 0.50 per person per night
- 4-star hotels - USD 1 per person per night
- 5-star hotels - USD 1.5 per person per night

Argentina - Fact File

- Official Name: Argentine Republic
- Capital: Buenos Aires
- Population: 38 million
- Total Area: 2.8 million square kilometres
- Official Language: Spanish
- Religions: Roman Catholic 92% (less than 20% practicing), Protestant 2%, Jewish 2%, other 4%
- Voltage: 220 volts. Argentina has European type two-pinned round sockets in most old buildings and the Australian style three-pin flat sockets in most new buildings.
- Dialling Code: +54
- Time Difference: GMT/UTC -3
- Airport Departure Tax: US\$18

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Argentina - Visas

UK, Australian, Canadian, US, South African and New Zealand passport holders do not require a visa for entry into Argentina for up to 90 days.

For entry into Argentina you must:

- Hold a passport valid at least six months on entry with one blank visa page
- Hold proof of sufficient funds
- Hold proof of onward/return airline tickets
- Hold documents showing proof of purpose of trip
- Hold all documents required for the next destination
- Confirm with their airline that boarding will be permitted without a visa as these conditions are subject to change

Please be advised that visa requirements are subject to change and that visa procurement is the responsibility of the traveller and not On The Go Tours.

Argentina - Climate

The Argentine climate ranges from hot and humid in the north to cold and windy in the south. In northern Argentina, summer is hot and winter fairly mild while in contrast, Tierra del Fuego, at the southern tip of Argentina, is quite often cold with continual winds, rain at times and freezing winter temperatures.

Buenos Aires, due to its position in the central region, has a Mediterranean climate with well-defined seasons. Spring, between September and November is mild, which contributes to the flourishing green colour of the plants and trees in the lush parks. Summer, between December and February, is dry and hot and winter can be cold. It usually begins to rain in April and reaches its highest level during June and July, then decreases gradually to almost nothing in November.

Visit www.worldclimate.com to get an idea of what the weather will be like on your tour.

Argentina - Money

Important

In Latin America you will have problems changing the US\$100 CB B2 2001 series notes and it is important you do not bring

them. In some countries banks won't even take them. The serial number is located in the top left hand corner and bottom right hand corner on the side with the President's face. This serial number starts with CB and then a few more numbers and then directly under that B2. At the bottom of the note near the signature of the Treasurer it says which series of notes it is and it is there that it says 2001 series.

Local currency

The monetary unit in Argentina is the Argentine peso. For up-to-date exchange rates with your own currency visit www.xe.com.

Changing money, credit cards & ATMs

We recommend that you bring cash/travellers cheques in US dollars only. Visa, Mastercard, Diners and American Express are the best credit cards to bring however there can be problems at times getting money out from ATMs, so make sure you have sufficient cash for emergencies.

There is no restriction on the amount of foreign currency that you may bring into Argentina, however very large sums should be declared on arrival. There is often a general lack of small change and we recommend maintaining a supply of small denomination notes and coins.

Argentina - Local Transport

Much of Buenos Aires can be visited on foot. Most sightseeing in Buenos Aires can be reached on foot from our hotel, with La Boca being the furthest at about an hour's walk. There is also a good, if rather dated, underground metro system (called the "subte") which has 5 lines and is very cheap at approx \$0.30 per journey.

There are local buses called "colectivos", which are also inexpensive, but you MUST have the right change (ask hotel reception for prices) as you have to drop the money into a machine. We recommend you use taxis (black & yellow) at night as they are fairly cheap and usually have meters fitted. Just make sure that the driver turns it on when you get in.

Remember that you will pay more for taxis at night.

Argentina - Food & Drink

As a guideline a simple snack (e.g. a sandwich) can cost as little as US\$1, a light meal will cost around \$5-\$6, and even a meal in one of the better restaurants in Buenos Aires costs very little in comparison to what you would expect to pay at home. Obviously this depends on what you order and if you have wine or other drinks, which will certainly increase the bill. If you eat in Puerto Madero or Recoleta in Buenos Aires you are likely to pay quite a bit more, however there is a huge choice of good reasonably-priced restaurants in the city centre where you can get a good meal (and great steaks).

Your tour leader will be able to recommend restaurants.

All drinks such as water, soft or alcoholic drinks are at your own expense at all times. The following is a guideline for drinks bought in a shop in the street. Prices in restaurants and hotels can sometimes be more than double the prices specified below;

- 1 litre of water US\$0.70
- 30cl bottle of soft drink US\$0.50
- 30cl bottle of beer US\$0.70
- 50cl bottle of beer US\$1.00
- Food

Food

In Argentina the basic diet focuses around meat mostly with french fries (papas fritas), mashed potatoes (pure) or 'papas suflé' (local typical deep fried potatoes that blow up like little balloons and are delicious). As there is a large Italian population you'll have no problem getting pasta dishes or pizzas. In fact, in the larger cities, you'll have no problem getting all types of food.

For breakfast it's normal to eat croissants (media lunas) with a good strong coffee. Most Argentines would have a large lunch at around 1pm then at around 5pm, they all head to the 'confiterías' for tea, sandwiches and cakes. Dinner is usually eaten around 10pm and is often grilled beef (asado) in different forms. Other dishes include 'lomo

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ala pimiento' (pepper steak), giant ribs (asado de tira) and mixed grills (parrillada) which include beef, intestines, offal, blood sausage (morcilla) and spicy sausage (chorizos) or thick grilled steak (churrasco). 'Bife de chorizo' is a rump steak (nothing to do with the sausage of the same name) and 'bife a caballo' is steak topped with a fried egg. Although seafood is not so common you can get fish (pescado) which can be served grilled, pan fried with breadcrumbs (apanado) or with a sauce. There are also plenty of chicken (pollo) dishes available. 'Milanesa de pollo' (boneless chicken cooked with breadcrumbs) is a favourite.

For a cheap and hearty meal 'tenedor libre' restaurants offer a fixed price buffet. These are usually very good value and you can eat as much as you like.

Vegetarians

If you are a strict vegetarian you may experience a distinct lack of variety in the food available, especially in small towns. However vegetarian alternatives are becoming more popular particularly in south Argentina. Our tour leaders will do their best to provide interesting vegetarian alternatives for included meals, but your patience and understanding is requested.

Drink

You should be wary of drinking the local tap water. Bottled water, carbonated soft drinks and fruit juices are widely available and much safer. Argentina also has some of the best coffee in the world.

In Argentina some of the hotels we use have bars or serve alcoholic drinks. If there is not a bar in the hotel then there is sure to be one within walking distance. Imported beers and spirits are available but local spirits tend to be cheaper. There is an array of rums, gins and brandy and the fabulous Argentine wines can be extremely cheap (from US\$1 a bottle) There are also various brands of beers including Quilmes, Rubia, Negra Ahumada, and Negra Extra XXX.

Chile Country Guide

Chile - Fact File

- Official Name: Republic of Chile
 - Capital: Santiago
 - Population: 18 million
 - Total Area: 756,102 square kilometres
 - Official Language: Spanish
 - Religions: Roman Catholics 77%, Protestants 16%
 - Voltage: In Chile the standard voltage is 220 V and the frequency is 50 Hz. You can use your electric appliances in Chile, if the standard voltage in your country is in between 220 - 240 V (as is in the UK, Europe, Australia and most of Asia and Africa).
 - Dialling Code: +56
 - Time Difference: GMT/UTC -4
- For other time differences please visit www.timeanddate.com
- Airport Departure Tax: \$30 USD

Chile - Visas

Most nationals, including citizens of the EU, North American and Australasia do not need to acquire a visa in advance to enter Chile. However some nationalities must pay an entry fee on arrival by air (e.g. United States \$100, Canada \$55 and Australia \$34, these costs may change). Entry is granted on production of a passport valid for more than six months, a return air/bus ticket and proof of funds to support yourself for the duration of the stay. Most nationalities can enter for up to 90 days, although it's up to the immigration official to decide whether you're allocated 30, 60 or 90 days on arrival. Visa requirements do change periodically so you should check for the latest information on your specific visa requirements with your local Chilean Embassy or Consulate well in advance of your planned date of travel.

APIS and ESTA - important flight information: ESTA - if flying to the US, or via the US you will need to fill in your application to ESTA online. This costs \$14 per person. This must be done by you personally.

Passports must also be machine-readable (MRP). Avoid locking suitcases if transiting the USA, as their customs authorities retain the right to break into them.

APIS - Many countries now oblige airlines to provide additional information about passengers prior to the flight departure. This

Advance Passenger Information (APIS) must be supplied to us promptly in order to issue tickets and avoid fare increases. We will provide the airlines with the relevant details if we are booking your international flights. If the information is not provided you may be denied boarding.

Chile - Climate

Chile is very long and narrow (it is no more than 180 km wide at any point) and the Andes Mountains are a dominant feature running down the entire length of the country. Because of its length, Chile encompasses a variety of climates (the country contains both arid deserts and icebergs). There's no one time that's perfect to visit every part of the country, but it seldom rains during October to March, humidity is low, midday temperatures reach about 32°C and the nights are cool. It is colder and rains a lot in Santiago and in the south in May to August. A sweater (and, in the south, a heavy jacket) should be taken no matter when you go, as nights can be cool-to-cold nearly everywhere.

Santiago, due to its position in the central region, has a Mediterranean climate with well-defined seasons. Spring, between September and November is mild, which contributes to the flourishing green colour of the plants and trees. Summer, between December and February, is dry and hot although at night it cools down slightly, and on the coast this temperature drop can be much more extreme. Autumn is between March and May, and temperatures decrease gradually. Daytime winter temperatures are reasonable but mornings can be very cold.

Visit www.worldclimate.com to get an idea of what the weather will be like on your tour.

Chile - Money

Important In Latin America you will have problems changing the US\$100 CB B2 2001 series notes and it is important you do not bring them. In some countries banks won't even take them. The serial number is located in the top left hand corner and bottom right hand corner on the side with the President's face. This serial number starts with CB and then a few more numbers and then directly

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under that B2. At the bottom of the note near the signature of the Treasurer it says which series of notes it is and it is there that it says 2001 series.

Local currency

The monetary unit in Chile is the Chilean peso, which is divided into 100 centavos. For up-to-date exchange rates with your own currency visit www.xe.com.

Changing money, credit cards & ATMs

We recommend that you bring cash/travellers cheques in US dollars only. Visa, Mastercard, Diners and American Express are the best credit cards to bring however there can be problems at times getting money out from ATMs, so make sure you have sufficient cash for emergencies. Travellers cheques must be changed before 12pm except at 'casas de cambio' (which do tend to offer better rates than banks anyway).

There is no restriction on the amount of foreign currency that you may bring into Chile, however very large sums should be declared on arrival. There is often a general lack of small change and we recommend maintaining a supply of small denomination notes and coins. When arriving at the Santiago International Airport we suggest that you get some Pesos at one of the little banks just inside the luggage hall or use one of the ATMs outside the terminal. Change enough money to see you through the first few days of your trip – particularly if it is a weekend.

Chile - Local Transport

Much of Santiago can be visited on foot. There is a very good underground metro system which has three lines and is very cheap at US \$0.40-\$0.60 per journey. You can also buy a 10 journey card for about US\$4. The last trains are at around 10pm. There are local buses called micros, which are also cheap, but you should try to have the right change (ask at the hotel reception for prices). They also have 'colectivos' (shared taxis on fixed routes). We recommend the use of taxis at night as they are fairly cheap and usually have meters - just make sure that the driver turns it on when you get in. Remember that you will pay more for taxis at night.

Chile - Food & Drink

All meals are included when camping and lunch is included on travelling days in the truck. When staying in hotels all meals are at your own expense. As a guideline a simple snack (e.g. a sandwich) can cost as little as US\$1.50, a light meal will cost around US\$5-8, and a meal in one of the better restaurants in Santiago will compare with developed countries in the west. Obviously this does depend on what you order and if you have wine or other drinks which will certainly increase the bill. In cheaper restaurants where Chileans and backpackers eat, you can get meals for as little as US\$3 if you shop around.

Your tour leader will be able to recommend restaurants.

Food

In Chile the basic diet focuses around chicken, beef or seafood, mostly with french fries or rice (or both) and sometimes salad. Compared to countries further north, Chile's cuisine is quite creative and tasty. 'Cazuela de ave' is a stew of large chunks of chicken, potatoes, rice, onions with green peppers and 'pastel de choclo' is a casserole of beef, onions and olives topped with a maize mash baked in an earthenware bowl. 'Parillada', a mixed grill of meats, offal and intestines served at your table in a charcoal brazier (miniature barbecue) is popular here as in all the southern countries. Other favourite dishes include 'lomo ala pimienta' (pepper steak) and 'humitas' (mashed corn mixed with spices and butter baked in a maize leaf).

Seafood is the basis for many of Chile's favourite dishes and the 'congriso' is their national fish. One of the most popular ways to serve it is 'caldillo de congrio' (a soup with large pieces of the fish with onions and potato balls). Other delicious fish include 'corvina' (bass), 'albacore' (swordfish) and 'cojinoa' (no translation). Try a 'paila choncha' (a bouillabaisse type dish with heaps of flavour) or a 'parillada de mariscos' a mixed seafood grill. There is a whole host of other seafood available including clams (almejas), mussels (choritos/choygas), sea-urchin (erizo), barnacles (picorocos) and seaweed.

Typical snacks are 'emanadas de pino' (pasties with onions, raisins, olives meat and peppers) and 'prieta', a blood sausage (black pudding) stuffed with cabbage

Vegetarians

If you are a strict vegetarian you may experience a distinct lack of variety in the food available, especially in small towns. However vegetarian alternatives are becoming more popular you will just have to search a little harder for the restaurants that cater to your tastes. Our tour leaders will do their best to provide interesting vegetarian alternatives when arranging group meals in the campsite, but your patience and understanding is requested.

Drink

All drinks such as water, soft or alcoholic drinks are at your own expense at all times. The following is a guideline for drinks bought in a shop in the street. Prices in restaurants and hotels can sometimes be more than double the prices specified below:

- 1 litre of water US\$1.50
- 30cl bottle of soft drink US\$1
- 30cl bottle of beer US\$1.50
- 50cl bottle of beer US\$3

You should be wary of drinking the local tap water (especially outside of Santiago). Bottled water, carbonated soft drinks and fruit juices are widely available and much safer. However fruit juices are sometimes made from unboiled tap water, so could upset your stomach. An easy way around this is to order the juice 'con leche' with milk instead. For decent coffee try one of the cafe chains: Cafe Haiti, Tio Pepe or Cafe Brasil.

In Chile some of the hotels we use have bars or serve alcoholic drinks. If there is not a bar in the hotel then there is sure to be one within walking distance. In more up-market hotels, imported beers and spirits are available, but tend to be expensive. Alternatively there is an array of local rums, gins, brandy available and the fabulous Chilean wines which can be extremely cheap (from US\$1.50 a bottle). There are various brands of beers including Cristal, Escudo, Austral, Heineken and Royal Guard (light), there is also a brown ale type

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beer from the south called Malta. Please note that many places will charge a refundable deposit for the bottles.

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