

Andean Discovery

17 days | Santiago to Buenos Aires



Discover the highlights of Chile, Bolivia and Argentina on this 17 day private tour, visiting Atacama and the otherworldly Valley of the Moon, Uyuni, the world's largest salt flat and the spectacular Iguazu Falls, before ending in the sultry capital of Buenos Aires.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Santiago - take in the highlights of Chile's capital on a half day cultural city tour
- Atacama Desert – explore the world's driest desert and the lunarlike landscape of the Valley of the Moon
- Take in the spectacular scenery of Laguna Verde on the slopes of the volcano Licancabur, the Valley of Dali, Chalviri hot springs, continue the journey to the Geysers of the Sun Morning to admire the spectacular colors of hot mud, then to Laguna Colorada
- Salar de Uyuni – explore Bolivia's spectacular dazzling white salt flats and see the giant cactus of Fish Island
- Colchani - spend at the unique Hotel Palacio de Sal, the first hotel in the world built entirely of salt

- Humahuaca - stroll around this picturesque little town which gives its name to the beautiful gorge
- Pucara - visit the ancient fortress located on a hill top, which is Argentina's most important archaeological site
- Purmamarca - wander around this charming Andean village, visit the craft market and see the famous Hill of the Seven Colours
- Salta - spend a night in this sophisticated city, renowned for its colonial architecture and breathtaking landscapes
- Iguazu Falls - take in incredible views of the spectacular Iguazu Falls from both the Brazilian and Argentine side
- Buenos Aires – take a guided tour of Argentina's captivating capital, dubbed the Paris of South America

What's Included

- 16 nights superior accommodation
- 16 breakfasts, 1 lunch and 1 dinner
- Airport arrival and departure transfer
- Santiago and Buenos Aires city tours on a shared basis (private touring available for a supplement)
- Moon & Death Valleys excursion on a shared basis (private touring available for a supplement)
- Tour of the Rocks Valley, Incahuasi Island and Uyuni Salt Flat on a shared basis (private touring available for a supplement)

- Humahuaca Gorge Excursion on a shared basis (private touring available for a supplement)
- Tour of the Dali Valley, Chalviri hot springs, Sol de Mañana Geysers and Laguna Colorada, Villamar on a shared basis (private touring available for a supplement)
- Brazilian Falls and Argentine Iguazu Falls Tour on a shared basis (private touring available for a supplement)
- English speaking local guides for all scheduled sightseeing
- All relevant transfers and transportation

What's Not Included

- International flights and visas
- Laundry, drinks and items of a personal nature
- Tipping – an entirely personal gesture
- Domestic flights – South American airpasses are available with LATAM and other airline carriers when booked in conjunction with international flights, which can often offer significant savings on domestic flights. Please ask a member of the team for more information.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Santiago

Welcome to Chile. Upon arrival at Santiago International Airport, you will be greeted and

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transferred to your hotel. Spend the rest of your evening at leisure. **Overnight - Santiago**

Days 2-3 : City Sightseeing



After breakfast, enjoy a half-day city tour of Chile's capital. Starting at San Cristobal Hill, you'll visit the Plaza de Armas, Cathedral and the Government Palace. Then head east to experience some of Santiago's older neighbourhoods, such as Plaza Concha y Toro, which is known for its cobblestone streets and historic mansions. The tour ends at a handicraft store where you can admire lapis lazuli jewellery, a stone that is only found in Chile and Afghanistan.

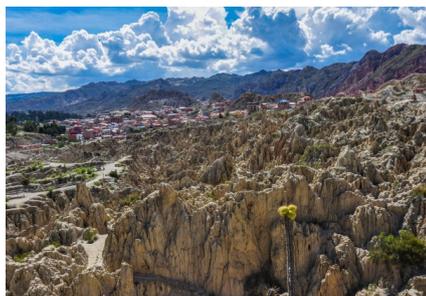
Day 3 is free for you to explore this cosmopolitan city for yourself, whether you want to discover its fascinating museums, unwind in one of the hillside parks or check out what Santiago's buzzing nightlife has to offer. **Overnight - Santiago (B:2)**

Day 4 : San Pedro de Atacama

Santiago - Atacama. Transfer to the airport for your flight to Atacama. Upon arrival at Calama airport, you will be met and transferred to your hotel in San Pedro de Atacama.

Overnight - San Pedro de Atacama (B)

Days 5-6 : Moon & Death Valleys



This afternoon you'll depart on a half-day excursion to the beautiful Moon Valley. Sculpted over thousands and thousands of years by erosion, this otherworldly landscape features incredible rock formations and sand dunes. Visit the salt caverns and climb the mayor sand dune for breathtaking views, before returning to San Pedro de Atacama in the evening.

Day 6 is free to spend at your leisure. **Overnight - San Pedro de Atacama (B:2)**

Day 7 : Laguna Colorada



Atacama - Villa Mar (Bolivia). Today you will journey via the Hito Cajón Bolivian border to Villa Mar, passing the Valley of Dali and Chalviri hot springs enroute. Other stops include the Geysers of the Sun Morning, where you can admire the spectacular colours of the hot mud, and Laguna Colorada, home to the famous James Flamingos. **Overnight - Villa Mar (B)**

Day 8 : Uyuni Salt Flats



Villa Mar - Uyuni Salt Flats. After breakfast, visit the bizarre rock formations of the Stones Valley and take in the incredible landscapes of the vast dazzling Uyuni Salt Flats, visiting the famous giant cactus of Incahuasi Island (commonly known as Fish Island). Next, learn about the process of salt extraction at a salt

processing plant before enjoying lunch in the middle of the Salt Flats.

In the afternoon travel on to Colchani where you will be staying at the Hotel Palacio de Sal, one of the world's most unusual hotels and the first hotel in the world built entirely of salt. After dinner, enjoy an evening walk near the hotel. The sky at this latitude is considered one of the clearest in the world. **Overnight - Uyuni / Salar De Uyuni Region (B, L, D)**

Day 9 : Tupiza

Uyuni Salt Flats - Tupiza. Today travel to the tranquil Bolivian town of Tupiza, stopping en route to visit the mining centre of Atocha. On arrival enjoy a short walk through the city.

Overnight - Tupiza (B)

Day 10 : Humahuaca & Pucara



Tupiza - Humahuaca - Purmamarca (Argentina). Today you will cross the border into Argentina, travelling to the colourful northwest region and the picturesque town of Humahuaca. Enjoy some free time to explore before continuing to Tilcara. Here you will visit the most important archaeological site in Argentina. Known as Pucara, this hilltop fortress boasts exceptional views over the valley below. Enjoy a short visit to the town of Tilcara and its fascinating Archaeological Museum, before the short drive to Purmamarca.

Overnight - Purmamarca (B)

Day 11 : Salta

Purmamarca - Salta. Enjoy free time this morning to explore Purmamarca Village, where highlights include the famous Hill of Seven Colours, the church and the craft market. Discover its narrow streets and meet the locals, before travelling to the city of Salta, which is renowned for its

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handsome colonial architecture and rugged mountainous backdrop.

Overnight - Salta (B)

Days 12-13 : Iguazu Falls (Argentina)



Salta - Iguazu. Transfer to Salta Airport for your flight to Iguazu, arriving into Puerto Iguazu Airport you will be met and transferred to your hotel.

On day 13 enjoy a full-day excursion into the Argentinean side of Iguazu Falls. Your visit can be done via 3 circuits, best-known as the Lower Path, Higher Path and the Devil's Throat Path. The Lower Path offers great views of the majority of the rapids and falls, however there are a high number of steps along the way (approximate duration: 2 hours). The Higher Path then crosses the top of the canyon and allows you to look down over the edge of the falls (approximate duration: 1 hour). To access the Devil's Throat Path, you must take the Ecological Jungle Train then follow the trail to the large lookout balconies at the edge of the falls (approximate duration: 2 hours). **Overnight - Iguazu Falls (Argentina) (B:2)**

Day 14 : Iguazu Falls (Brazil)

Iguazu - Buenos Aires. Today enjoy a half-day excursion to the Brazilian side of Iguazu Falls. Separated from the Argentinean National Park by the Iguazu River, the Brazilian Falls were declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1986 and form part of one of the largest natural protected areas in South America. Stroll along the 1,200-metre catwalk and enjoy stunning views of the 275 falls.

Transfer to Puerto Iguazu Airport for your flight to Buenos Aires. You will be met on

arrival and transferred to your hotel in the capital. **Overnight - Buenos Aires (B)**

Day 15 : Buenos Aires City Tour



Today enjoy a guided tour of the main highlights of Buenos Aires, including the Metropolitan Cathedral, Government House and Plaza de Mayo. Watch the locals tango on the streets of the San Telmo neighbourhood and stop at the colourful suburb of La Boca, home to several important artists. You will also visit Palermo, to marvel at its elegant buildings and parks before ending your tour in the exclusive neighbourhood of Recoleta, where you can visit the famous cemetery alongside many fine restaurants and cafes. **Overnight - Buenos Aires (B)**

Days 16-17 : Buenos Aires

Spend day 16 exploring Buenos Aires at your leisure. Perhaps wander the lively outdoor markets or shop in some of the city's cutting-edge boutiques. Enjoy gourmet cuisine and sample some of the country's renowned wine. No trip to the Argentinian capital would be complete without watching a tango performance, or you could even put on your dancing shoes and learn to tango yourself.

On day 17 it's time to bid farewell to Buenos Aires. Unless you have considered extending your stay you will be transferred from your hotel to the international airport. **Overnight - Buenos Aires (B:2)**

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Argentina Country Guide

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

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

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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 ala pimienta' (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

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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.

Bolivia Country Guide

Bolivia - Fact File

- Official Name: Republic of Bolivia
- Capital: La Paz (administrative), Sucre (judicial)
- Population: 8.4 million
- Total Area: 1.1 million square kilometres
- Official Language: Spanish, Quechua and Aymara
- Religions: Roman Catholic 95%
- Voltage: 110 volts in La Paz and 220 volts in the rest of the country
- Dialling Code: +591
- Time Difference: GMT/UTC -4
- Airport Departure Tax: US\$25

Bolivia - Visas

Citizens of the EU, Canada and Australasia do not need a visa to enter Bolivia. 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. Many other nationals, including US and South African citizens do require visas. For the latest information on your specific visa requirements you should contact the local Bolivian Embassy or Consulate well in advance of your planned date of travel.

Bolivia entry/exit requirements: Your passport must contain a Bolivia entry stamp, without this you'll have to pay a fine when you leave the country. If you enter Bolivia overland ensure that your passport is stamped on both sides of the border, with an exit stamp from the country you are leaving and an entry stamp on the Bolivian side.

Bolivia - Climate

Nicknamed the 'Tibet of the Americas', landlocked Bolivia is the highest and most isolated country in the Americas. With

elevations ranging from sea level to over 6,880 metres, the Bolivian landscape offers a mind blowing array of complex ecosystems and stunning scenery. It is basically divided into three regions: Altiplano (a plateau at an average of 4,000 metres above sea level, 800 kilometres long and about 130 kilometres wide); the yungas (a series of forested and well-watered valleys); and the llanos (the Amazon-Chaco lowlands). Because of the wide range of elevations and topography, there are many different climatic patterns. The overall temperatures are probably cooler than most people expect. Even in the humid forest regions of the north, frosts are not unheard of. Bolivia's unprotected expanses contribute to variable weather conditions and the two climatic 'poles' are Puerto Suarez for its stifling, humid heat, and Uyuni for its near-Arctic cold and icy winds.

There's no time that is perfect for the entire country, but December to March is when most of the rain falls. La Paz is always cool to cold at night, so be prepared with sweaters and windbreakers. La Paz can get quite warm during the day but sometimes mists swirl through the streets and the city can be literally wrapped in the clouds. Throughout the country, night temperatures drop dramatically, and on the high Altiplano, when a cloud passes over the sun, the temperature plunges noticeably. In Cochabamba, Sucre and Tarija, winter is the time of clear, beautiful skies and optimum temperatures. The lowlands experience hot sunny days and an occasional shower to cool off and settle the dust.

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

Bolivia - 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 Bolivia is the boliviano (often referred to as the 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 in US dollars only. There is no restriction on the amount of foreign currency that you may bring into Bolivia, 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 – you may sometimes be offered sweets, cigarettes or even razor blades as change!

When arriving at the La Paz El Alto International Airport we suggest that you change some money at the bank ("Cambio") in the main terminal building. Change enough money to see you through the first few days of your tour – particularly if it is a weekend. Please note you can only change cash (not traveller's cheques) at the Cambio.

There are ATMs in the city where you can get money out 24hrs a day.

Bolivia - Local Transport

Most of La Paz is easy to visit on foot, although the high altitude can take its toll, especially when walking up hill. There are various types of buses and minibuses which are very cheap but you will need to know which routes to use (ask at the hotel reception for assistance). There are also fixed route taxis "trufis" which are "colectivos" (meaning other people will be on-board). You can tell these taxis apart by their red number plates. We recommend the use of taxis at night as they are fairly cheap and much safer than walking. It is not common, however, for taxis to have meters so you will need to barter for a good price. In other Bolivian towns and cities walking is

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basically the best and cheapest way to see the sights.

Bolivia - Food & Drink

Food

In Bolivia the basic diet focuses around chicken, beef or seafood, mostly with french fries or rice (or both) and possibly a little salad. The Bolivian national dish is the parillada, a mixed grill with everything meaty including offal and intestines. Sajta de pollo is hot spicy chicken with onion, fresh potatoes plus dehydrated potatoes called chuno, lomo ala pimienta is a pepper steak popular with travellers, fricase is juicy pork with chuno, silpancho is bread-crumbed meat with fried eggs, rice and banana, saice is a dish of mince meat with spicy sauce and potatoes, rice, onions and tomatoes and milanesa is beef or chicken breaded and fried like a schnitzel. For a simple fish, you should ask for pescado which can be grilled, pan fried with breadcrumbs apanado or served with a sauce. Trout trucha is especially good from Lake Titicaca. Typical snacks include empanadas, pasties filled with cheese, humitas (maize pies), pucacapas (spicy cheese pies) and saltenas (meat or chicken pasties which you can get super spicy or mild). Much of Bolivia's food is not too hot and spicy but you will find a bowl of aji (which is a chilli or hot pepper sauce) on most tables which can be added to spice things up.

In most of the larger cities and towns you will find an array of international cuisine. There are pizzerias on every corner and Chinese (chifas) food is very common. A cheap, filling 3 course lunch (normally called a comida del dia) can often be had for about US\$1.50.

Vegetarians

If you are a strict vegetarian you may experience a distinct lack of variety in the food available, especially in small towns. You might find that you are eating a lot of omelettes and other egg dishes. 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

You should be wary of drinking the local tap water. Bottled water and carbonated soft drinks are widely available and are generally safe to drink. Plastic sachets of flavoured chocolate and strawberry milk are also available.

Imported beers and spirits are available but usually at a high price. If you are happy to drink the local spirits then there is an array of rums and singani (distilled grapes). Imported Chilean and Argentine wine can sometimes also be found cheaply. A bottle of rum could be as little as US\$5 in a local shop and quite often the mixer to go with it (Coke) is more expensive. There are various brands of beers including Pacena, Ducal and El Inca (dark sweet stout).

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

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Andean Discovery

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 to 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 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 'congrío' is their national fish. One of the most popular ways to serve it is 'caldillo de congrío' (a soup with large pieces of the fish with onions and potato balls). Other delicious fish include 'corvine' (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/cholgas), 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

Andean Discovery - 17 days

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Andean Discovery

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

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