

Chile and the Lake District

14 days | Santiago to Puerto Mott



Get behind the wheel for this classic self-drive tour of Chile from vibrant Santiago and its neighbouring vineyards to the famed Lake District for outdoor adventure and vistas of pure beauty. Sample world-class wines, admire crystal clear lakes and the backdrop of impressive volcanoes and explore the native rainforest of Huilo Huilo.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Santiago – half day city tour of colonial architecture and traditional neighbourhoods
- Colchagua Valley – Chile's finest wine-making region
- Chillán – vast handicrafts market and fascinating Mexican murals
- Pucón – ideal base to explore the Lake District and the incredible Villarrica Volcano
- Huilo Huilo Reserve – lush, native forest with plenty of outdoor activities available
- Puerto Varas – situated along Lake Llanquihue's southern shore with excellent access to the Osorno volcano and Pertohué waterfalls

What's Included

- 13 nights standard accommodation (superior and deluxe hotels available on request)
- 13 breakfasts and 2 dinners
- Airport arrival and departure transfer on day 1 and day 14
- City and wine tour in Santiago on a shared basis (private touring available for a supplement)
- 12 days car hire/rental – car hire/rental based upon compact vehicle, Hyundai Accent Sedan, VW Golf Sedan or similar. Includes unlimited kms, CDW insurance (USD \$500 deductible), roadside emergency assistance.

What's Not Included

- International flights and visas
- Laundry, drinks and items of a personal nature
- Tipping – an entirely personal gesture

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Santiago

Bienvendidos a Chile! Once you've arrived in Santiago you'll be met and transferred to your hotel. Spend the remainder of the day at leisure. **Overnight - Santiago**

Day 2 : Santiago City Tour

Encircled by snow-capped Andean peaks, the city of Santiago enjoys a particularly spectacular setting. This morning join a scheduled city tour taking in the Metropolitan Cathedral, the La Moneda Presidential Palace and the Plaza de Armas where artists randomly appear to make theatrical performances. Jump on the metro for a short ride to the magnificent Santa Lucia park and its unique castle. Continue to the Lastarria neighbourhood to marvel at the neoclassical architecture and make the most of the many restaurants, coffee shops and green parks.

In the afternoon head 35 minutes out of town to the Cousiño Macul Vineyard on a scheduled tour. Producing high quality wines in exclusive amounts, this vineyard is an excellent introduction to the wine production process and how technology is used alongside artisan traditions. **Overnight - Santiago (B)**

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Days 3-4 : Colchagua Valley



Santiago – Santa Cruz. After breakfast collect your rental car and drive to Santa Cruz in the Colchagua Valley. Known as the Valle de Colchagua in Spanish, the valley sits in the centre of one of Chile's finest wine-making districts and is home to many of the country's world-class wines. Spend the next two days independently touring the wineries in the valley, sampling as much wine as you can handle. It's also worth checking out the Museo de Colchagua, boasting a well-designed and diverse collection of exhibits housed in a grand colonial hacienda. **Overnight - Santa Cruz (B:2)**

Day 5 : Chillan

Santa Cruz – Chillán. Enjoy a leisurely breakfast in your hotel before following Route 5 to the lively city of Chillán. Upon arrival and hotel check in why not spend the remainder of your day exploring the vast handicrafts market of Feria de Chillán? Filling the Plaza de la Merced and offering everything from fresh produce to knitwear and leather goods, this daily market is a souvenir hunter's paradise. Wandering around the city will also reveal a fascinating collection of Mexican murals. **Overnight - Chillan (B)**

Days 6-8 : Villarrica and the Lake District



Chillán – Pucón. Stretching from Temuco in the north and Puerto Montt in the south, Chile's Lake District is spattered with dozens of crystal clear lakes, snow-capped mountains and dense forest. After a morning's drive you reach Pucón, your base for the next three nights and the ideal place from which to explore the region's natural gems. The outdoor activities on offer here are staggering – raft the Río Trancura rapids, hike in the secluded wooded corners of Parque Nacional Huerquehue, fish in the pristine rivers or rest your bones in the local thermal spas.

No trip to the region would be complete without visiting Parque Nacional Villarrica and its centrepiece, the smouldering Volcán Villarrica. Lined by lush forest and sharply ascending into a black waste of lava, the volcano is a dominating sight and it's possible to hike to the gaseous crater with a local tour guide. The national park is also home to two other volcanoes, spectacular waterfalls and remote hiking trails.

Overnight - Pucón (B:3)

Days 9-10 : Huilo Huilo

Pucón – Huilo Huilo Reserve. A short drive this morning brings you to the gorgeous Huilo Huilo Reserve. Nestled in 100,000 hectares of lush, native forest, the private reserve supports a diverse range of ecosystems rich in endemic species. In the distance the unspoiled white tip of Volcán Choshuenco looms large. Spend the next two days partaking in the many activities offered by your rainforest lodge. Trek along scenic walking trails, explore the reserve on horseback, take a jeep expedition to one of the beautiful lagoons, walk the rainforest canopy, mountain-bike, kayak, try your hand at fly fishing or simply relax in one of the natural thermal baths. **Overnight - Huilo Huilo (B:2, D:2)**

Day 11 : Puerto Varas



Huilo Huilo Reserve – Puerto Varas. Departing your rainforest lodge this morning drive further south to the elegant little town of Puerto Varas. Serving as an introduction to Patagonia, Puerto Varas has a wealth of tourist facilities and with wide streets, green parks and stunning views of the Osorno and Calbuco, it's the ideal spot to base yourself. Food in this region is excellent so make sure you finish your day with a hearty meal at a restaurant in town. **Overnight - Puerto Varas (B)**

Days 12-13 : Lake Llanquihue and around

With Puerto Varas as your base, spend the next two days independently exploring the surrounding area. Surrounded by gently rolling pastures with the perfectly symmetrical Volcán Osorno as its backdrop, Lake Llanquihue could easily swallow a day of your holiday. Visit the little villages that dot the pastures looking for stalls selling German pastries and smoked trout or head to the black-sand beaches of Frutillar Bajo, a popular holiday resort with several traditional wooden structures. You could also venture further afield to the Saltos de Petrohué, a series of steaming rapids created by a hard layer of lava eroded into small channels that connect with the stunning Lago Todos los Santos. **Overnight - Puerto Varas (B:2)**

Day 14 : Puerto Montt

Today marks the end of your Chilean adventure. After breakfast and hotel check out, drive to airport in Puerto Montt to return your hire car and connect with your onward departure flight.(B)

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

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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 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

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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 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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