

Atacama & the North

10 Days | Santiago to Arica



Get off the beaten track in Chile's northern reaches with this unique adventure through the Atacama Desert. Kicking off in Santiago discover fascinating museums, lunar-like landscapes of geysers and rock formations, pre-Hispanic ruins and gigantic geoglyphs, mammoth copper mines and abandoned ghost towns with plenty of natural beauty to boot.

- Cerro Pintados – ancient site consisting of more than 400 giant geoglyphs
- Humberstone and Santa Laura – abandoned ghost towns with crumbling houses and rusty processing plants
- Arica – the brilliantly preserved Chinchorro mummies
- Lauca National Park – the stunning Chungara Lake backed by the snow-capped Parinacota volcano

- Private touring of Arica, Lauca National Park and nitrate ghost towns

What's Not Included

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

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Santiago – half day city tour of colonial architecture and traditional neighbourhoods
- San Pedro de Atacama – picturesque oasis village with an expansive archaeological museum
- Salar de Atacama – Chile's largest salt lake
- Geysers del Tatio – sunrise visit to soak in the thermal springs
- Valle de la Luna – striking lunar-like landscape with a sunset visit to enjoy the changing colours
- Chuquicamata – the largest open-pit copper mines in the world

What's Included

- 9 nights STANDARD accommodation. Upgrading to SUPERIOR or DELUXE accommodation options are also available upon request. Accommodation rating – See Trip Notes for details
- 9 breakfasts, 4 lunches and 2 dinners
- Airport arrival and departure transfer on day 1 and day 10
- Services of local English-speaking specialist guides
- Entrance fees to all sites included in the itinerary
- Excursions to Santiago, San Pedro, Taito Geysers and Chuquicamata mines on a shared basis (private touring available for a supplement)
- All relevant transfers and transportation on a private basis unless otherwise stated

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Santiago

Bienvendidos a Chile! Upon arrival into the airport you will be met and transferred to your hotel in Santiago. The rest of the day is free for you to get out and explore. **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 tour of the city to discover Santiago's appealing blend of the old and new. Walking to the Plaza de Armas gaze at the handsome colonial architecture including the grandiose Catedral Metropolitana, the Post Office and the Santiago City Hall. Continue to the Government Palace and the older

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neighbourhood of Plaza Concha y Toro marked by cobblestone streets and elegant 20th century mansions. Heading east through neighbourhoods with a thoroughly modern appearance stop at a local handicrafts store where you can try a Pisco Sour. **Overnight - Santiago (B)**

Day 3 : San Pedro de Atacama

Santiago – Calama – San Pedro de Atacama. This morning you will be transferred to the airport for your flight to Calama. On arrival you will be transferred to the little oasis village of San Pedro de Atacama. After hotel check in enjoy a scheduled afternoon city tour with a visit to the outstanding Museo Arqueológico Gustavo Le Paige. Housing more than 380,000 artefacts including Neolithic tools, ceramics and gold and silver ritual masks, the museum is famed for its prehistoric mummies, notably the withered 'Miss Chile'. **Overnight - San Pedro de Atacama (B)**

Day 4 : Atacama Desert



After breakfast visit the 12th century pre-Inca fortress of Pukara de Quitor. Strategically located on a hill, the defensive walls encircle a group of stone buildings that have been partially restored. Continue to the ancient settlement of Tular where circular dwellings are interconnected by common passages and patios. Dating to 800 BC the site is the earliest known settlement in the area and is now partially covered by the constantly moving desert sands. Later in the afternoon see the impressive Licancabur volcano on your way to the village Toconao where the volcanic

Liparita stone is quarried nearby. Heading in to the centre of the Salar de Atacama, the largest salt lake in Chile, arrive at the Chaxa Lagoon where you'll find pink flamingos congregating. **Overnight - San Pedro de Atacama (B)**

Day 5 : Tatio Geysers and the Valley of the Moon



It's an early morning departure today as you travel to the Geysers del Tatio for a picnic-style breakfast and a stroll around the geothermal fields to see the geysers and pools of boiling water and mud. Sunrise is the ideal time to visit when the colours give the landscape a surreal appearance and thermal activity is at its peak. Enjoy a rejuvenating soak in the hot springs before heading back to San Pedro de Atacama. En route stop at the small village of Machuca where home-made empanadas, sopaipillas, coffee and coca tea can all be sampled. Later in the afternoon head to the dramatic wind-eroded landscape of Valle de la Luna. The angular geology is often compared to the surface of the moon and you'll get the opportunity to visit salt caverns and climb the sand dunes to marvel at the kaleidoscope of colours that appear over the Andes at sunset. **Overnight - San Pedro de Atacama (B)**

Day 6 : Chuquicamata copper mine



San Pedro de Atacama – Chuquicamata – Iquique. Carved out of the ground like an enormous, sunken amphitheatre, the Chuquicamata mines are one of the world's largest open-pit copper mines, dwarfing the huge ore trucks to resemble crawling ants on the crater floor. Join a scheduled tour to learn about the copper mining process and to see the incredible feat of human engineering. Later in the afternoon continue north to Iquique passing the impressive Pintados geoglyphs along the way. Consisting of more than 400 figures etched into the hillside, the site features images of animals, birds, humans and geometric patterns. Continue to Iquique for overnight. **Overnight - Iquique (B, L)**

Day 7 : Nitrate ghost towns

Iquique – Humberstone – Arica. Once the scene of a thriving industry built on vast nitrate deposits, the ghost towns of Santa Laura and Humberstone now stand empty and lifeless. Abandoned in 1960, Humberstone now lies in total disrepair with workers' houses, a theatre, a church and a hotel gradually disintegrating under the desert sun. At Santa Laura you'll find the old processing plant towering like a rusty dinosaur over the few remaining houses. Continuing your journey north through the desert you'll pass the Pampa de Tamarugal, an artificial forest in the middle of the desert, and the 86m tall Atacama Giant geoglyph. En route to Arica along the Tiliviche ravine and the Chiva escarpment you'll

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also see the well-preserved panel of geoglyphs illustrating a herd of llamas.

Overnight - Arica (B, L)

Day 8 : Arica



Arica – Putre. Sitting at the foot of the Morro cliff, the city of Arica has a colourful history, best seen in its architecture and national monuments including the St Mark's Cathedral and the ex-customs building. Touring continues with the pre-Hispanic settlements of Cerro Sombrero and Cerro Sagrado where ancestral beliefs are illustrated through panels of geoglyphs. Visit the Archaeological Museum at the University of Tarapacá where the complete evolution of the area is charted, from its most ancient inhabitants up until the arrival of the Spanish. It's also home to the Chinchorro mummies, some of the best preserved and most ancient mummies ever discovered. At the Artisans Village you'll have the opportunity to pick up some souvenirs and appreciate the local art and handicrafts.

Ascending towards the altiplano after lunch, pass diverse landscapes, more geoglyphs and the village of Poconchile and its 17th century church. The Cardones Canyon is a highlight with its 4m tall cacti. Visit the native Indian ancient fortress of Pukara de Copaquilla and the pre-Hispanic farm terraces of Socoroma before arriving in Putre.

Overnight - Putre (B, L, D)

Day 9 : Putre



This morning visit Lauca National Park and the Chungara Lake. During the ascent you'll come across Andean bogs and strange flora such as the llareta plant, which only grows 1mm every year. Surrounded by the snow-capped Volcan Parinacota, the Chungara Lake is one of the highest lakes in Chile and when the wind is still, the reflection of the volcano is a staggeringly beautiful sight. Later visit the village of Parinacota where you'll have the chance to meet some of the native Aymara inhabitants and learn about their traditional customs and beliefs. **Overnight - Putre** (B, L, D)

Day 10 : Arica

Putre – Arica. Today marks the end of your unique Chilean adventure. After breakfast and hotel check out you will be transferred to Arica airport. There are a number of flights from Arica to Santiago, from where you can take your onward flight home. (B)

BEFORE YOU GO

Tipping

Tipping is an essential part of the culture. For a job well done, we would suggest for your tour guide: USD \$5-6 per traveller, for each day of sightseeing.

For your driver and On The Go Representative we'd recommend USD\$2-3 per traveller for each day of service. Tipping is an entirely personal gesture and ultimately the amount is up to you.

Accommodation ratings

On our Private trips, you can often choose your style of accommodation. The price quoted on our website is reflective of the included accommodation, please see the "included" section on the first page of this document for details. Should you opt for an alternative hotel category, this will be confirmed in writing with the respective price on your invoice.

For further details about the indicative hotels, please see the "hotels" tab on our website. Here we rank hotel's in their respective country (REGIONAL CATEGORY) - but we also tell you how it ranks by Western standards (OUR CATEGORY).

STANDARD - Equates to a Western 3-star standard, always featuring en-suite rooms and usually a restaurant.
SUPERIOR - Equates to a Western 4-star standard, featuring en-suite rooms and usually a restaurant and often a swimming pool and/or a fitness centre.
DELUXE - Equates to a Western 5-star standard, usually featuring spacious, en-suite rooms, a restaurant, swimming pool and fitness centre and an array of amenities, excellent service and customer care.

LUXURY - Equates to a Western 5-star plus standard - the creme de la creme. Featuring spacious, en-suite rooms, a restaurant, swimming pool and fitness centre and an array of amenities, this accommodation is a cut above the rest. Sheer opulence!

What To Pack

For day-to-day wear you should go prepared to encounter all seasons. Both warm clothing and a sun hat are essential at altitude; a light fleece jacket and a Gore-Tex outer shell makes a good combination. Trousers or shorts made from light, quick-drying synthetic materials also work well. It can get very cold at altitude, particularly after sundown and so warm clothes are essential as is a good waterproof jacket.

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Strong, comfortable footwear is also essential and you should bring insect repellent, sun block and sunglasses. You should take swimwear for visits to thermal baths. A torch can also be useful during your time on the salt flats. Temperatures can drop well below freezing at night, so thermal underwear is advisable, as well as thick socks and gloves and a hat that will cover your ears.

If you plan to go to good restaurants or out on evening entertainment trips, you might want to bring something a bit smarter as well (although formal attire will not be required).

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.

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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 congriso' (a soup with large pieces of the fish with onions and potato balls). Other delicious fish include 'corvine' (bass), 'albacore' (swordfish) and 'cojino' (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.

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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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