

Argentina, Eclipse & Chile 2020

10 days | Buenos Aires to Santiago



Travel from Buenos Aires to Santiago and witness the total solar eclipse in December 2020 on this 10-day group tour of Argentina and Chile. Enjoy a guided tour of Buenos Aires, see the eclipse unfold from an exclusive observation camp and explore beautiful Bariloche. Marvel at incredible scenery on the breathtaking Andean Lake Crossing to Puerto Varas, visit the German-style city of Frutillar and discover the enchanting Chilean capital of Santiago.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Total Solar Eclipse - watch this incredible natural phenomena in Patagonia on the 14 December 2020
- Andean Lake Crossing - cruise from Bariloche in Argentina to Puerto Varas in Chile, crossing spectacular lakes, admiring volcanoes and glaciers as you sail
- Experience this amazing astronomical event at an exclusive observatory camp and enjoy gourmet food and wine as the spectacle unfolds

- Bariloche - enjoy a scenic tour of the Patagonian wilderness including Lake Nahuel Huapi and admire the view from Campanario Hill
- Puerto Varas - spend two days in this picturesque lakeside town, with incredible views of Osorno and Calbuco volcano
- Frutillar - discover the German-style city on the shore of Llanquihue Lake, see the famous Lake Theatre and opt to visit the German Colonial Museum
- Buenos Aires - take a guided city tour of Argentina's captivating capital to see highlights including the Plaza de Mayo, colourful La Boca neighbourhood and Recoleta.
- Santiago - explore the Chilean capital on a guided tour to see highlights including the Plaza de Armas, Cathedral and La Moneda Government Palace

What's Included

- 9 breakfasts & 1 gourmet picnic lunch with premium Argentinian wines
- Half Day Llanquihue & Frutillar & Puerto Octay Excursion
- All relevant transfers and transportation
- 6 nights 4 star hotels and 3 nights boutique hotel in Bariloche (or 3 nights guesthouse for anyone booking from 01 Dec 2019 onwards)
- Domestic flights: Buenos Aires - Bariloche and Puerto Montt - Santiago de Chile

- Expert local guides for scheduled sightseeing
- Airport arrival and departure transfers on days 1 and 10
- Half day Buenos Aires and Santiago city tour
- Full day solar eclipse excursion to an exclusive observatory camp with an astronomer guide
- Eclipse viewing glasses
- Half day Bariloche scenic tour
- Full day Andean Lake Crossing excursion

What's Not Included

- International flights and visas
- Items of a personal nature, additional meals and drinks
- Tipping – an entirely personal gesture
- Bariloche Eco Tax - \$2 per day (\$6 in total) to be paid directly to the hotel at time of check in

DETAILED ITINERARY

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 UK 020 7371 1113 info@onthegotours.com
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updated on 30-05-2020 01:37:11

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Argentina, Eclipse & Chile 2020

Day 1 : Welcome to Argentina



11 December 2020. Welcome to Buenos Aires. You will be met by our representative at Buenos Aires airport and transferred to our centrally located hotel in Argentina's captivating capital. Spend the rest of the day at leisure. **Overnight - Buenos Aires**

Day 2 : Buenos Aires sightseeing



This morning we take in the highlights of the seductive city of Buenos Aires on a half day guided tour, including attractions such as 9 de Julio Avenue, the Obelisk and Corrientes Street. The first stop will be in the Plaza de Mayo to visit the Cathedral and the Old City Hall, before we continue to the old neighborhood of San Telmo, with its colonial houses and cobblestone streets. We'll also visit the striking La Boca neighbourhood, with its brightly coloured zinc houses, the exclusive area of Puerto Madero, which was once the old city port, and the scenic Palermo woods.

Finally, we end our tour in Recoleta, which is one of the most elegant neighbourhoods in Buenos Aires. See the Recoleta Cemetery, the resting place of Argentina's most famous figures and spend the rest of the day at leisure. **Overnight - Buenos Aires (B)**

Day 3 : Fly to Bariloche

Buenos Aires - Bariloche. Today transfer to the airport for your flight to Bariloche, a scenic city in northern Patagonia. Set on the shore of Lake Nahuel Huapi and within a national park of the same name, Bariloche is surrounded by some of the most beautiful scenery in the world.

On arrival in the city, the rest of the day is free to relax at the Peninsula Petit Hotel, our base for exploring Bariloche and witnessing the total solar eclipse tomorrow. The hotel is on the shore of the lake and has its own private beach, so you can get out and make the most of your surroundings.

Please Note - the Peninsula Petit Hotel in Bariloche is now fully booked. Anyone booking this tour from 01 December 2019 onwards will stay at the Hosteria Katy in Bariloche. Overnight - Bariloche (B)

Day 4 : Total Solar Eclipse



14th December 2020. Experience the incredible astronomical event that is a total solar eclipse today. We have a full day excursion to an exclusive Nomad observatory camp, at a privileged location along the central path of the eclipse, near Piedra del Aguila. Departing Bariloche with our local guide early this morning, enjoy an incredibly scenic drive to the vast steppe lands in the east of Nahuel Huapi National Park. Arriving at our eclipse camp, you can have a drink, relax and await the eclipse in comfort or go for a short hike in the stunning Patagonian wilderness.

The big event begins with a partial eclipse at 11:45 local time. 13.08 is the start of the total eclipse, with totality lasting for just under

2 minutes. We'll be in the perfect spot to watch this incredible spectacle unfold (subject to weather conditions). Eclipse glasses will be provided to ensure you can watch this natural phenomenon safely.

Solar eclipses usually occur twice a year, however total solar eclipses are rare. A total solar eclipse is when the moon perfectly aligns in front of the sun, plunging the entire area into total darkness. Look out for Bailey's Beards as the eclipse unfolds - these small blots of lights appear just before the total eclipse and are caused by gaps in the mountains and valleys on the Moon's surface allowing sunlight to pass through in some places but not others.

After the mesmerising eclipse, we'll enjoy a delicious 'Campestre' picnic lunch at our camp, accompanied by premium Argentinian wines. Relax and reflect on the spectacle you just witnessed before we return to the hotel in Bariloche, arriving late afternoon. **Overnight - Bariloche (B, L)**

Day 5 : Bariloche Scenic Tour



We spend our final day in Bariloche exploring the staggeringly beautiful Patagonian hills. Our half day sightseeing tour of the region takes in the breathtaking vistas of Lake Nahuel Huapi and Victoria Island. We also head through pine forest and past towering rock formations to the top of Campanario Hill. The incredible views from the top of the hill were voted one of the "Top 10 Views in the World" by National Geographic. The rest of the day can be spent further exploring Bariloche and its surrounding area at leisure. **Overnight - Bariloche (B)**

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Day 6 : Lake crossing to Puerto Varas



Bariloche - Puerto Varas (Chile). Transfer to the pier this morning for a full day lake crossing to reach Puerto Varas in Chile's Lake District. Departing by boat, we cross shimmering Lake Nahuel Huapi and continue across Lake Frias to the Perez Border with Chile.

Once we've crossed the border, we admire the extinct Tronador Volcano, which is home to nine glaciers on its flanks. We then enter the lush Perez Rosales National Park and cruise on Todos los Santos Lake. The lake has earned the nickname of 'Emerald Lake' due to the green-blue tone of its waters. From the lake you'll enjoy amazing views of the Osorno and Calbuco volcanoes before we finally dock at Petrohue and transfer to Caban Del Lago Hotel in nearby Puerto Varas. Set on the shores of Lake Llanquihue, the hotel offers stunning panoramic views of Puerto Varas and Osorno volcano. **Overnight - Puerto Varas (B)**

Day 7 : Llanquihue & Frutillar



This morning enjoy a half-day excursion to the charming lakeside city of Frutillar, known as Chile's 'City of Music', stopping en route to visit Llanquihue city. Founded by German settlers in 1856, Frutillar is like a slice of

Bavaria in South America, with the added bonus of being surrounded by volcanoes and resting on the shore of magical Lake Llanquihue. There's free time to explore the quaint, German-style streets and you can opt for a visit to the German Colonial Museum to learn about life for the original German settlers of Frutillar. You can also see the famous Lake Theatre before we head to Puerto Octay, also located on the shore of Lake Llanquihue. Wander the ancient streets and see the bustling Main Square before we return to Puerto Varas, where the rest of the day is free to relax. **Overnight - Puerto Varas (B)**

Day 8 : Fly to Santiago

Puerto Varas - Santiago. Transfer to Puerto Montt Airport this morning for a flight to Santiago, the welcoming capital city of Chile. Santiago is one of the most scenic capitals in the world, encircled by the snow-capped peaks of the mighty Andes Mountains. On arrival at the airport, you'll be transferred to our hotel where the rest of the day is at leisure. **Overnight - Santiago (B)**

Day 9 : Santiago city tour



Today we enjoy a guided tour of Santiago. The city is as varied as it is beautiful, an amazing contrast of the old and the modern. Our sightseeing includes the central Plaza de Armas, home to the Cathedral, Post Office and City Hall. See the La Moneda Government Palace and enjoy a drive through some of the old neighbourhoods of the city, including Republica and Concha y Toro. Finally, we discover the more modern eastern part of the city before the afternoon is free to further explore independently. **Overnight - Santiago (B)**

Day 10 : Santiago

20 December 2020. Today our tour comes to an end after a final breakfast in the hotel. There's an included transfer to the airport for your onward flight. (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 Grand Brizo Buenos Aires

Conveniently located in the heart of Buenos Aires, the 4 star Hotel Grand Brizo offers comfortable and spacious guestrooms, which are well-equipped with modern amenities. Free WiFi is available throughout the hotel and a tasty buffet breakfast is served daily. The hotel's restaurant offers international cuisine and the property also has a bar, outdoor swimming pool and fitness centre for those looking to unwind from the hustle and bustle of the city. Popular places of interest near Hotel Grand Brizo Buenos Aires include The Obelisk of Buenos Aires, July 9 Avenue and the Colon Theater, while Plaza de Mayo Square is just 1 km away.



Peninsula Petit Hotel

This enchanting boutique hotel is set in an idyllic location, on the shore of picturesque Lake Nahuel Huapi. With attractive Patagonian decor and modern amenities including WiFi, the well appointed guest rooms all offer incredible views of the lake, native forest and surrounding hills. The hotel's restaurant and tea house serves delicious home cooked meals and guests can enjoy leisurely strolls through

Argentina, Eclipse & Chile 2020

the beautiful gardens down to the private beach. Located in San Pedro's Peninsula, the property is 12.4 miles from downtown Bariloche, which can easily be reached by bus or taxi.



Hosteria Katy

Anyone booking this tour from 01 December 2019 onwards will stay at Hosteria Katy. Surrounded by lush woods, rugged snowcapped mountains and pristine lakes, Hosteria Katy is a charming family-run inn which offers a real home away from home. The property has seven cosy en-suite guestrooms, which are simply furnished, with garden views and free WiFi. There's a comfortable living room and dining room where you can enjoy a wonderful variety of organic products fresh from the garden, delicious home-made bread, jams and tasty cakes. Located in the picturesque and peaceful village of Llao Llao, away from the hustle and bustle of Bariloche town centre, you'll find several excellent places to eat within easy walking distance and given its convenient location inside the Nahuel Huapi National Park there's a wonderful range of walking trails and lake activities to enjoy nearby. Bariloche city centre is 16.2 miles away.



Cabana del Lago Hotel

Hotel Cabana Del Lago is scenically located on the shore of picturesque Lake Llanquihue in Puerto Varas, just 3 minutes walk from the beach and a short lakeside walk into town. The comfortable guestrooms are tastefully furnished, with modern amenities and picturesque lake views. A tasty buffet

breakfast is served daily and the cosy restaurant offers an excellent range of Lake District specialities, with live music in the evening. Guests can enjoy a swim in the hotel's beautiful indoor pool and jacuzzi which overlook the lake and bikes can be rented to explore the area. As the sun sets the hotel's view out over the lake and across to Osorno Volcano is simply stunning.



Fundador Hotel

Set in the heart of downtown Santiago's historic Paris-London district, this comfortable hotel provides a convenient base for exploring Chile's capital. The hotel is light and brightly decorated in an Andean style, with warm rustic rugs and slate stone floors. Guestrooms are fully equipped with modern amenities, with the benefit of 24 hour room service and free WiFi. A buffet breakfast is included and the hotel's Calicanto Restaurant serves tasty Mediterranean cuisine with choice of local wines. There's also a fitness centre, sauna and spa on site for those who want to work out or relax after a busy day of city sightseeing.



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

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

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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 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

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Argentina, Eclipse & Chile 2020

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 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

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