



About Chile.

WELCOME TO CHILE

With its snow-capped mountains, dazzling lakes, the world's highest and driest desert, breathtaking glaciers and icefields, and a 3,500-mile coastline, this is a land of superlatives and contrasts on a remarkable scale. Its unique natural characteristics aside, Chile is something of an anomaly in Latin America, admired as much for its rock-solid economy, social and political stability, and the superb infrastructure of its capital city, as it is for its fruit, wine, and talent for rescuing miners from seemingly impossible situations. Since 1989, the country has grown year after year, recovering admirably from almost two decades of dictatorship to become an example of industry, resilience, and creativity. The country has become the business hub for multi-national companies, while at the same time encouraging a strong entrepreneurial culture, all of which places it among the world's most notable emerging nations.

GEOGRAPHY

A land of unparalleled diversity and contrasts, with formidable natural beauty, Chile covers a total area of 291,930 sq. miles (756,096 km.²), which is equivalent to twice the size of Japan, or France and the United Kingdom combined. It is the longest country in the world from north to south at 2,674 miles (4,303 kilometers), or 38 degrees of latitude. That's Stockholm to Marrakech or Los Angeles to New Jersey! Chile has more Pacific coastline than any other country. It is an incredibly narrow country, rising from sea level to a staggering 22,610 feet (6,893 meters) at Nevado Ojos del Salado (the highest active volcano on Earth) in just 160 miles. Chile shares borders with Argentina, Peru and Bolivia, but is the only South American nation not to border Brazil. Alexander Selkirk and Charles Darwin explored the country extensively, and their respective voyages were well documented. Over 20% of Chile's land mass is protected, a total area larger than the entire landmass of Costa Rica!, and 4% of UNESCO's World Biosphere Reserves are found in Chile. From the peaks of the Andes and the salt flats of Atacama to the pampa and ice fields of Patagonia, Chile is truly a geographical wonder.

ICONS

The enormous diversity offer Chile makes for some highly contrasting icons. The north of the country is dominated by the Atacama Desert which extends south as far as the semi-arid Elqui and Limari Valleys. Chile's Central Region includes Santiago, Wine Country, and the coastal cities of Valparaiso and Viña del Mar. Further south, the spectacular Lakes Region is the starting point of Patagonia, which ends in the southern tip of South America. Another icon is Easter Island, the mysterious Polynesian island home to over 600 moai statues.

FACTS & FIGURES

Full name:	La República de Chile (Republic of Chile)
Population:	17.8 million (UN, 2011)
Official Language:	Spanish
Capital city:	Santiago
Area:	291,930 sq. miles (756,096 km ²)
Major religion:	Roman Catholic (73%)
Life expectancy:	76 years (men), 82 years (women) (UN)
Monetary unit:	Chilean peso (CLP)
Main exports:	Copper, fish, fruit, paper and pulp, chemicals, and wine
GNI per capita:	US\$10,120 (World Bank, 2010)
Internet domain:	.cl
Intl. dialling code:	+56
National Day:	September 18
Borders with:	Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina
Government:	Centralist/Socialist Coalition
President:	Michelle Bachelet (2012-)

DID YOU KNOW?

- ◆ Chile has 31 National Parks and 48 Natural Reserves,
- ◆ The skies of the north are so clear that the world's foremost astronomical observatories are found in area between La Serena and Antofagasta.
- ◆ Chile's Lago Llanquihue is the second largest lake in South America, after Peru's Lake Titicaca, at 330 square miles (860 square km).
- ◆ The alerce tree, found in southern Chile, is noted for its longevity. Some alerces are over 4,000 years old.
- ◆ The name 'Chile' may come from the indigenous Mapuche word 'chilli', which means 'where the land ends', or the onomatopoeic "cheele-cheele", the Mapuche imitation of a bird call.
- ◆ Chileans manage to squeeze in an extra meal during the day. Called 'once' ('eleven' in English), its origins are somewhat obscure. Some say it is a direct translation of the British 'Elevenses', while others say that back in the 19th century men would sneak into the kitchen or a back room to have a sip of aguardiente, a grape spirit, instead of tea. Since the word has 11 letters, they called it 'once'. The jury is well and truly out on this one.
- ◆ The name Easter Island (translated literally into Spanish as 'Isla de Pascua') is actually known locally as Rapa Nui. Originally called Te Pito O Te Henua (Navel of the World) by the first Polynesian settlers over 1,500 years ago, Easter Island was so called after the Dutch Admiral Jacob Roggeveen stumbled upon it on Easter Sunday in 1772.
- ◆ Scottish sailor Alexander Selkirk was marooned for four years on the Juan Fernández Islands. After being rescued, he published his story of survival, which was the inspiration for Daniel Defoe's classic novel Robinson Crusoe.
- ◆ People on the island of Chiloé have a novel way of moving house. They literally move the house! Known as a 'minga', the event brings the entire community together to move a house from A to B. The islanders place the house on tree trunks, after which it is dragged by oxen to the new site. A huge feast is served afterwards.
- ◆ A Chilean flag atop a house under construction announces the completion of the 'tijerales', the roof support structure on a building. Once this is completed, the flag is placed on the roof and the owner must offer a barbecue for all who were involved in the construction. Should the owner not comply, mysterious flaws will dog the next stage of construction.
- ◆ Chile has the world's largest outdoor swimming pool at the San Alfonso del Mar. Set along the coastline, it is larger than 20 Olympic swimming pools and holds 66 million gallons of water. The pool is also in the Guinness Book of World Records for being the world's deepest at 115 feet and costs over USD 3 million a year to maintain.

CLIMATE

The climate of Chile comprises a wide range of weather conditions across a large geographic scale, extending across 38 degrees in latitude, making generalizations difficult. The following is a brief guide. The North is arid to semi-arid (From the Atacama Desert to the Elqui Valley), while Central Chile is essentially Mediterranean (Including Santiago, Wine Country, and the Central Coast). The South is temperate oceanic in and around the Lakes Region, and semi-arid in Patagonia (from Coyhaique to Punta Arenas, including the Torres del Paine National Park). As for insular Chile, both Easter Island and the Juan Fernández Islands are classified as Humid sub-tropical. Most of Chile is blessed with temperate, year-round climate. However a strong oscillation between minimum and maximum temperatures is common in most areas, but especially in the Atacama Desert and Patagonia. Travelers visiting those areas at any time of year should come prepared, bringing plenty of layered clothing.

During the month of October, visitors to Santiago can expect long, warm days, and very little rain. This is the start of Spring, so make sure to pack accordingly.

AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Santiago												
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
°Celsius	29	29	27	23	18	14	15	17	19	22	26	29
°Fahrenheit	84	84	81	73	65	57	59	63	66	72	79	84

Atacama Desert												
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
°Celsius	26	26	25	23	21	19	19	18	19	21	22	24
°Fahrenheit	79	79	77	73	70	66	66	65	66	70	72	75

Lakes Region												
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
°Celsius	19	21	17	17	15	12	10	8	10	14	17	20
°Fahrenheit	66	70	63	63	59	54	50	46	50	57	63	68

Patagonia												
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
°Celsius	21	22	19	17	14	9	7	8	15	17	18	25
°Fahrenheit	70	72	67	62	58	48	44	46	59	62	65	77

Easter Island												
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
°Celsius	27	27	27	26	23	22	21	21	22	22	24	26
°Fahrenheit	80	81	80	78	74	72	70	70	71	71	75	78

MAP

The following map highlights the major cities of Chile.

